

University of El Salvador
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The Use of the Mother Tongue (L1) in Foreign Language Classes

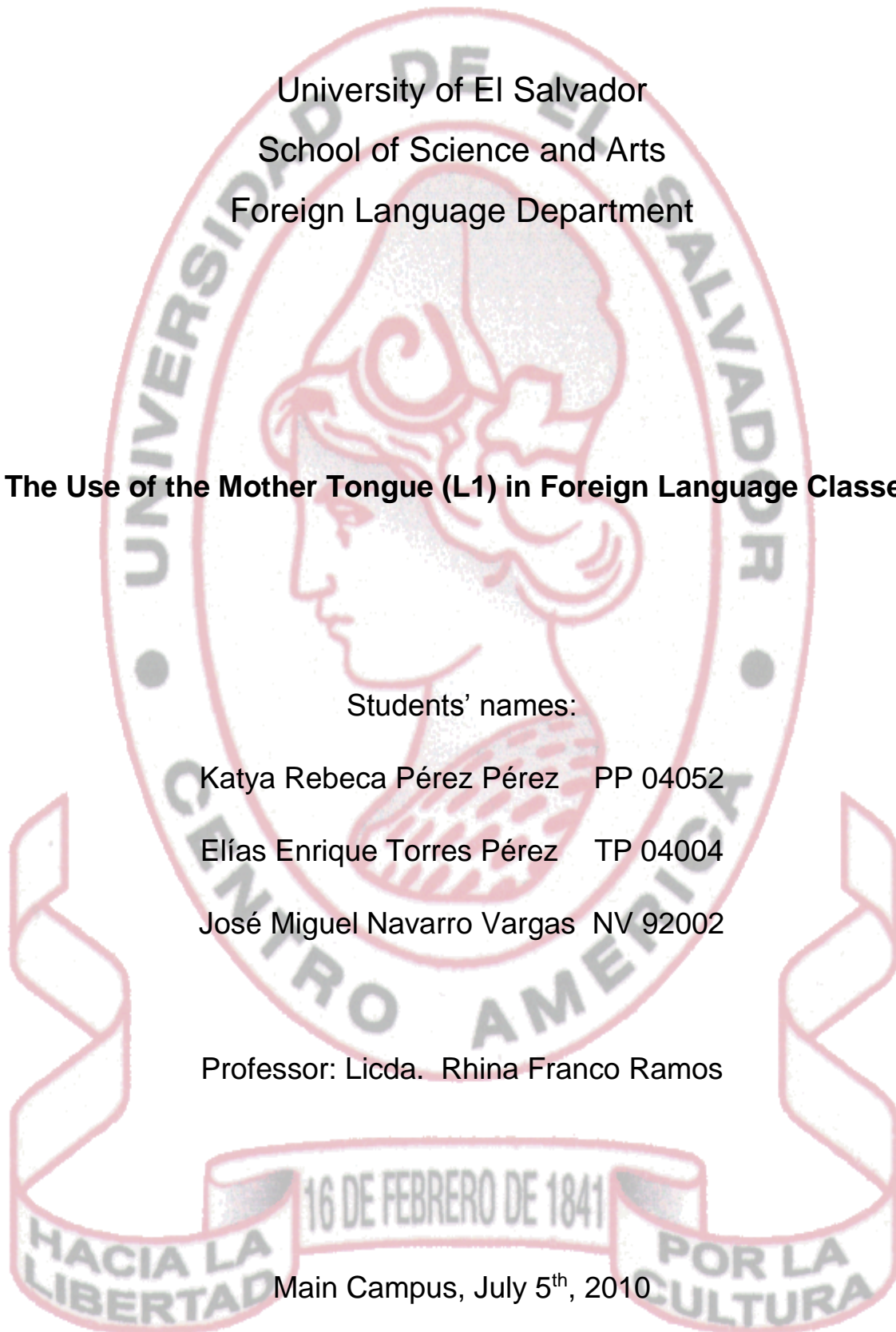
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I. INTRODUCTION

Learning a language requires the implementation of different strategies such as the use of the mother tongue (L1) that facilitates learning and teaching in foreign language classrooms. This leads us to two different perspectives on learning a new language: the linguists and researchers that fully support the mother tongue use in foreign language (FL) classes, and the others that support only the target language (L2) in FL contexts for a more effective way of learning and acquiring a foreign language. These two perspectives on learning a target language are widely recognized as “Monolingual Approach” (Krashen, 1981) and “Bilingual Approach” (Auerbach, 1993).

