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**The Role of the Mother Tongue in the Different Methods for Teaching a Foreign Language
and their Methodological Implications**

by

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Abstract

The use of the mother tongue (MT) during the foreign language (FL) classes has been an item of discussion for many researchers, teachers and learner teachers but nowadays many empirical studies have demonstrated that foreign language learners do not switch off their mother tongue while learning the FL, but they have it present in their minds even when teachers try to erase or to shun this normal process from the students' brains. The same studies show that when learners use their first language (L1) they work collaboratively helping each other, while students who only use the foreign language show little evidence of interaction and collaboration. However, the influence and use of the learners' first language can be a facilitating or a constraining factor in foreign language learning and could bring advantages or disadvantages according to the wide or little use of the mother tongue not only by part of students but also by part of teachers, the strategies teachers adopt into the foreign language classroom and the appropriate conditions teachers create into the foreign language classroom environment which could facilitate or interrupt the students' learning.

Keywords: Foreign Language, Mother Tongue, strategies, advantages and disadvantages.

Resumen

El uso de la lengua materna en las clases de lengua extranjera ha sido un punto de discusión para muchos docentes, investigadores y profesores aprendices, pero hoy en día muchas de estas investigaciones han demostrado que los estudiantes no desactivan su lengua materna en sus cerebros al momento de aprender una lengua extranjera y que además, la LM está presente en los aprendices incluso cuando muchos profesores intentan borrar o prohibir este proceso, el cual es normal en la mente de los estudiantes. Los estudios demuestran que los estudiantes que utilizan su primera lengua en clase cooperan con el aprendizaje del otro mientras que los estudiantes que solo usan la lengua extranjera muestran poca colaboración entre ellos. Sin embargo, el uso de la primera lengua en los aprendices puede ser un factor facilitador u obstructivo en el aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera y puede acarrear ventajas y desventajas de acuerdo a la cantidad de uso que se le dé a la misma no solo por parte de los estudiantes sino también por parte de los profesores. Las estrategias adoptadas en el salón y las condiciones apropiadas del ambiente que los profesores pueden facilitar o interrumpir el aprendizaje de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: Lengua extranjera, Lengua materna, estrategias, ventajas y desventajas.

The Role of the Mother Tongue in the Different Methods for Teaching a Foreign Language and their Methodological Implications

The aim of this paper is to show the use of the mother tongue (MT) as a tool in a foreign language (FL) classroom and its importance not only in recent days but along the history of the teaching-learning process of a foreign language. To make it possible, a wide amount of information from different authors has been analyzed and the most relevant literature related to this topic is going to be linked. It is divided into four chapters; the first one discusses the different aspects of the language and the definitions of mother and foreign language. The second one discusses the role of the mother tongue in the teaching in traditional, communicative and the post method era ways of teaching. The third one mentions the advantages and disadvantages of the use of the mother tongue in the foreign language class. And the fourth chapter shows some strategies to introduce the mother tongue in the foreign language class. This paper aims to know the methodological implications that the mother tongue has had in the different methods for teaching a foreign language.

Additionally, this paper points out some objectives with its own support; each chapter has a main objective and also has its own description which finally throws the outcome to know the global objective of the complete paper which is to state the role of the mother tongue in some of the different methods of the FL teaching-learning.

Among the several objectives of this paper, to know the definition of mother tongue (MT) and foreign language (FL) is important as equal as to know the difference and similarity that exists between foreign language (FL) and second language (L2).

a) This paper gives a summary based on different authors about what mother tongue (MT) and foreign language (FL) are.

b) To show the ambiguity between foreign language (FL) and second language (L2).

To show a summary about some methods which use the MT along the FL teaching-learning process' history.

a) A short summary about some of the different FL teaching-learning methods along the history which use the MT are an evidence for this section

b) To show what has been the role of the MT along the history in some of the different FL teaching-learning methods.

To identify the advantages and disadvantages that using the mother tongue in the foreign language classes could bring.

a) It is important to show the bad effects that using the MT in the FL classes have; stating disadvantages give teachers the opportunity to not to rely in an exaggerated way on their L1 and to help students to use the FL in classroom.

b) It is equally important to know the advantages that using the MT in the FL classroom could bring not only for teachers but for students too.

To illustrate some strategies for learning a foreign language using the mother tongue.

a) The strategies given here are a guide for teachers and tutors in order to know how to use the L1 in the FL classes without oversusing it.

b) Teachers in some occasions do not know in which quantity to use student's MT, here there are some strategies to make students using the FL and decrease the

use of the MT in the foreign language classes.

The intention of this paper is to know what is the role of the mother tongue in the FL teaching-learning process; additional to it, the review of the literature will show us the use of the L1 in the some of the different methods for teaching a FL throughout the history, the definition of mother tongue and foreign language, the advantages and disadvantages of its use and some strategies for teaching a FL using the MT.

Even when the MT has been present in a big part of the several methods for teaching a FL, there are some methods which almost do not use the MT in the FL teaching-learning process. In this paper, how the mother tongue is viewed as a significant tool in that process, the effects that it (MT) has had, and how helpful it could be in any classes will be shown.

In the first chapter definitions related to mother tongue and foreign language based on research will be presented. In addition to this, the three connotations that language has: language as structure, language as a discourse, and language as ideology based on Kumaravadivelu's vision will be discussed.

Regarding the origins and use of the MT in different FL teaching methods, the second chapter will show the role that mother tongue has had in traditional methods, communicative methods, and the post-method era based on investigations made by experts in methodology such as Celce-Murcia and Kumaravadivelu.

