Original Paper

Use of Bilingualism in Teaching EFL in the Branches of Taibah University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Inequality has many faces. Giving recognition to a single language variety as standard creates a cadre of people who gain from the acquisition processing, storage, transmission, retrieval and other manipulations of language through various controls. The global shift towards the realization of effective communication in English and the need to empower prospective participants of the opportunities in the world marketplace and in the academic arena to make knowledge of English a prerequisite tool. To satisfy the increasing demand, qualified personnel in EFL pedagogy becomes essential in helping aspirant learners achieve their goal—linguistic competency and proficiency for better learning and professionalism across the world. The issue of bilingual education in EFL teaching in universities in Saudi Arabia has increasingly become a challenge. This study presents the perception of thirty-two male and female teachers selected from personnel engaged in teaching English language in Al Ula, Yanbu and Al Mahad Campuses of Taibah University, Madinah. The curriculum design process in Saudi Arabia managed by educational policies can take into consideration several important factors such as interests, motivations, and aspirations of the people in the Saudi Arabian societies.

Keywords

bilingualism, second language learning, mother tongue, foreign language, L2, language teaching

1. Introduction

English is a global language and an international lingua franca. Most people around the world speak English language as their second language. Language is more than words and expressions. In fact, language comes as a package including culture, identity, lifestyle, traditions, conventions and many other things. Therefore, learners and speakers have to go through all these things, which, of course, are going to affect them in a way or another. In fact, the impact of language on identity is crucial. Language has the

ability to reform somebody's identity. It is obvious that any language has its unique features, which are shown through people's speech and behaviors. Individuals who speak more than one language can play various roles and can show different identities using their languages. However, people unconsciously may modify or become affected the moment they start learning another language. Additionally, some people admire particular cultures, so they start learning the language of the culture for the sake of understanding the culture better.

2. Literature Review

The number of languages spoken in the world is more than the existing number of countries. There are 3,000 to 4,000 languages with a little more than 150 countries to accommodate them (Grosjean, 1982). Therefore, bilingualism/multilingualism is expected to be a universal phenomenon. However, this is not so. At one extreme, there are countries, which follow monolingual policies, imposing a uniform language as their national/official language. Demographically, such countries may be multilingual, functionally, they are always monolingual. The phenomenon of bilingualism attracted researcher's attention in Europe as far back as in the 19th century A.D. (Wolff, 1971). Until this period, monolingualism was the way of life, represented first by Hebrew and then Latin.

Seeing bilingualism on different levels is just one way to focus on the appropriate aspect of bilingualism as it occurs in diverse situations. Many specialized concepts are also needed to develop theories to account for complex worldwide research findings. It will also be seen that, in order to analyze languages in contact, bilingualism issues need to be seen from a number of different viewpoints. Concepts in bilingualism stem from a number of dimensions, such as the age of a person using two languages, which provide viewpoints on bilingualism. From the standpoint of when a person, on the individual level, starts being exposed to more than one language regularly, it is called simultaneous bilingualism. Because of differences in individuals and circumstances, there is no exact age or critical period after which a person cannot be bilingual, but after adolescence, it becomes more a matter of deliberate learning than natural acquisition.

To view the issue from a different perspective, additive or subtractive bilingualism is the kind of bilingualism in individuals that tends to result from different social status of languages. Children sense when a language is not useful or valued, so they are liable to lose or not acquire such a language unless people around them demonstrate that the two languages are equal in value or more useful than one. This applies to the L1 of language minority students, who may lose it, as well as to the L2 of language majority students, who may not gain bilingual fluency. The relative social status of the languages affects everything from educational policy to individual motivation.

2.1 Teaching Bilingual Education in Saudi Arabia

There is much to study in bilingualism as an academic discipline, but learning by experience can also be vital in such a field. For this author, teaching bilingual education as English for professional purposes course to upper division college students for four years until 2019 onwards constituted

359

learning experience. This issue thus emphasizes concepts that proved to be important in teaching bilingualism and bilingual education in Saudi Arabia. There are several ways that learning from experience can be a valuable hint to academic study in a field such as bilingual education.

The definitions of bilingualism have been varied, numerous, and usually contradictory. The idea is that the bilingual phenomenon as a situation and a process is complicated and it is hard to define it in one simple definition. Thus, many definitions from different dimensions can describe the bilingual phenomenon in the Saudi high school level, but before it is defined, some concepts related to bilingualism should be explained. These terms are language ability, language achievement, language competence, language performance, language proficiency, and language skills. Language skills tend to refer to highly specific, clearly definable components such as spelling, handwriting, and grammar. Conversely, language competence is a general and broad concept, used specifically to describe an inner and mental representation of language; such competence usually refers to an underlying system inferred from language performance. Language performance is the outward evidence for language competence, e.g., conversation or performance in a language test. Language ability is defined as a general latent disposition that determines the eventual language success. In addition, language proficiency is usually used as a synonym for language competence and refer to the general ability of a person in using a language regardless of any certain academic background or education. On the other hand, language achievement is the outcome of formal instruction (Baker & Jones, 1998).

Macnamara (1967) suggested that a bilingual is a person who can possess a minimal competence in only one of the four languages skills: speaking, listening comprehension, reading, or writing in a language other than his or her mother tongue. This is consistent with the Saudi situation. Saudi bilinguals have good competence in two skills, speaking and reading but they still struggle in listening and writing in their second language, English. Moreover, Beatens-Beardsmore (1982) defined bilingualism as a necessary or optional means of effective communication between two or more "worlds" using two language systems. Similarly, Titone (1989) stated that bilinguality implies a degree of communicative competence sufficient for effective communication in more than one language; effectiveness requires the ability to correctly understand the meaning of messages and/or the parallel ability to produce intelligible messages in more than one code. In the Saudi context, bilinguals are able to communicate in both languages but "effective" may not describe their communication in English. They can communicate effectively in Arabic but the degree of effectiveness in their communication in English is limited. Furthermore, Hamers (1981) stated that the term "bilingualism" refers to the state of a linguistic community, since two languages are in contact, with the result that two codes can be used in the same interaction and a number of individuals are bilinguals. This refers to societal bilingualism while the concept of bilingualism is more appropriate to describe Saudi bilinguals. This bilingual is the psychological situation of individuals who have access to two linguistic codes as a means of social community, and the degree of access might vary along with a number of dimensions, including cognitive, psychological, social - psychological, social, sociolinguistic, sociological, sociocultural, and

linguistic. These dimensions were discussed with regard to individual bilingualism. Another dimension is the language choice in defining bilingualism. A bilingual speaker has three choices: speak language A, speak language B, or speak a combination of A and B in a single utterance (Hoffman, 2001). A Saudi bilingual can speak Arabic, English, or a combination of Arabic and English. This combination can be defined as code - switching, which has recently spread in Saudi Arabia, particularly between teenagers at high schools. Bloomfield (1942) proposed one of the famous definitions of bilingualism, which is that in the extreme state of foreign language learning, the speaker becomes proficient, which makes him indistinguishable from the native speaker in his environment, and this proficiency in a foreign language is not associated with the loss of a native language. Although this definition does not describe Saudi bilinguals, this is the target for them in the future.

2.2 Levels of Bilingualism

In teaching bilingual education courses, it was found helpful to check students' understanding of what kind or level of bilingualism was being discussed. The author therefore often wrote a square grid on the board with the following levels of bilingualism. Following are the details:

1) Individual,

2) Family,

3) Societal, and

4) Education

EFL teachers have a responsibility to teach the culture of the target language.

Language learning is often claimed to have the advantage of broadening cultural horizons and this is clearly of relevance to teachers who are charged with teaching elements of culture themselves. This section will consider in what ways language learning has been credited with conferring greater cultural understanding.