The ‘Bilingual Approach’ is currently gaining more support by incorporating the students’ L1 as a learning tool and also as a facilitator for an efficient communication. On the other hand, the ‘Monolingual Approach’ where only L2 is used within the framework of the classroom is regarded as the best way to acquire a foreign language. The exposure to language leads to learning, excluding the students’ L1 for the benefit of maximizing students’ exposure to the L2. These two approaches have been a subject to discussion whether the bilingual or the monolingual approach would fit the learners’ needs and provide a better input in order to improve language accuracy, fluency and clarity to facilitate the procedures of a foreign language learning.

According to Kavaliauskienė (2009) the modern trend of teaching languages is *“based on the communicative method which emphasizes the teaching of the target language*

through the target language. However, the idea of abandoning the native tongue is too stressful to many learners, who need a sense of security in the experience of learning a foreign language” (p.22). In the past, methods such the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), were based on the use of L1 in Foreign Language classes, however, the students were unable to speak fluently after having studied the language for a long time. This led to the idea that all use of the mother tongue in the language classrooms should be avoided. In addition, translation has been taught as uncommunicative, boring, pointless, difficult and irrelevant (Harmer, 2001: 131).

This research aims at showing the two different visions already presented on the exclusive use of the target language (L2) vs. the mother tongue (L1) use in FL classes. Nevertheless, here it is tempted to demonstrate that the latter is the one that can help students learn the foreign language more efficiently. Schweers (1999) stated that “*among the number of professionals in the field of the second language acquisition, there appears to be an increasing conviction that the first language has a necessary and facilitating role in the foreign language classrooms.*” Therefore, this research provides the insights of the use of the mother tongue as a useful teaching and learning tool for FL teachers as well as students in order to use it within foreign language acquisition environments.

This research, apart from the point of view of the theorists in favor and against the mother tongue usage contains the lived experiences of the researchers through the teaching -learning process of English and French in order to support the thesis stating that the mother tongue is a necessary tool in FL classrooms, and when it is used at the appropriate time it can help the acquisition of a foreign language. Besides, this research contains the

objectives which were set in order lead the work from the very beginning. This work comprises a justification that highlights the reasons why this subject was researched; the body of the work that gathers all the information related to the subject of study; also the methodology implemented to researching this issue and all the steps needed to fulfill this assignment based on the literature review process (Machi & Mc Evoy, 2009); and finally the bibliography containing the sources where all the data were taking from is included.

II. OBJECTIVES

A. GENERAL OBJECTIVE

1. To carry out a bibliographical research on the use of the mother tongue in foreign language classes and how this can intervene in the learning of the target language.

B. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

1. To determine how the mother tongue usage in foreign language (FL) classes has a meaningful impact on students' linguistic competences.
2. To establish whether or not the implementation of L1 in the FL classrooms hinders the learning of L2.

III. JUSTIFICATION

Nowadays, the mother tongue usage in foreign language classes is a matter of debate. For some teachers and linguists it plays an important role in the learning of a foreign language, while for their opponents it is an obstacle that must be avoided because it hinders the learning of the target language. In our country, it appears that L1 usage when learning a foreign language has not been given the relevance it should have; therefore, it was thought it would be helpful to do a research on this topic in order to raise students' and teachers' awareness on the importance of the implementation of L1 in their classes. There is also a necessity in knowing their perspectives and experiences on the use of mother tongue in FL contexts. Besides, we are aiming at exposing the arguments of the people who are in favor of the use of the native language in the classroom and the ones who are against it.

Many foreign language teachers hesitate when they have to decide if they are going to use just the target language, or if it is advisable to use the mother tongue in their classes. We have to take into account that there are teachers that go to the extremes, and for them, using L1 is almost forbidden. In contrast, other teachers overuse L1; therefore, students do not practice the new language as much as they should. That is why we have to find a balance between the amount of the mother tongue use and the foreign language usage, and its effectiveness in L2 learners.

We consider that the data of the topic can be an aid for students and teachers to increase and update their knowledge on the application of the mother tongue. This provides the information of what is known about the subject of study, which can be useful to decide how manage the target language in FL classrooms. For some teachers the use of the mother

can be very beneficial, whereas for others, its usage can be harmful. Therefore, the mother tongue role depends on the teachers' and students' perspectives. This research shows some points where using the mother tongue is accepted and very useful in the learning process according to some studies and researches carried out around the world and our own experiences as students and teachers in FL classrooms.

IV. The use of the mother tongue in Foreign Language classes

There are two opposing points of view regarding the role of the mother tongue usage in Foreign Language classes: the people favoring the use of the mother tongue in FL classrooms claim that its usage can be regarded as a learning tool when learning a second language; whereas, the opponents of using the mother tongue in foreign language environments state that learners acquire a foreign language while being exposed to the target language exclusively. Nevertheless, the use of the mother tongue in foreign language classrooms represents many advantages such as: creating an affective environment, reducing students' anxiety and stress, facilitating grammar understanding, raising awareness of the similarities and differences between the mother tongue and the target language, retaining the cultural and linguistic identity of the learner, and so on. (Schweers, 2003; Matioli, 2004; Auerbach, 1993; Piacsecka, 1988; Atkinson, 1993). Butzkamm (2003) in his article: "Death of a Dogma", states that the mother tongue is one of the greatest resources we have in FL classrooms because it provides learning and it is a language acquisition support system. All what Butzkamm points out in his work about the mother tongue usage is something that helped us a lot when we were learning the target language, in this case English and French. Therefore, we as learners of Foreign Languages consider that using the mother tongue at the appropriate time in FL classes can help the acquisition of the target language.

Researchers in favor of the exclusive use of the target language agree that the learning of L2 should be acquired the same way of L1. Thus the teacher must provide comprehensible input: focus on the message, not the form, which means that learning a language should be developed as natural as possible. For example, children learn the mother tongue just by hearing their parents speak and without the necessity of following grammatical instructions and syntax. In addition, they just imitate the sounds they hear

without taking care of oral mistakes, they learn through constant exposure to their mother tongue.

According to the famous linguist Krashen (1981), in his input hypothesis, he says that a foreign language should be acquired not learned through maximum exposure to the target language which is the way children acquire their native language. This is accomplished by the amount of comprehensible input, the amount or level of language that a student can fully understand, plus a little more provided by the teacher. Krashen states that this happens when a child or an adult acquires a language. In his theory, he suggests that the language to which learners are exposed should be as natural as possible. For example, the content the teacher teaches should not be limited to some tenses, but they should be provided with a mixture of all, just like parents use when they talk to their kids. Therefore, students can learn easily and fast as long as they are exposed to meaningful learning, and if it is interesting to them.

On the other hand, the researchers in favor of the use of the mother tongue claim that rigidly eliminating or limiting the native language does not appear to guarantee better acquisition (Mattioli, 2004). Besides, exposure alone to the target language is not enough to learn it. In this case it is suggested to apply some strategies to guarantee a better acquisition with the help of the mother tongue usage. Among these strategies can be mentioned: explanations, vocabulary, concepts in the mother tongue; or translation itself.

A. The use of translation

Advocates of the monolingual approach claim that there must be a separation between the target language and the mother tongue. They claim that mixing the two languages and

translating from one language to the other interferes with the acquisition; besides, it can cause confusion and it is likely to be counterproductive for early learners. Curtain (1991) points out that there are two main reasons why language mixing and translating are inefficient. First, if the students know that the teacher is going to use both languages, they will not engage with the target language and will patiently wait for the mother tongue version to appear. Second, the teacher who knows he or she will be clarifying or repeating in English will not expend as much effort to make the target language comprehensible” (p.46); this means that if the students know that the teacher is going to use the L1 and L2 for explaining a topic, giving instructions, and clarifying meaning they will not make an effort to understand the target language because they will get the translation from the teacher in their mother tongue. In addition, if the teacher uses the mother tongue right afterwards, he will not work hard to convey meaning, instructions, grammar explanations, in the target language; consequently, he will be less prepared to teach classes in which students will be encouraged to using the target language from the very beginning.