The advantages and disadvantages of using the mother tongue in the foreign language classes are described in the third chapter. Here, the researchers from different experts in different places around the world who agree with the fact that using the L1 in FL lessons can have a positive effect in the learners' learning process will be analyzed.

In the fourth chapter some strategies in which the mother tongue is used as a tool for teaching a foreign language will be proposed. Moreover, this chapter will show how the MT can be an ally in the FL class instead of obstructing or disturbing the process of the FL learning.

To conclude this introduction and to continue with the main item of this paper it is important to cite the following quotation which "reflects" the view about the use of the MT in the foreign Language classes:

“Monolingual lessons without the help of the mother tongue are extrinsically possible; however, monolingual learning is an intrinsic impossibility. No one can simply turn off what they already know. We postulate that the mother tongue is 'silently' present in beginners, even when lessons are kept monolingual.” (Butzkamm, 2003, p. 24)

Mother Tongue versus Foreign Language

To understand the role and the incidence that L1 has in the FL classes, it is important to define some relevant terms such as mother tongue and foreign language.

Nazary (2008, p. 163) states some differences between mother tongue and second language. According to him, the first difference between both is that the mother tongue learning is something inevitable; whereas, in humans beings there is no an inherit ability for learning a second language. The second difference is that the mother tongue learning is part of the whole maturational process of children while the second language learning process is given after such maturational process has been completed. The third difference he notes is that children start learning their mother tongue with no other language behavior whereas in the case of the second language children have a language learnt so they have a stated language behavior. And finally, he

notes that motivation to learn a first language is different from motivation to learn a second language.

Definition of Mother Tongue

First of all, it is important to define MT; at this point Atkinson (1987) argues: The mother tongue (L1) is the language learnt by each person when they are in his/her early years; moreover, it's his/her natural instrument not only for communication but for thought too." According to him, the human being acquires the MT in the first years and uses it as a tool for getting and sharing information that gives a functional sense allowing interaction. So, a person makes a scheme of what he/she wants to say on his/her mind before transmitting it in verbal communication.

Definition of Foreign Language

Foreign language is the language which is learnt in a formal way by children and adults in foreign language classes in schools, academies or universities and students have a minor dominion of it. Moreover, learning a FL takes time because it is a long term process, and needs enough effort, meaningful use and wide interaction by part of learners (Da Silva & Signoret, 2005).

Experts call it (FL) in different ways:

- Second Language
- Foreign Language
- Non-native Language
- Secondary Language

- Non dominant language
- Target Language

Experts, in many of their research, do not mark the difference between second language (L2) and foreign language (FL); however, the L2 can be learnt through natural interactions with native speakers or being in the foreign environment while the FL is learnt in foreign classes (Da Silva & Signoret, 2005).

To make a difference among first language (L1), second language (L2) and foreign language (FL), Da Silva and Signoret (2005) state the following box:

Chart 2.1. Psychological processes and circumstances of verbal learning

Process	Language	Subject	Situation
Acquisition	First L1	Children	Natural
Acquisition	Second L2	Children	Natural
Acquisition	Second L2	Adults	Natural
Informal Learning	Second L2	Adults	Natural
Formal Learning	Second L2	Adults	Scholar
Formal Learning	Foreign FL	Children	Scholar
Formal Learning	Foreign FL	Adults	Scholar

Taken from: Temas Sobre la Adquisición de una Segunda Lengua. Da Silva & Signoret (2005).

Even when the difference between L2 and FL is not widely expressed some theorists think that both terms do not have a significant difference but its development process are not the same; the kind of input or linguistic information received to achieve proficiency in verbal behaviorism

in the second language is very different from the proficiency reached in the foreign language.

The L2 is developed in situations similar to the acquisition of the mother tongue while the FL is learned in language classes (Da Silva & Signoret, 2005).

As a way to have a wider vision of what learning a FL means, it is relevant to know how language is conceived in a human being's life. To do this, this document will take as a reference the classification proposed by Kumaravadivelu where the language is seen from three different perspectives: as a structure, as a discourse, as an ideology.

Language as a Structure, Discourse, and Ideology

To determine the role that the L1 has in the FL learning it is important to know how the MT has been present throughout our lives. Here, the fact that language is considered as a system formed by codes that create a universal grammar (Chomsky, 1980 cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2006) as discourse that makes intra-personal communications possible as well as the way people think when using the language, is going to be explained in a wider and clearer way.

Language as structure

To talk about language as a structure, Kumaravadivelu (2006) cites Chomsky (1959, 1965, p. 5) who during his research determined that human beings have a “Universal Grammar”, an “innate ability,” and a “language faculty” thanks to their genetic structure which makes them capable of learning any language. This nativist position (according to Chomsky) states that all human beings have a predisposition for language acquisition and that such a universal grammatical knowledge guides and helps children to create grammatical sentences in their L1. Considering that, Chomsky (1959, 1965) concluded that all adult native speakers of a language are able to produce and understand utterances they have never said or heard before; that mean

that people can produce an infinite number of sentences from a finite number of grammatical rules. On the other hand, Chomsky (1959, 1965), concluded that every child, without any neurological or biological deficiencies, acquires a language quickly without any formal instruction.

Finally, Chomsky (1959, 1965) distinguished the ‘grammatical competence’ from ‘pragmatic competence’, arguing that “The first one was the knowledge of form and meaning and the second was the knowledge of conditions and manner of appropriate use . . .” (Chomsky, 1980 cited by Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 6). He looked at human language as a cognitive psychological mechanism with an internal grammar inside of the human being and which helps children to know how other grammar rules work after knowing the way their own grammar works; for that reason, Chomsky does not see the human language only as a communicative tool for social interaction but as a mechanism which could facilitate the understanding and learning of any language.