The word culture is one of the most complex ones in the English language, mainly because it is used to express different concepts in a range of disciplines. What most concerns us here are ways of discussing culture, which is most relevant to language and language learning. An early such definition is that of Edward Sapir: "language does not exist apart from culture, that is, the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives". Sapir's definition does suggest by "assemblage" that culture is a static phenomenon, a view that now has little currency. Definitions that are more recent emphasize the fluid, situated and negotiated nature of "culture", meaning that it will manifest differently in different social and interpersonal contexts and different times. As Morrissey 2006 put it: "Culture' is not an item of baggage but a continuous process of renegotiation grounded in specific times and places and affected by other social processes". Carr (2007) defines culture as "the systematic and collective making of meaning" and argued that language has a central role in the making of meaning, as does Halliday (2016), who contended that learning one's first language is learning how to mean. The language use cannot be disassociated from the creation and transmission of culture.

Bilingualism includes the individual level, such as your own bilingual and bicultural development; the

family level, such as bilingual child raising; the level of society, such as language minorities and government policies; bilingual education in international schools, and colleges such as the right to choose languages for children's education or your own cultural identity. Thus, for example, in discussing the overly idealized image of the bilingual in Japan, which sounds boastful to attribute to oneself, students can be referred to the square grid to focus on the individual level of bilingual development and how it is a matter of degree. Family bilingualism often involves analyzing what languages are spoken among members of an international family. Another article in this series, on bilingual child raising, discusses how to aim for balanced input and opportunities for interaction in the two languages. Societal bilingualism can be of relevance to families in terms of the surrounding community or society while taking up broader issues such as the percentage of speakers of different languages in a country or region. The level of education refers to schools, which may be international or bilingual in the medium of instruction, that is, the language in which courses are taught. There are many types of bilingual education in the world (Baker, 2006, pp. 213-225), and among the more effective types, immersion is where 50% or more of the curriculum is taught in the students' second language (Bostwick, 2005). The author has developed a method for students to analyze the type of bilingual education evident in various educational situations in Japan and abroad. The above-mentioned new course also touches upon linguistic human rights (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995). As a case in point, although government policies, Japanese parents may rightly do not support native languages of children of immigrants to Japan expect such support from other countries when they are transferred abroad.

2.3 Objectives of the Study

This research study has sought to investigate the use of bilingualism in the teaching of English as a foreign language, which facilitates the learning of L2 at graduation/certificate level in general English language/integrated skills classes.

3. Research Method

The researcher has selected to analyze the research topic from the aspects of integrated skills as taught at Taibah University branches under the province of Al Madinah Saudi Arabia to the learners of English language for the development of the topic. As analysis helps in thoroughly examining the topic from all dimensions, the researcher looks upon all the aspects of the research topic to discover how the use of bilingualism expedites teaching and learning process in the EFL classrooms.

The population comprised a total number of 106 students from branches, (Taibah University) at graduation level and 32 male and female teachers who were teaching these students. Although no studies have been located which aim to discover the contribution of the use of bilingualism in foreign language learning, there have been several studies which are pertinent in either content or method. The most common methods used to investigate the relationship between mother tongue and a foreign language are the observation of teachers' regular lessons combined with semi-structured interviews.

The intention of this study was to find out whether the use of bilingualism is a teaching aid in teaching and learning a foreign language and whether mother tongue does facilitate the learners. The tools that were used comprised semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and classroom observations. There were some general concerns over the level of comprehension and proficiency among the respondents. Therefore, the questionnaire was designed and arranged in such a manner, which would require the respondents to do as little reading as possible. The questions were always read out to the respondents by the researcher himself and by the colleagues who were teaching them. They had been briefed to be aware of situations where the respondents needed extra assistance.

3.1 Research Questions

However, the researcher has divided various sections of the study in these sub-questions to be able to test the hypothesis:

1. What is the role of mother tongue in teaching a foreign language effectively?

2. How frequently should mother tongue be used in teaching EFL in classes?

3. What is the attitude of the learners towards using mother tongue in a class?

4. Why is it desirable that the students and teachers use mother tongue in an EFL class?

5. How do teachers look at the issue of bilingualism in their teaching method?

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

To collect the data relevant to the present study, the researcher observed the classes of a graduation programme in the morning session at all three branches of Taibah University, KSA. In the second part of this comparative study, the researcher collected data from many different courses useful for English language proficiency from all three branches. It has been done in order to ascertain this specific area as the pivot of bilingualism as teaching aid and hence linchpin of his research. The classroom observations were done during the academic semester. From where the researcher himself belongs to, (106 students, 32teachers) out of whom 25 teachers are Non Arabic (Urdu/Hindi as their mother tongue) and 8 teachers are Arabic (Arabic as their mother tongue) speakers.