According to Hammer, another reason why the mother tongue should be avoided in the foreign language classroom is that learners may think that every word in the target language has its correspondent in the native language, which is not true. Some words and idiomatic expressions make sense just in one language (Harmer, 1998). In addition, he states that: “all students make mistakes at various stages of their language learning. It is part of the natural process they are going through and occurs for a number of reasons”. In the first place, the students` own language may get in the way. This is most obviously the case with ‘false friends’ – those words that sound or look the same but mean something different, such as ‘asistir’ in Spanish which means ‘attend’ in English and not ‘assist’–.

False friends are more common where the learner's language shares a common heritage with English (i. e. Romance languages)." (Harmer, p 132, 2001)

Giving pupils immediate translation is seen as one of the failure, as the immediate translation tends to create a dependency for the students (Cameron in Yolagani, 2009). Cameron, a defendant of the monolingual approach, explains that pupils will soon realize the pattern of their teacher's explanations and learn that they do not have to concentrate on, working out the meaning because the translation is predictably given afterwards. Furthermore, Cameron suggests avoiding translation and trying other techniques like using visual aids, props, textbook illustration that are used to explain a new term and clarify the words that remain confusing.

In contrast, the need for translation is supported by non-native teachers, and this can be for two possible reasons: first, they themselves have learned by using L1 too and that worked in the learning process, or just because they master both languages and they think using L1 as a learning tool facilitates their jobs saving time to everyone (Harmer 1998). According to him, Grammar-Translation was probably the most commonly used way of learning languages for hundreds of years- and it is still practiced in many situations-. Practitioners think that, by analyzing the grammar and by finding equivalents between the students' language and the language to be studied, the students will learn how the foreign language is constructed. It is certainly true that most language learners translate in their heads at various stages anyway, and we can learn a lot about a foreign language by comparing parts of it with parts of our own.

In particular, quick translation in the mother tongue can help without interrupting the flow of a conversation or even being noticed (Butzkamm, 2003). This frequently

happens in FL classroom. For example, when trying to communicate in the target language, then the learner suddenly stops and asks the teachers “*how do you say (x word) in English?*” He or she usually supplies the word and the student continues expressing his/ her ideas in the target language. When students do not know a word or expressions they are taught to paraphrase those words or ideas, which are really helpful when they have not acquired a great number of words in L2 yet, especially in basic levels. This is a good way to show us that we can make use of our existing knowledge of L2 in order to communicate. Mother tongue insertions can function as a “conversational lubricant” (Butzkamm, 1998).

In addition, translation helps to raise awareness of similarities and differences between L1 and L2. Atkinson (1993) claims that by raising one’s consciousness of the nonparallel nature of languages, the learning process becomes richer. Translation not only allows learners to think comparatively,” but it is also a real life activity” because students who learn English for their jobs will probably need to know something about translation. Furthermore, Duff (1989) expounds on the merits of translation as a language learning activity. He describes how translation can help develop three characteristics essential for language learning: flexibility, accuracy and clarity. For example, translation “trains the learners to search (flexibility) for the most appropriate words (accuracy) to convey what is meant (clarity). (Duff in Mattioli, 2004).

Teachers must raise students’ awareness of the similarities and differences of languages since the very beginning of the teaching-learning process in order to avoid misunderstandings that interfere with communication. We remember teachers that at the basic level warned us to be aware of “false friends “ which are words that seem to be just the same in our mother tongue, but in fact they have nothing to do with the ones we

associate with. For example, the verb “pretend” we as students and even teachers may think that it is the equivalent of the verb “pretender” in Spanish. We may say: “I pretend to study more this year” instead of saying, “I intend to study more this year”. This is a common mistake that really interferes with the meaning we try to convey to other people. In French a very misleading word when you are a beginner is “carte” that might be mistaken for the word “carta” in Spanish when it really means map. Encouraging learners to look for the similarities and differences of the foreign language and their mother tongue may help reach better proficiency than when ignoring this aspect.

B. Collocations

When learning a new language, it is important to know how to use collocations in order to improve understanding and communication, and as a result to obtain more accurate speech and writing. Collocations consist of pairs or groups of words that co-occur with a very high frequency (Murcia, 2003). These are important in vocabulary learning. “The meaning of a word has a great deal to do with the words with which it commonly associates” (Nattinger in Murcia, 2003). In accordance with Murcia if collocational associations are not learned as part of L2 vocabulary knowledge, the resulting irregularities will immediately mark the learners’ speech or writing as obvious non-native speakers.