Language as discourse

The term discourse is defined by Celce-Murcia & Olshtain (2000 cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 6) as:

“an instance of spoken or written language that has describable internal relationships of form and meaning (e.g., words, structures, cohesion) that relate coherently to an external communicative function or purpose and a given audience/interlocutor”

Discourse appeared to show that language is not only a disconnected and decontextualized division of phonology, syntax, and semantics but a connected and

contextualized unit of ‘language use’ which makes the understanding and comprehension of information given to an audience possible.

Halliday (1973, cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2006) defined language as sets of options which are available to the speaker–hearer in social contexts; for this reason he looks at language as the source which makes communication in any society available. Additionally, Halliday (1973) argues that language communication is the result of the interplay between the three ‘macrofunctions’ that himself has distinguished into the language: the ideational, the interpersonal, and textual functions of language. Moreover, he argues that learning a language involves “learning to mean”, that means that, it is not only necessary to know a code but to use it correctly in a communicative situation. At this point, Hymes (1972) adjoins that communicative competence is to know how to express oneself into a communicative environment through a process that depends on knowledge and usage, and consists on grammatical and sociolinguistic competences which manage communication.

Language as ideology

Ideology is “a systematic body of ideas, organized from a particular point of view” (Kress & Hodge, 1979 cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2006 p.11). Taking into account that ideology comes from each person; each one has a different point of view from a particular topic and each one uses his/her own understanding to organize ideas for transmitting them. Everyone has his own point of view depending on the situations they are facing that means that ideology is the difference among the several thoughts people have. With their ideology people make part of an environment where sometimes other people will be in agreement with he/she or sometimes people could think different and have different ways to react, way to act, etc.

Thompson (cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2006 p.12) argues “to study ideology is to study the ways in which meaning serves to establish and sustain relations of domination”. As it was mentioned before, a person has his/her own thoughts, his/her own ideology; this is which makes the inter-relationships among people possible. According to him the ideology of language requires to know how meaning is constructed by symbolic forms in everyday sentences to complex images and texts to allow establishing and sustaining relations with people.

The anthropologist Kroskrity (cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2006 p. 12) suggested that language ideologies consist on the following four converging dimensions:

First, language ideologies denote that language and discourse are constructed in the interests of a specific social group; second, language ideologies are multiple because of the social divisions (class, gender, generations, etc.) within sociocultural groups; third, members vary the degree of awareness of local language ideologies; and finally, participants’ language ideologies mediate between social structures and forms of talk.

In education, analysts of the critical discourse take language teaching as a medium for making learners conscious about the inequalities they have to face and to develop the ability to overcome them. They advise that instruction in language awareness “should not push learners into oppositional practices which condemn them to disadvantage and marginalization; it should equip them with the capacities and understanding which are preconditions for meaningful choice and effective citizenship in the domain of language” (Fairclough, 1995, cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2006 p.15).

Now, after knowing the definitions and conceptions about language, it is important to start talking about the role that the L1 has had in the teaching-learning process.

The Role of Mother Tongue throughout History

The use of the Mother Tongue was accepted in many of the traditional methods of the language teaching; even in some of them it was almost obligatory. However, in some others, the use of the Mother Tongue was less used and even it was seen as a process which only interfered with the learning process.

In the 19th Century the grammar analysis sustained in the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) which proponents were Karl Ploetz, Johann Seidenstucker, H.S. Ollendorf and Johann Meidinger (as cited in Celce-Murcia, 2001) appeared. Here bilingual teaching was necessary and almost obligatory and the written skill was more relevant than the spoken skill, for that reason instruction was given in the students' native language and there was little use of the target language (Celce-Murcia, 1991). Hui-chin & Shih-chieh, (2010) add that the process' purpose was that students were good at grammar translation and a well-developed reading and writing skills rather than the oral communication skill. Richards and Rogers (2001) state that Grammar is presented in a deductive way, and there is explicit explanation of rules and forms where learners memorize grammar rules and vocabulary with their translation equivalents which means that teacher uses L1 to make meanings clear. Later, Weschler (1997 cited in Nazary, 2008, p 141) modified the GTM and proposed the called "Functional-Translation" method. Here the emphasis is firstly on the understanding and conveying the meaning of ideas which are most useful for students and the use of the MT is not a matter of shame by part of teachers neither of students, the important thing in this method is to reach the proposed goal.

Charles Curran proposes the Community Language Learning in 1970; here the L1 is used to provide security to students. MT in this method is like a bridge which connects what learners

already know with things they do not know yet. Here, students say utterances in their MT and the teacher whispers the meaning of the sentence in the FL, then the student knows the correct pronunciation and this process reduces anxiety in students. Also, directions in class and sessions during which students express their feelings and are understood are conducted in their L1 (Nazary, 2008, p.101-102).

In the Natural Approach (1970) whose proponents are Krashen and Terrell, the MT is used to make input comprehensible in order to students speak fluently later; its purpose is to help beginners become intermediates to speak fluently afterwards. Finally, Lewis proposes the Lexical Approach (1993), in this method L1 is used to clarify word meanings to make clear the sense of utterances. Its purpose is to teach a FL through learning theory, collocations, word combinations and chunks. In the same way, Suggestopedia uses the Mother Tongue for translation purposes.