Classroom observation:-

Table 1. Use of MT in the EFL Classroom by Native Arabic Teachers

Serial No.	Variables	Taibah University Campuses			
The teacher use L1 because he/she meant to:		Al Ula	Yanbu	Al Mahad	Total
1	To help to define new vocabulary	21	16	26	63
2	To practice to use of phrases and expressions	27	22	31	80
3	To explain grammar points	41	33	56	130
4	To give instructions	19	12	25	56
5	To give suggestions about effective learning	15	09	19	43
6	To explain the meaning of words	52	39	67	158

The table shows that the number of occasions on which L1 was used by native Arabic Teachers in the classes for different purposes. The table displays clearly that all five the native Arabic teachers of English used L1 in a variety of situations on different occasions (see Table 1).
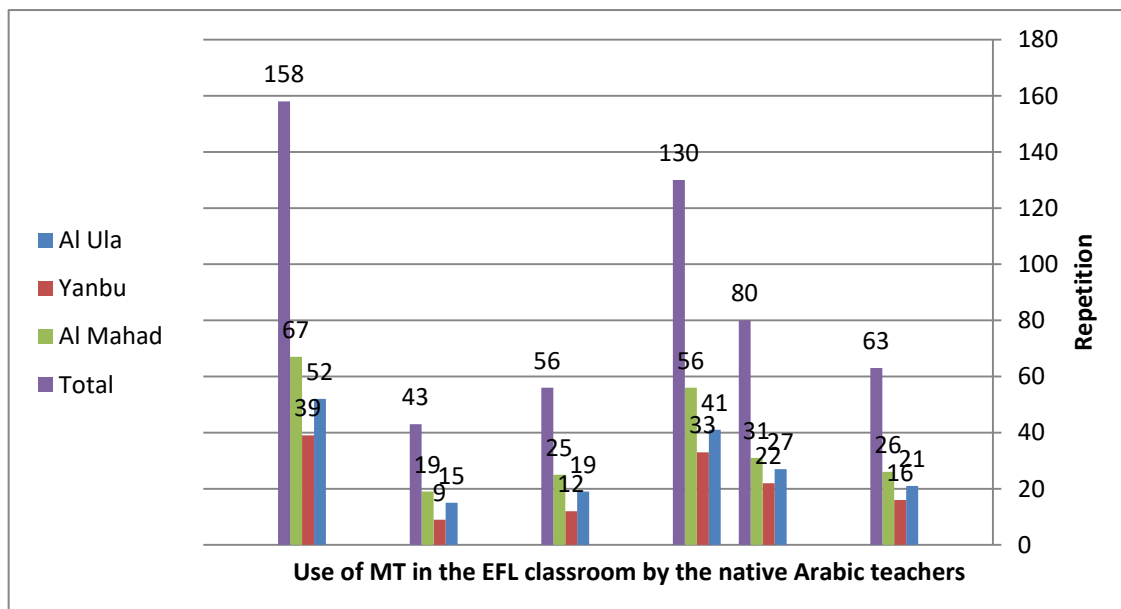

Figure 1. Use of MT in the EFL Classroom by Native Arabic Teachers

The table firstly, shows the number of occasions on which L1 was used by sixteen teachers in 100 minutes classes for various purposes. The table displays clearly that L1 has been reported on higher side by all the eight teachers for various purposes, like that defining new vocabulary items, To practice to use of Phrases and expressions explaining idioms and proverbs, explaining prepositional phrases, explaining slang and taboo words, complex grammatical rules, explaining creating fun in language class, and giving suggestions to learn effectively. The main use of L1 was employed when the teacher attempting to explain the meaning of words used in certain context.