Bahns (1993) in a contrastive study of collocations, reports that learners seem to rely on a “hypothesis of transferability,” whereby the majority of collocational errors found in English learners can be attributed to L1 influence. For example: ‘drive a bookshop’ instead of ‘run a bookshop’, based on influence from a Polish equivalent; ‘make

attention´ at instead of `pay attention to´, from a French equivalent; and `finish a conflict´ instead of `resolve a conflict´ from a German equivalent. Bahns recommends that, “whenever possible it would be helpful to identify those collocations that a learner with a particular L1 background knows already” because of an equivalent in the L1 and in English. Teachers could then help students focus on identifying the differences for a chosen group of semantically equivalent L1/L2 pairs. (Bahns in Murcia, p 292, 2003)

As students of French and English we have identified the collocations in which we make mistakes the most. When there are coincidences among the three languages there is no problem, but when there are not, then problems arise. For example, in English they say `ask a question´, in French; `poser une question´, but we usually take for granted that they associate question with the verb *to make* (hacer), the one we use in Spanish. In addition, in English the standard collocation is `make a mistake´ but we influenced by our mother tongue say `do a mistake´, `take a decision´ instead of `make decision´, or `I have “x” years old´ instead of `I am “x” years old´.

C. *The use of various languages*

We have to take advantage of our mother tongue to enrich and facilitate the memorization of vocabulary. As learners of French and English, we have realized that we can associate words that are similar in spelling, pronunciation and meaning among languages. For instance, the word “bizarre” has the same aspects aforementioned in

English and French. Other examples are the words *naïf* or *coup d'état*. There are many others, then how just ignore it? The same happens with French and Spanish because they are two romance languages. For instance the verbs “partir”, “venir” have the same meanings in both languages. Besides, words that have three or more syllables are very similar among English, French and Spanish. For example, the word communication is spelled the same way in French and English and it is very similar to Spanish.

In cases of naturally occurring bilingualism both languages help each other, supplementing each other (Butzkamm, 2003); this means that if a child grows up learning two languages at the same time, one language can help the other develop. For example, a Salvadorian immigrant family moving to a foreign country like the United States where a child speaks Spanish only at home but he gets most of the input in English at school and somewhere else, the use of the two languages help him develop both languages because he puts them into practice at the same time. For instance, a child wants to phone his grandparents in El Salvador to tell them something he has not yet understood in Spanish; he will first get help by asking “Como se dice *truck* en español?” so, the lack of vocabulary is solved in the most possible way.

In addition, non-natural bilingual speakers often feel the need to reassure themselves in their stronger language. For that reason, there is always a predominance of one language over the others. In this case our mother tongue (Spanish) is the strongest one. We recall our late linguistics’ teacher saying that children who are raised speaking two languages tend to mix languages when they do not know how to express one idea in one language completely. As the previously mentioned example of bilingual children, we as

learners studying two foreign languages at the same time have realized that we also have a stronger foreign language. For some people, English is easier and consequently they are more fluent in English; whereas others do better in French even if they have been exposed mostly to English.

D. *Monolingualism vs. Bilingualism*

People who support the monolingual view state that the importance of L2 should be shown to students, through its continual use. Besides, the lesson minutes are priceless slots of time for input, output, and practice (Atkinson, 1993). He agrees with the need to maximize L2 usage and states that “every second spent using L1 is a second not spent using L2 and that every second counts”. That means that it is important to use the target language every time it is possible because most of the times the classroom is the only place where students have contact with the foreign language and they have to take advantage of that.

Furthermore, the target language could be used to convey the meaning through gestures, visual aids, word-concept, drawings, charts, signals or mimes, games, and so on; if they are used during the class, they can help students learn more easily and faster without the necessity of being translating or using L1. Sometimes the use of the mother tongue is seen as a waste of time when teachers prefer not to use L2 at every moment. This means that avoiding L1 completely can cause confusion, make the lesson more difficult to understand, students could lose the interest, and as a result a waste of time that could be spent in more important issues during the course. Although for learners it is the other way around, it could be counterproductive the exclusive use of the target language.