Then, from the 70s until 90s the communicative methods appeared; in this epoch there were different methods that permitted the use of the L1 in the FL classes but in a narrowed way. The first method mentioned here is the Communicative Language Teaching (1970) which proponents are Widdowson, Savignon, Hymes, Canale and Swaim. The L1 is not completely banned but it is not encouraged and errors are seen as natural in the FL process; this method's aim is the students' communication in the FL according to the social context, the purpose and the interlocutors.

Task Based Language Teaching (1980) its proponents are Willis, Prabhu, Feez, Crooks, Nunan, Smith, Doyle, Foster and Skehan. The objective is to make students develop their communicative skills through meaningful tasks/activities in the FL. Here the L1 is used to

provide the instructions to develop the specific tasks. In this regard, Cook (2001 cited in Scott and de la Fuente, 2008, p. 4) states “bringing the L1 back from exile . . . may liberate the task-based learning approach so that it can foster the students’ natural collaborative efforts in the classroom through their L1 as well as their L2”.

In the last years, the post-method era proposes to join different methods for teaching a FL; again the L1 is only used as a tool to clarify meaning. Schweers (1999, cited in Miles, 2004) said that the use of L1 in the FL classroom is needed to explain some aspects in the lesson. For instance, Cooperative Language Learning (1992) which proponents are Olsen and Kagan promotes the group work where students develop the target language as soon as they interact and exchange information. The usage of the MT arises as an unconscious act when interaction occurs. The teacher employs it to reinforce meaning and certain aspects the students do not understand or that are not clear.

Harbord (1992, mentioned in Butzkamm, 2007) says that translation and code-switching are natural stages of the learning process and an inevitable part of itself which have to be accepted and having as a purpose the comprehension of the structures of the new language. Moreover, scholars find in L1 an important tool to use during the FL lessons because themselves can clarify task management, determining meaning and vocabulary, and explaining grammar (Storch and Wigglesworth’s, 2003 as cited in Scott & de la Fuente, 2008).

Making the learning meaningful and easier; promoting confidence and a sense of achievement and being able to understand what is being said are some of the uses of the MT students do during FL lessons (Januleviciene’ and Kavaliauskiene’s, cited in Brooks-Lewis, 2009). Whites’ & Storch’s research shows that the necessity of employing the L1 in the FL

classrooms is not only by part of the students but by part of teachers and its use increases depending on the complexity of the lessons and tasks. Lorenzo et al. (2009 cited in Mendez & Pavón, 2012) demonstrated that student who used the L1 as a help in the FL learning process had a better understanding and storing of academic contents than the students who only used the L2 during the class.

Dabène (1996 mentioned in Varshney, 2005, p. 3) states that the influence of the MT not only permits learners to learn syntax or grammar, but it gives students several metalinguistic tools that they can use in order to discover new structures. Varshney (2005, based on Lüdi, 1993 & Cambra Giné, 2003) argues that the students' L1 serves as a tool for the communication and the learning but she adds that teaching only in the FL could make dissapear the people's previous experiences. Besides, Varshney (2005) adds that taking into account classroom management, a big part of teachers make sure that the L1 gives them the opportunity of providing quickly information about the development of activities and investing more time on the language learning. Finally, Varshney adds that when teachers do not give equivalents in students MT, surely learners are going to look for a translation on dictionaries or with their classmates; this process makes learners to evade future inappropriate uses of words or even misunderstanding in student's conversations.

Now, after talking about the use of the L1 in the FL teaching-learning process through the time in different methods, it is likewise important to talk about the advantages and disadvantages that the use of L1 by students in the class could have. Here, different authors such as Nazary, Butzkamm, Auerbach, Scott & de la Fuente carried out different researches in order to show how the students' MT can help them during lessons depending on the difficulty of the themes and the

disadvantages students could face when they overuse L1 in the FL classes.

Advantages of Using the MT in FL Classes

To talk about the advantages of using L1 in FL classes it is important to cite some authors such as Auerbach (1993, p.18) who believes that “when the native language is used, practitioners, researchers, and learners consistently report positive results” .In her research she shows her agreement with the use of the L1 in the foreign language learning, arguing that the use of the MT throws an affirmative outcome. Dujmovic (2007 cited in Nazary, 2008) states that the fact of excluding the students’ MT from the FL classroom to maximize students exposure to the FL is not necessarily productive. Atkinson (cited in Nazary, 2008, pp. 140-141) proposed the called “Judicious use of theory” where he argues that the students’ L1 is a vital source and also a communicative tool not only for students but also for teachers. Additionally, Auerbach (1993) states that the use of the L1 by part of students is because they do not have the enough proficiency in the L2 so before speaking in the L2 they start processing their ideas in their MT and Butzkamm (2003) adds that the time teachers use on translation is not a waste of time because this process prepare students to take risks above all when speaking and at the same time to comprehend the different aspects of the language.

Nuttall (1996, p.187, cited in Nazary, 2008, p. 142) appreciates the importance of using the students' L1 in the reading skill, when there is discussion of the development of worksheets and in reading summary tests. He defends the students' use of the MT arguing that:

“Inability to express themselves (students) in the target language necessarily limits both the kind and the quality of the responses students

give. It is quite possible that students who are permitted to use their L1 in responding will explore the text more accurately and thoroughly than those who are restricted to target language responses” (p.187) .

Cook (2001, p. 418 mentioned in Scott & de la Fuente, 2008, p 101) shows us that L1 can be used in task-based learning approaches: “Through the L1, students may explain the task to each other, negotiate roles they are going to take, or check their understanding or production of language against their peers”. Students feel more confidence when they use their MT while developing FL lessons, making them feel they are doing the activity in the correct way.

“Using the mother tongue as a resource for the support of language learning has gained currency recently as translation seems to promote the three qualities considered to be essential for language learning: accuracy, clarity and flexibility” (Ross, 2000 as mentioned in Suntharesan, 2012, p. 3). According to Ross, the use of the L1 is fundamental in the FL learning for learners because it makes the learning precise, understandable and bendable which could help students gain confidence not only in their own language but in the language they are learning.

In occasions L1 can be used to save time, to prevent misunderstanding and frustration, and also the MT can be used to support rather than sabotage FL development (Spada & Lightbown, 1999). Arguing that “the L1-L2 connection is an indisputable fact of life”, Stern (mentioned in Kumaravadevelu, 2006, p. 188) gives three reasons why L1 should be allowed in the FL classroom: First, when a new language is learnt, there is always a resort to the language already known. Second, first language serves as a frame or as a reference system for FL learning. And third, the native language and the native culture are deeply in a person’s life; so acquiring a new language requires a personal adjustment. He suggests that MT may be useful, at the initial

stages of language learning, to fall back on comparisons between L1 and FL and explanations of FL in L1 terms.

“The mother tongue is the womb from which the second language is born” (Deller and Rinvoluturi, 2002, p. 2) this means that the L1 is a guide for learning a FL, the reason is because learners start learning a foreign language based on their own MT, looking for similarities and differences between them and analyzing structures, syntax, grammar, pronunciation, coherence, sense of words and meaning of single words and complete utterances. In agreement with them, Brooks and Donato (mentioned in Scott & de la Fuente, 2008) consider the use of L1 as a normal process but additionally they say that MT is the assistant of the FL and vice versa, so this process makes students learn with the security of understanding what they are learning. And in the same sense, Swain (1985, as quoted in Holthouse, n.d., p. 2) adds that L1 usage is a normal psycholinguistic process that facilitates FL production and permeates learners to initiate verbal communication; he ends ensuring that “If we did not keep making correspondences between FL items and MTs items, we would never learn foreign languages at all”.

Hammerly (1991 mentioned in Butzkamm, 2003, p. 13) states that the appropriate use of MT in FL learning can be twice as efficient without any loss in effectiveness; L1 is a tool that facilitates the students learning and makes it meaningful for them, that means that what it is important and significant for them is internalized in an easy way and the MT makes this possible. Also, teachers have to take into consideration that in the FL classroom, both L1 and L2 help each other, promoting each other reciprocally; when students do not know a word, expression or phrase, they resort to their MT in order to complete the activity they are doing (Saunders, 1988 and Tracy, 1996 quoted in Butzkamm, 2003, p. 4).

Adding the L1 use is a spontaneous strategy which permits learners to evade frustration and cognitive strain (Scott and de la Fuente, 2008). Students translate the text, review grammar rules, review the aim of the task, and plan what to say in the oral part but L1 also could reduce anxiety, sustain collaborative interaction, and foster their curiosity to learn new terminology and vocabulary. The use of L1 is like a 'skeleton' for learners' learning; if they understand the differences and similarities between MT and FL their learning efficiency will increase. Moreover, it is like the first process people do when they are learning a language but it does not include knowing concepts or the whole world once again as when they were children, only reaching the desired language proficiency (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009 cited in He, 2012, p. 11).

When students do not know or are unfamiliar with a new approach or a new item in the FL, the teacher who does not give an explanation in L1 surely will cause a significant student lack of motivation (Harbord, 1992 cited in Holthouse, n.d. p. 7). If students understand the reason of doing an unfamiliar activity they will view it as beneficial and will accept it; for that reason they are going to make a genuine effort to do it.

Furthermore, Dujmovic (cited in Nazary, 2008) states that bilingual/bicultural teachers enrich the process of the FL learning by using not only the mother tongue but also L1 culture as resources to teach a FL. Gill (2005, mentioned in Nazary, 2008, p. 143) mentions that the role of mother tongue is making comparison and contrast and with a judicious use of the L1 (connotation, collocation, idiomatic usages, sociocultural norms, intonation, gestures) serves for discussing the cross-cultural issues.

As we can see, the use of the MT has some advantages when teaching-learning a

language. Now it is also important to know the disadvantages that the L1 use involves in the FL lessons, to do it, different authors state their opinions about the MT use and the problems it can carry out.

Disadvantages of Using the MT in the FL Classes

As equal as advantages, there are also some arguments against the use of the MT in the FL classes above all by part of teachers. Turnbull (2001 cited in Timor, 2012) argues that students do not benefit when teachers over-rely on using their students' L1 especially when the teacher is the only linguistic model and main source of FL input, because the extent use of the MT makes the learners lose the chance to learn and to talk the new language.

The first reason not to use the MT in the classroom is the over-use of the L1 which will slow down the development of the L2 proficiency among students. (Atkinson, 1987). Trusting too much in the MT could inhibit the development of the FL in the students' learning process because of the reduced exposure or the totally immersion in the FL (Spada & Lightbow, 1999). Atkinson (1987) states that teachers should have caution in utilizing the MT in the FL classroom by noting some undesirable outcomes such as: first, teacher and/or students could feel that they do not have to understand any item until translation. Second, teacher and/or students fail when making distinctions between equivalence of form, of semantics and pragmatics trough and inaccurate translation. And third, learners speak in class all the time in their MT even when they are able of expressing what they mean in FL.

