On the Use of L1 in Communicative Adult EFL Classroom

Aušra Janulienė

Abstract. The issue of using only the target language in a foreign language classroom has arisen with the spread of the communicative approach to teaching language. The use of L1 has advantages and disadvantages, which are discussed in the article. Though it is currently believed that the ‘English only’ environment facilitates students’ learning of natural English and helps them to train their skills to communicate in English in real life situations, adult students can be critical of teaching methods applied by their teachers and not feel safe when only the target language is used. The article presents the results of the survey which was aimed at assessing the usefulness of L1 in a communicative classroom from the point of view of adult learners. The results lead to the conclusion that the adult students support the idea of strictly limiting the use of L1 in a communicative classroom. Research also shows that those students who expect L1 to be used in class would prefer their teachers to translate instructions, vocabulary, explain grammar, difficult concepts, and check their understanding. In these cases the teacher can employ different techniques to minimize the use of L1, yet create safe and student-friendly learning atmosphere.