On the other hand, the use of the mother tongue has another very important sense according to bilingual supporters. They say that ignoring students' L1, can make students feel that their identity is threatened. Piasecka (1988) states, "One's sense of identity as an individual is inextricably bound up within one's native language...If a learner of a second language is encouraged to ignore his/her native language, he/she might well feel his/her identity threatened" (in Hopkins, 1988, p.18). Besides, the use of the students' mother tongue may help them realize that the teacher values their language and culture in countries where the Foreign Language is viewed as an imperialist language.

Furthermore, to reject a child's language in the school is to reject the child, which means that if the mother tongue is avoided in FL environments, the students might feel that their language, culture and identity is rejected. When the message, implicit or explicit, communicated to children in the school is "Leave your language and culture at the schoolhouse door", children also leave a central part of who they are, their identities at the schoolhouse door. When they feel this rejection, they are much less likely to participate actively and confidently in classroom instruction. It is not enough for teachers to passively accept children's linguistic and cultural diversity in the school. They must be proactive and take the initiative to affirm children's linguistic identity by having posters in the various languages of the community around the school, encouraging children to write in their mother tongues in addition to the majority school language (e.g. write and publish pupil-authored bilingual books), and generally create an instructional climate where the linguistic and cultural experience of the whole child is actively accepted and validated (Cummins in Curtain, 1991).

E. Native and non-native teachers

The monolingual approach values more the native teacher than the non-native one. He/she is seen as the ideal teacher (Pennycook in Miles 2004). This assumption is due to the fact that a native speaker of a foreign language can maintain an L2 only- policy when teaching and without the necessity of resorting to L1. He provides correctness in his speech, fluency and a native accent, which a non-native teacher may lack of and it is difficult to obtain in a country where the language is not spoken officially. In addition, the students who scarcely keep contact with native speakers are not tempted to ask the teacher for translations since they know the teacher is not fluent in their mother tongue.

On the contrary, supporters of bilingualism argue that native teachers are not necessarily the best teachers and insist on an L2 only-policy is impractical since the majority of teachers are not native speakers. Being a native speaker does not necessarily mean that the teacher is more qualified or better at teaching. Non-native teachers are possibly better teachers as they themselves have gone through the process of learning an L2 (which is usually the language they teach). Thereby, they have a better understanding of the difficulties and challenge a student faces throughout the learning process. Furthermore, there is not scientific validity to support the notion of a native teacher being the ideal teacher (Philipson in Miles, 2004).

We have had native and mostly non-native teachers in our majors. What we have experienced with native teachers is that sometimes it is difficult to understand what they are saying and sometimes they have had to resort to our mother tongue. According to some friends that are learning Asian languages, they face many difficulties with their teachers because they do not manage Spanish well. On the other hand, they may help you get an

excellent accent and pronunciation. However, this does not mean that they are better than non- native teachers that give you advice on how to progress in the foreign language. In addition, non-native teachers are seen as models to imitate. They are admired because they can speak two or more languages.

F. The benefits of using L1 or L2 in classrooms

Maximum use of the language being taught is thought to be an essential way of creating real communication in the classroom and maximizing opportunities for acquisition (Bondi & Alessi, 2002). It is widely believed that the meaningful, situational use of the foreign language in the classroom may have very positive effect on learning because of its communicative potential. Use of the FL in class naturally associates the FL to situations where an information gap does occur: a teacher directing learners to an exercise in their books (‘Open your books at page 25, please. Exercise 3’) or checking their understanding of something (‘All right? Are you ready to start?’), is indeed exchanging real information with the learners. Classroom interaction in the FL can thus increase both learners’ exposure to the language and their exposure to meaningful and realistic use of the language in contexts that can also be easily transferred to normal social situations (Example: ‘I’m sorry. I don’t understand’).

Meanwhile bilingual supporters state that the use of L1 creates a low anxiety environment. According to Reis (1996), when teaching English through English, he observed that his students were not content with his teaching English through English; he tried to convince them about the advantages of the maximum use of English in the classroom, but he could not succeed. As a result, he came to a conclusion with his students

and they together decided to allow five minutes of L1 used in each class sessions. These five minutes of L1 was called the “L1 break”. As he puts L1 break, it appeared to have impressive effect both on him and the students by reducing students’ affective filter and created a friendly nice classroom environment.