In addition to that, Holthouse, (n.d.) states that that communication in FL breaks down when students leave the classroom because they only hear their MT spoken around them, so they do not have the motivation neither the necessity to use FL at all; for that reason it is extremely

difficult for students to resist the temptation to fall back on their L1. There is a relationship between comprehensible input in L2 and proficiency in this one, so L1 should be excluded from the classroom; however, students use their MT at home so the proficiency is not successful (Krashen, 1985 cited in Miles, 2004, p).

Additionally, this over-use of the MT in the classroom is not made only by students but also by teachers; however, teachers often feel uncomfortable or guilty when students are talking in the MT. Teacher's aim is to improve students' FL and it could not be possible if students are speaking in the MT (Carless, 2007). Moreover, when tasks involve a lot of MT use, teachers feel frustrated because they cannot monitor performance on the use of language adequately and it will seem as if they were monitoring MT usage in the classroom (Carless, 2002). Teachers feel they are not encouraging students to talk in the L2 and that they are motivating them only to do translations, and teachers suppose that the way to learn a L2 is the total exposure to it and that learning a FL through MT do not prepare students to face real conversations.

Another disadvantage about using the MT in a wide way in the classroom is that teachers give lessons in the MT most of time; so, there is not an adequate environment for teaching or learning and students are not exposed to the FL the right time. For this reason, teachers think that it is urgent to reduce the use of the L1 in the FL classroom because this use could cause problems in the L2 learning (Lado, 1957 mentioned in Halasa & Al- Manaseer, n.d.).

Furthermore, Krashen (1985, mentioned in Miles, 2004, p. 7) argued that the best way to learn a FL was to expose them to the foreign language (FL), teaching the entire lesson in the L2, from what he says there was a specific relationship between comprehensible input and proficiency in L2, so there was not the necessity of using the learners' L1 and it should be

excluded from the classroom; nonetheless, himself argued that students used their MT at home so the proficiency was not successful.

As an additional feature, language teaching practitioners assume that errors and difficulties made by learners when learning a FL are a result of MT interference (Halasa & Al-Manaseer, n.d.).

In the chapter below, the advantages and disadvantages of the MT use have been explained, we can think that the lack or the over use of it could be a negative factor in the learning process, so, we can say that the ideal is to find mechanisms which let the use of the MT without overusing it; for that reason in the following paragraphs we present some strategies and uses for the L1 in order to strengthen the learning process.

Strategies for Learning a FL Using the MT

Stern (1992, cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2006) talks about an explicit and an implicit strategy. The explicit strategy could help learners to focus on the characteristics of the language and acquire a conscious knowledge of this one. Then, they will be conscious about how the language functions, what words mean, how meaning is conveyed depending on the context, and other aspects of the language. The implicit strategy takes into account that language is very complex and it cannot be fully described; even if the entire system is described, it would be impossible to keep all the rules in mind and relying on it must have a realistic learning. The two strategies can be combined, but the mix will be varied according to the language topic, the course objectives, the characteristics of the students, and the needs of the teaching situation”.

Besides, learners also may differ on their preference for explicit or implicit language learning, depending on their age, maturity, and previous educational experience.

Explicit	Implicit
rational /formal/ intelletual	Intuitive
deliberate	subconcious acquisition
Analysis	incidental
Cognitivism	global understanding
inferencing	Behaviorism
rationalist approach	mimicry and memory
systematic study	empiricist approach exposure to language

Taken from: Understanding Language Teaching, from Method to Postmethod. Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006).

In this model, Stern (2006) shows the features which are located in the explicit side and in the implicit side; also, he shows that there is an interaction between explicit and implicit knowledge. An explicit strategy helps learners focus on the characteristics of the language and acquire a conscious and conceptual knowledge of it. They can use that knowledge to know how the language functions, what words mean, how meaning changes according to the context, and so on. An implicit strategy takes into account the fact that language is really too much complex to be described completely, and even if the entire system could be described, it would be impossible to keep all the rules in mind and to have an effective learning of it.

There is a cross-lingual strategy, according to Kumaravadivelu (2006) who believes in compound bilingualism, where the knowledge and the L2 are acquired through the use of L1. The L1 is the medium to reach the knowledge of our environment; it is moreover, the medium to learn a foreign language. Throughout our MT it is possible to gain knowledge of another language, the MT makes our brains doing relations and comparisons between what we already know and the things we are learning. This referent or MT is also a help to differentiate words that might be similar in both languages but have a different meaning in real life.

Swain (1998 as mentioned in Scott & de la Fuente, 2008, p. 70) defined the uses of L1 and L2 mixed as “any part of a dialogue in which students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or self-correct”. In FL lessons, it is a normal behavior that students talk in their MT while they are constructing dialogues, writing texts or oral activities; when they mix both the MT and the FL they are doing their own feedback resorting on their L1 and having their classmates as a help.

Carless (2007) in his research named "Student use of the MT in task-based language classroom" made an interview to different teachers in a university in Honk Kong (China), here he took note of some stratagems that teachers adopted in order to encourage students to speak in the FL without banishing totally their L1 from the classroom: The first one was to state ‘language monitors’ in the classroom; one student by group of students whose role is taking notes about what students say in their MT and to help them to translate the utterances into the FL, the advantage here is that students learn the FL even when using their L1. Another strategy reported for a teacher was the fact of involving materials and guiding questions in the TL, here students discuss in their MT and then with the teacher's aid students convert their ideas into the FL in an

oral or written way.

The book *General ESL Strategies* (1990) also gives different strategies for teachers that can be applied in the FL classroom with the only aim to make students feel confident when learning a FL, here are some of them:

- To use the MT to promote linguistic and academic development while ensuring comprehension.
- Content can be taught in L2 if necessary but it must be made comprehensible; otherwise, give it on their MT, for that reason use vocabulary boxes, didactic activities, children's literature, games and hands-on experiences to teach concepts and vocabulary and make sure students are receiving content instruction.
- Brainstorm to see what the students already know about the topic.
- Provide background information or concept development if necessary using the L1 to ensure comprehension.

The use of the MT during the class can save time and prevent misunderstanding of terminologies or activities avoiding that our students feel shame when not knowing or comprehending a determinate activity. In order to evade it, Dodson (1967 quoted in Butzkamm, 2003) invented the sandwich-procedure for teaching dialogues (in the oral part). In this process teacher gives the meaning of the sentences by giving its meaning in the MT and repeats the utterance in the FL again.

Halasa and Al-Manaseer (n.d.) give some methods to help learners to acquire the FL without banishing the MT from the classroom, they are:

- 1.1.1. The Alternating Language Approach: this method emphasizes on reciprocity; two

languages are involved without being in a classroom situation. Students had the chance to learn each other's language. The success of this approach was in the students' satisfaction and improvement of their oral skill. This approach is limited and it requires two or more balanced groups.

1.1.2. The new concurrent method: This method allows the teacher to switch from one language to another according to particular rules (Jacobson, 1990 mentioned in Halasa & Al-Manaseer, n.d.). Teacher can switch when praising or scolding students. Classroom becomes real L2 teaching, and does not pretend being in a monolingual situation, L1 can also be used when introducing new vocabulary that cannot be understood by using a synonym or explanations in the FL.

1.1.3. Community Language Learning: Students talk to each other spontaneously in L2, but with the aid of their L1; teacher translates words or phrases into L2 when it is necessary until realize about students' progress so they become less dependent on L1 translation.

1.1.4. Dodson's (1967) Bilingual Method: Here, the teacher reads a sentence in L2 and then interprets it into MT when it is needed. Next, students copy what the teacher had said. The teacher tests the students' understanding by saying the sentence in L1 requiring an answer in L2. In this bilingual method students get the meaning of the sentence as a whole.

The MT may serve as an opportunity to create collaborative dialogues (Anton and DiCamilla 1998; Swain and Lapkin 2000 quoted in Carless, 2007). Halliday (1994, cited in Carless, 2007) argues that students working in groups can speak in their MT about a text and if through this process they are producing hypotheses about the language, so what they are doing is communicative.

Toward more intermediate and advanced stages, it is important to opt for intralingual techniques. Stern (cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 207) offers some useful intralingual and cross-lingual classroom techniques for different stages of the learners' FL learning. These activities propose to change the typical repetition of sounds, words, phrases, and sentences, into the use of verbal utterances based on real objects or pictorial representations, to drills and exercise, to dictation, to games, to communicative activities, to residence in an L2 environment. These techniques help the students to be in contact with a L2 environment in varying degrees. Stern (cited in Kumravadivelu, 2006) also recommends translation and interpretive activities; these process involves L2–L1 translation and use of a L2 to L1 dictionary, then the process will include introducing and summarizing an L2 text in L1, explaining the context of a text in L1; discussing in L1 the significance of an L2 text as final results of the suitability of that process.

Another strategy is 'functional translation' which consists on transferring meaning into English and not translating word by word. This strategy involves translation exercises of words or phrases in context, in this manner teacher can make that students' pay attention to the limitations of direct translation. It is also important, that the vocabulary of the language be from contemporary sources which make the language relevant for learners (Holthouse, n.d., p. 8).

The MT can play a constructive role in helping students to express themselves. A useful technique is to have students working in groups of three where two of them are discussing about a topic in the FL and the third member is taking notes of MT usage; each member would be a note taker. Finally, teacher revises the lists of L1 use by part of students trying to show the students' ways of expressing their ideas but in the FL. Moreover, this activity would involve the use of simplification or approximate synonyms and antonyms in order to make learners express

in a clear way (Holthouse, n.d., p. 9). Taking notes in the L1 while listening to lectures, tales or songs in the FL is a very useful strategy; these notes can help students to study and have a clear sense and meaning of the activity in a future test according to Koren (1997, cited in Nazary, 2008).

Nazary (2008) proposes to do flashcards where students can study and remember the meaning and the correct use of the words. He proposes 7 steps to do a useful flashcard, first students have to divide the flashcards in two parts the front page and the back page; in the front page students will write: (1) Word entity, (2) pronunciation, (3) parts of speech (ex. adj. or adv.), on the back page students will write (4) synonyms and antonyms of the word, (5) dictionary example, (6) learner's example and finally (7) L1 definition.

Front page	Back page
<p><i>Assist (v)</i> [1]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (<i>ə sɪst</i>) [2] • <i>Assistance (n)</i> [3] • <i>Assistant (n/adj)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To help / helper / Supporter</i> [4] • <i>We will assist you in finding somewhere to live / can I be of any assistance?</i> [5] • <i>When I do my homework, my dad is always ready to assist me</i> [6] • <i>باري کردن - دستيار</i> [7]

Nation (2003) encourages the use of bilingual cards, L1-L2 word pairs and L1 translation as the best ways for increasing vocabulary learning in students. He adds “forget all the criticism you have heard about rote learning and translation; research has repeatedly shown that such learning is very effective” (Laufer, Meara, & Nation, 2005, p. 6). The research made by Hamin and Majid (2006, cited in Nazary, 2008, p. 142-143) noticed a real improvement in the foreign

language writing skill when students took ideas generated in their MT.

