

Practical Application of Learners' First Language to Teaching Meaning in EFL Classes: A Case Study Conducted in the Department of English at King Khalid University

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Abstract

There has long been a question of whether learners' first language can help with teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) when the focus is teaching meaning. This issue has always been controversial. The study, therefore, aims at exploring how learners' first language (L1) can be applied effectively in EFL classes to help with the teaching of meaning with the minimization of L1's potential negative impact. The study examined (a), faculty members' general opinion about the use of L1 in EFL teaching, (b) the effectiveness of L1 use in teaching meaning, and (c) the students' views on L1 use. The study was undoubtedly of great importance as it solved the question of how much L1 could be used in teaching meaning in EFL classes in the most practical way. The method adopted was primarily qualitative involving semi-structured interviews with lecturers and professors who had experience of language teaching. A survey conducted on the first-year students also provided the researcher with some quantitative data. The result revealed both positive and negative opinions. The positive ones remarkably outnumbered the negative ones. The findings also helped the researcher ponder some pedagogical implications. The study concludes that learners' first language can be a fascinating and effective tool for teaching meaning provided that the teacher has full control over the class to ensure that the classroom still has the target language environment.

Keywords: EFL classes, L1's negative impact, L1's positive impact, learners' first language, practical application of L1, teaching meaning

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