Stephen Krashen (1981) , in his discussion of the “affective filter “, highlights the importance of emotions in the language learning process and the fact that children are known to resist learning when it is unpleasant, painful, or being attempted in a punitive environment. This is a filter that the brain erects to block out second language input, no matter how carefully designed that input may be. The filter goes up in the presence of anxiety or low self confidence, or in absence of motivation. The filter goes down, and the language can come through, when motivation is high, when a student is self-confident, and when the learning takes place in a relatively anxiety-free environment. Then, the L1 plays an important role to low the anxiety in the classrooms since for some students the idea of abandoning the native language is too stressful. They need a sense of security in the experience of learning a foreign language.

The use of L1 creates a better affective relationship between teacher and students because in most EFL settings the teachers and students share the same native language and cultural background. English can be a barrier between the class and the instructor, something that may get in the way of a more casual relationship with the teacher. According to Papaefthymiou-Lytra in Mattioli (2004) instances of spontaneous humor or comments on class activities tend to occur in L1, providing solidarity and camaraderie. For example, the target language is sometimes a barrier between the students and the teacher.

We remember our Advanced English teacher that used to tell jokes in class but when he did it, he switched from English to Spanish. He said what is funny for Americans, is not for us.

Another important factor in the construction of the meaning, according to Curtain (1996), is the role of emotions in the learning process. Jensen (1998) states: “Emotions drive attention, create meaning, and have their own memory pathways” (in Curtain, 1991, p.300). In addition, he points out that many content areas a moderate level of stress optimizes learning. However, for subjects with high complexity and novelty, such as language and mathematics, students learn better with lower stress environment.

Emotions play a very important role in the FL classrooms to create a better classroom affective environment. To keep this kind of environment, we as future professionals of language teaching have to use many of these activities that can provide positive emotions such as games, songs, rhymes, and lessons involving movement and physical activity. Creating a warm emotional climate in which students feel self-confident, free, and highly motivated is of great importance thus they keep the classes interesting and encourage motivation.

The usages of L1 can be beneficial for different learning purposes. According to Schweers’ research (2003), in EFL classes Spanish is used by the teachers to give complex instructions in the Puerto Rican University of Bayamon, especially in basic levels. In addition, it is used to explain difficult concepts, apply translations, check for comprehension and sense, and explain classroom methodology. Besides, students feel there are clear cases where Spanish will facilitate their comprehension of what is happening in class. A majority also agree that the use of Spanish helps them learn English.

The foreign language learner can build upon existing skills and knowledge acquired in and through the mother tongue. Students cannot simply turn off what they already know. The mother tongue is “silently” present in beginners, even when lessons are kept monolingual (Butzkamm, 2003). Through the mother tongue we have learnt to vocalize, to read and to write. “Ignoring or forbidding English will not do, for learners inevitably engage in French-English associations and formulations in their minds” which means that avoiding the mother tongue in FL classes will not necessarily mean that they will eliminate it from their heads, it is actively present in the learners’ minds. (Hammerly, 1989 in Butzkamm 2003). Translation/transfer is a natural phenomenon and an inevitable part of second language acquisition..., regardless of whether or not the teacher offers or permits translation” (Harbor, 1992). For Deller and Rinvoluceri (2002) the mother tongue is the mother of all the other languages learned by the student. It is through the mother tongue that the other languages are born in the learner’s mind. Thus, to eliminate it from the EFL classroom “is like to wean a baby on day one of their life” (Deller and Rinvoluceri, 2002, p.10).

V. CONCLUSION

After having done the bibliographical research about the usage of the mother tongue in FL classrooms and our own experiences lived through our majors at the University of El Salvador, it can be concluded that the use of L1 does not obstruct the learning of L2, instead it can facilitate it. Therefore, the teachers should find the appropriate time in which to use the mother tongue in their classes since it reduces the anxiety levels, provides a sense of security and identity, enhances the effective environment, saves time and confusion, facilitates comprehension, takes into account socio-cultural factors, and allows learners-centered learning, raises consciousness of the similarities and differences between the mother tongue and the target language, which in sum help students learn more efficiently.

Nowadays it is common for EFL teachers to use the students' mother tongue as a tool for conveying meaning as means of interaction in their classrooms. According to some researches, the complete deletion of the mother tongue in FL classes is not appropriate. However, when used appropriately, the use of L1 can be very beneficial. Of course, there has to be a balance in which the teacher may consider appropriate to use the mother tongue in the FL classrooms without overusing it since there is no specific percentage of the mother tongue usage.