Other functions of L1 in classroom activities are as follow: conversation activities, discussion of intensive reading, preparation for writing, and some fluency tasks, awareness-raising activities, contrasting L1 and L2, research in L1, presentation in L2 (Nation, 2003; Prodromou, 2002 cited in Nazary, 2008, p. 144).

Conclusions

The mother tongue has had many methodological implications in the different methods for teaching a foreign language; moreover, it has had and an important role and depending on the method, one can say if it is useful or not useful it the foreign language process.

The use of the mother tongue has been an item of discussion since many years ago. Some methods along the foreign language teaching-learning process' history do not agree and delete sometimes the usage of the L1 in the FL classes. However, this paper has made a compilation of some of the methods which have the use of the MT as a tool in the foreign language teaching-learning process.

The review of the different methods in the FL teaching-learning process throughout the history gives us a general idea about the wide or few quantity of use of the MT that each one of them has; moreover, this same revision throws the positive and negative features when using the MT in the FL classes, the advantages and disadvantages of its use and finally, this paper suggests some strategies that FL teachers can adopt when definitely they cannot drive or organize their class in the foreign language only.

The specific uses of the MT has been established in this paper, the first one is when teachers teach grammar which involve difficult structures or words, phrases or sentences which

meaning cannot be clearly stated in the FL, in this situation teachers should use students' MT in order to make them understand structures and its purpose or to make clear the meaning of the sentences, phrases or words.

Another situation is when teachers give instructions into the classroom. It is important for teachers to be sure about what they want their students do, in this case the use of the MT to clarify doubts, to reorganize the group and to establish specific duties is the best way. Finally, when teachers want to know if students understood the purpose or the aim of a determinate activity they should use the MT.

Making a comparative paragraph, one can notice that the quantity of negative aspects and positive aspects are almost the same. While the use of the MT in the FL classes helps students to understand in the clearest and the best way the aim of a determinate item in each activity and helps them to develop the activity in a coordinate way seems an advantage, the overuse of it (L1) in the FL class, not only by part of students but by part of teachers, makes the class lost the real FL environment and the opportunity to learn more and that is a disadvantage.

While the use of the L1 in the FL learning process makes students feel confident when speaking because they evade frustration or "embarrassment" could be seen as an advantage, the over-rely on MT by part of students makes them to fall in the error of thinking about the idea that they do not have the necessity of using the FL for communicative purposes which is obviously a disadvantage.

While the use of the mother tongue in the foreign language classes makes students feel and live their own culture inside of the classroom looks like an advantage, the fact of being afraid by part of the students about the idea of "abandoning" their own culture and learning a

new culture through the FL is a disadvantage.

The strategies proposed above give the teachers some ideas to state in their classrooms in order to make their students to use their MT each time less and less but without making them both (teachers and students) feel guilty or embarrassing when using the L1 in the FL classes or when students do not know how to say, to pronounce or to explain a word, phrase or sentence. Also, even when one could say that the use of the L1 in the FL classes is not necessary, and it is seen as a waste of time or sloth by part of teachers, the researches cited above show that the use of the L1 is not only necessary but it is a normal process in scholars.

The research cited above talk about the use of the MT as a tool in the FL learning process when students do not have the enough vocabulary or the proficiency in the FL. Mother Tongue is required for the activity, if students are not linguistically capable of developing a chosen activity surely they are going to code-switch between both languages L1 and FL. Bhushan (2010 mentioned in Suntharesan, 2012) states that the use of the L1 might be for the following aspects: explaining difficult grammar, giving instructions which might not be understood in the FL, checking comprehension and saving time which can then be used for communicative works in the FL.

However, even when the use of the MT is a natural process and also serves as a useful tool in the FL learning, there are some disadvantages when using the MT in big quantities due to the lack of input in the FL for students, the lack of confidence by part of students when using the FL due to the inadequate environment teachers or school give to the learners, and finally the frustration not only by part of the teachers but by part of the students because of the very few use of the FL in the classroom with communicative purposes. In general terms, the use of the MT has

to be in a moderate way, only in this way this one (MT) doesn't make interference in the learning process or decreases the quantity and above all the quality of the input in the L2.

To accept if the MT used in the FL classrooms has or not effective or negative effects on students' learning is a decision made by each teacher depending on the advances in the teaching-learning process ; he/she has to decide if it is acceptable to use the MT in a wide way or to control the use of it. Thus, the use of the L1 doesn't have to be understood as an undemanding strategy by part of the teacher or by lacking of knowledge of that language but as a resource that teacher uses to give "tools" to the students with different strategies, techniques and procedures he/she considers necessary to help students to facilitate the learning of the FL; taking the reflection above into account, we can say that MT is a valuable tool to help students to have advantages in the FL acquisition.

It is a reality that the use of the MT has been present on the FL teaching since many years ago and it has been also, a tool which teachers use nowadays for giving instructions, so its use cannot be considered an interference due to the fact that in many cases can be a facilitator tool for the FL learning process; according to this one can say that the adequate or inadequate use of the L1 depends on the quantity, the way, the kind and the methodology in which the MT is used in the FL classroom.

Finally, even when mother tongue is a very useful tool in the foreign language classes, Colombia is a country where teachers make an over-use of it and this action doesn't permit students' proficiency in the FL. For future papers it is important to give more solutions, techniques or strategies in order to evade over-rely on the MT in foreign classes not only by part of students but also by part of teachers.

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