Table 2. Use of MT in the EFL Classroom by Non-native Arabic Teachers

Serial No.	Variables	Taibah University Campuses			
The teacher used L1 because he/she meant to:		Al Ula	Yanbu	Al Mahad	Total
1	To help to define new vocabulary	11	06	12	29
2	To practice to use of phrases and expressions	02	05	1	8
3	To explain grammar points	9	7	13	29
4	To give instructions	7	2	10	19
5	To give suggestions about effective learning	5	9	12	26
6	To explain the meaning of words	22	19	28	69

The table shows that the number of occasions on which L1 was used by non-native Arabic teachers in the classes for different purposes. The table displays clearly that the non-native Arabic teachers of English used L1 in a variety of situations on different occasions almost 60% less than native Arabic speakers (see Table 2).
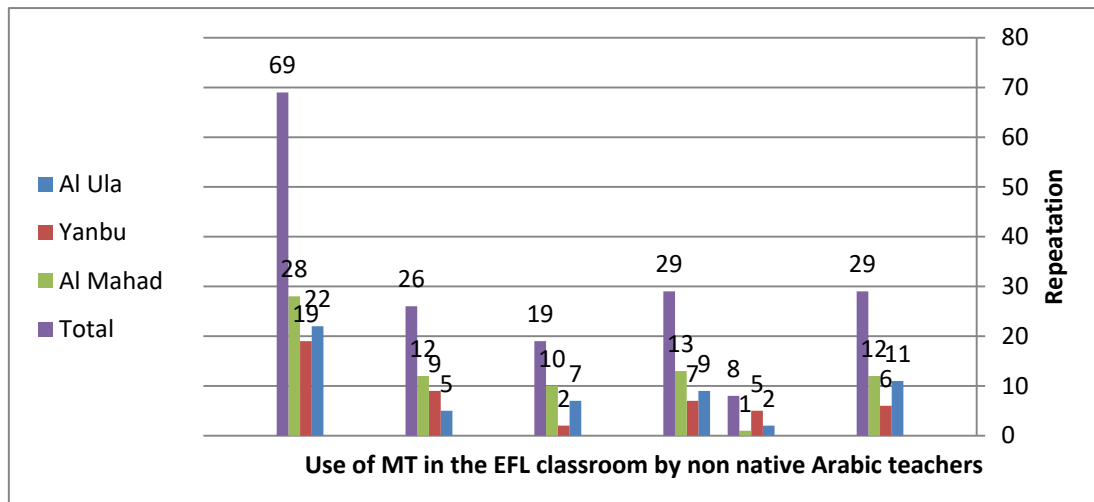

Figure 2. Use of MT in the EFL Classroom by Native Arabic Teachers

The second table displays clearly that L1 has been reported on by all the twenty five teachers in a variety of situations with the help of social media, and with the help of bilingual student, like that of giving instructions, defining new vocabulary items, complex grammatical rules, explaining complex ideas, explaining the meaning of words, and giving suggestions to learn effectively. It has been established by previous studies that a teacher can use only 20 to 22% of their mother tongue in the EFL classroom. On the other hand, it has been found in the branches of Taibah University, KSA in their local and foreign teachers, who had Arabic, would extensively use Arabic, whereas other language native speakers relatively use less Arabic to make students understand the concepts and both teachers and students were at ease in the use of L1 and no one wonders or feels disturbed in its use.

4. Conclusion

By focusing on viewpoints and contextualizing bilingualism concepts in their corresponding situations, particularly of vulnerable language learners, a clear pattern emerged from the societal to the individual level that could predict whether or not bilingualism was actually the intended result. The present study shows that bilingualism has a small but important role to play in communicating meaning and content. This role is important while teaching integrated skills of different courses at graduation level. Moreover, this research has shown that the use of mother should be restricted at a certain level.

Another aspect, where learners have little opportunity to meet and use the foreign language outside the classroom, need to maximize the use of English in ELF classroom. One obvious way to do this is to carry

365

out classroom management in L2, English. Classroom management involves things like telling the class what to do, controlling behavior, explaining activities. This requires careful thought by the teacher so that the vocabulary and structures used in the language of classroom management are also generally useful. If the use of English in classroom management is done in a planned, consistent way, then classroom management can be a very effective opportunity for learning through meaning focused input.

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