Using the mother tongue in Foreign Language classes is a very beneficial resource available to all teachers and students who need to count on this fascinating learning tool. We as students of Foreign Languages classes at the Language Department from the University of El Salvador have learned English and French without using the Target Language L2 exclusively. We have been aided by the mother tongue since the very

beginning of our majors when we were trying to find the meaning of unknown words, when we asked the teacher for grammar explanations, translated target language expressions into our mother tongue, established good rapport with the teacher and the rest of our classmates to feel more confident and secure, etc. For that reason, using the mother tongue at the appropriate time in Foreign Language classes can help the acquisition of the L2 more easily and without much pressure.

We also consider that the learning of a Target Language not only depends on the incorporation or the elimination of the mother tongue, but there are some other factors that interfere on this respect, among others they can be mentioned the interest and devotion that every learner has about learning another language, motivation, methods used, syllabus, content of the course, age in which the learner has begun to study a language, appropriate environment for the students to feel comfortable, teachers with appropriate training, vocation and teaching experiences and the innate capacity that every person has developed toward languages. Taking everything into account we think that this work could be a part of another research too, or maybe it can be helpful to some teachers in their teaching process.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) The use of the mother in Foreign Language environments is an important learning tool that teachers should consider of using in their classes since it helps students learn more easily and faster.
- b) The use of the mother tongue at the appropriate time in FL classrooms can facilitate language learning; for that reason, its usage can be used in order to save time and confusion when dealing with unknown words.
- c) The mother tongue is a learning resource available to all teachers, then its implementation makes language learning possible since it aids with the grammar understanding, language instructions and classroom management; so it's worthy to use this fascinating tool.
- d) The mother tongue helps students become more aware of the similarities and differences between the two languages: the mother tongue and the target language.
- e) When teachers decide to use the mother tongue in their Foreign Language classes, they are creating an affective environment that reduces students' anxiety and stress; therefore, the chances to learn a foreign language more efficiently are increased through its appropriate use.

VII. METHODOLOGY

The methodology applied to carry out this research consisted on choosing the topic “The use of the mother tongue in Foreign Language classes.” This was chosen because it is a research interest to us as students of foreign languages; besides and it is a debatable topic from which we can learn a lot about the appropriate use of the mother tongue in FL contexts. Also it is a well researchable matter since the use of the mother tongue is a subject to discussion in all FL environments. The second step consisted on consulting different resources such the Internet and magazines that gave us clearer ideas on how researching about this subject. Then, to choose the appropriate material we selected and organized it by skimming, scanning and mapping the available information with the purpose of cataloging and documenting the relevant one.

After having collected and organized the data into categories and themes, we analyzed the information in order to establish the current information available about the topic. After that, we selected the data that would be helpful to justify our thesis statement which is “the use of the mother tongue (L1) is an important tool that can help students learn a target language effectively”. We researched and found the two different points of view regarding the use of the mother tongue in FL classrooms: the linguists and experts in favor of the mother tongue use and the ones who are against the use of L1.

In surveying the literature we gathered all the information about the use of the mother tongue by putting together all the pieces of information in order to assemble the

current information, and then we synthesized the literature survey to form evidence and created simple claims and arguments to determine how the assembled information would fit together. After that, we made entry cards and an outline to use them as guide to address the different perspectives on the use of the mother tongue and provide the basis for addressing the research questions that we asked ourselves regarding the topic we chose to research.

After reviewing the current information about the use of the mother tongue in foreign language classes, we interpreted, analyzed, and assessed all the available data. Then, discriminated all that information which was not appropriate in this research and we valued the one that was more convenient for this study. In critiquing the literature we decided if the use of the mother tongue in FL classes would be beneficial for language learners. Based on the bibliographical study, we reasoned that the usage of L1 can be a helpful tool for students who are learning a foreign language.

After having completed all the five stages about the literature review process: selection of a topic, searching the literature, developing the argument, surveying the literature, critiquing the literature, we were ready to begin the exploratory writing, the formal outline and the preliminary draft. In writing the first draft we edited the preliminary one to provide the basis for writing the first draft. After having the first draft checked, we continued with the second one to make a further refining of the work to obtain the final version of the topic researched.

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