THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THE CLASSROOM DISCOURSE

by:
Jackielyn C. Borero

One of the important ingredients in language learning is the classroom discourse. Classroom talk is the language choice of the teachers and students in communicating with each other where it facilitates language development through contributing communicative competence among the students. Teachers are not only prioritizing the students’ use of grammar and vocabulary, but also engaging them to an effective communication. Classroom discourse should be considered by the language teachers, for the quality of the language they are using inside the classroom may determine the communicative competence and discourse will be learned by the students. It will become a tool to reinforce the learning and acquisition, for it may allow the students to expose and practice the language. However, in teaching English as Secondary Language (ESL), even though the references are written in English, there are still teachers who are using their mother tongue or vernacular as a medium of instruction.

In bilingual classes, there are numerous studies pertaining to the positive consequences of using the first language in learning the target language, for it may serve as an instrument to establish the metalinguistic knowledge that researchers may call it as a positive transfer. As stated by Madrinan (2014), the use of bilingual in the classroom has positive effects towards cognitive development, for students may easily learn the second language as they become proficient in the first language. Aside from using the first language in instructions, teachers also tend to use code-switching where it pertains to the practice of altering one language to another. Though, there are researchers who have negative views in using code-switching inside the classroom for it may lead the bilingual students to confuse as they may tend not to develop the two languages they are
trying to learn, still there are ample of studies claiming that code-switching is beneficial to language learning. As stated by Spice (2018), code-switching is a tool for language learning and instruction. It may induce students’ participations in the classroom where it can be used to establish rapport among the students as they become motivated in learning the target language. Several studies have existed about the use of bilingualism and code-switching inside the classroom, yet there is a limited study that explicitly suggests when to use the language choice in bilingual classrooms.

Since Filipinos are bilinguals and Filipino being the first language, some English teachers tend to instruct the students using their mother tongue. Borlogan (2012) stated that code switching is prevalent among Filipino classes and it is functional and effective in learning the target language for it may serve as the scaffolding. It is a potent resource of learning as students may easily understand the complex or complicated topics. In line with this, some English teachers are using Tagalog and English languages or code-switching as the classroom discourse for them to assure the clarity of their instruction. Senior High School students are learning English for about ten years starting when they were in elementary, yet the target language among the them has not yet established. Thus, there are times that teachers are using their mother tongue to make sure that every student may understand the lesson. Paez (2018) said that the use of Filipino language in the English classroom creates a significant atmosphere that contributes belongingness among the students.

In 1974, the Bilingual Policy of the Department of Education was introduced to develop a country which is competent in both Filipino and English. This policy mandated the use of English and Filipino as subjects in all levels from elementary to college where it also required the teachers to use their mother tongue in the instruction to achieve the goals of bilingual competence. However, the learning of English language was suffered as the result of this policy, for it may yield a language interference among the students. Therefore, former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo passed the Executive Order No.
210, s. 2003 that became DepEd Order on August 22, 2006 as DO 36, s. 2006 which aims to strengthen the use of English as a medium of instruction in the educational system of the country. This Act amended the use of English language as the primary medium of instruction in all public and private institutions of secondary levels. Thus, there should be a strict implementation of policy on how to strengthen the English language here in our country.

Reference:


