

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

As mentioned in Chapter one, there are conflicts about using L1 in L2 classrooms in the ESL setting, which affect the belief in EFL settings. The relevant theories and literature will elaborate the importance of using L1 in English classrooms and reveal the results of the former researchers' work.

2.1 THEORIES AND CONCEPTS RELATED TO THE STUDY

2.1.1 Learning and Behavior

The following reviews explain the relationship between learning (relevant to learning language) and behavior. This affects the consideration of using Thai in English classrooms by teachers.

In Barker's view, (1994), 'learning' was a more or less permanent change in behavior resulting from personal experiences in the environment. We could not directly measure 'learning' because it was a process in the human brain but we could observe it from the behavior. Barker defined behavior as what people do, the way they act and how they respond to their environment. He stated that much of behavior has been learned, but behavior change by itself is not 'learning'. The genes and environment were the factors, which altered the behavior. The environment seemed to play an important role in learning language. He gave an example that without any background knowledge, students could learn a lot in class by listening to their teachers. However, without enough extensive educational experience they could not be able to read the written text outside the class, or on the other hand, learn by themselves. He also supported the idea of 'unconscious learning' that we were not aware of what we learned or what was learned. The internal process would take care of 'remembering' or forgetting' something. He concluded that the unconscious process had two aspects: unconsciousness seemed to be needed for the learning process and both emotions and skilled behavior could be easily conditioned in a person's learning language.

In Chance's definition of learning (1994), it was an adaptive mechanism, a way of coping with a changing world. If we want to study about learning process, we

need to know the relationship between a behavior and changes in its environment as well. Chance discussed that learning also had its limitations: internal and external factors. Physical characteristics, nonheritability of learned behavior, heredity and learning ability, neurological damage and learning, preparedness for learning and critical periods, are concerned, especially the last factor. Sometimes, one point of a person's life is suitable to learn a second language. Chance said in animals there were critical periods to learn something at a particular time but it was not clear whether there were critical periods for learning in humans. By contrast, Lenneberg (1967) claimed that critical periods existed in two ways and they affected the language acquisition (L1). First, children could not acquire a language if they did not learn it around puberty and, second, if they learned a language after puberty, they could have difficulties in learning.

Hartley (1998) asserted that operant conditioning and reinforcement still played an important role in human learning. He claimed that an operant conditioning, which required reinforcement or rewarding in order to achieve the goal, could not be fully applied to learning because human learning process was more complicated. Learners were not the passive receivers, who always responded to the reinforcement, but they were active processors who had strategies and knowledge to handle different situations.

Powell, Symbaluk and Macdonald (2002) confirmed that behavior was any activity of an organism that can be either directly or indirectly observed. If the behavior changed, learning would occur. Therefore, they defined learning as a relatively permanent change in behavior that resulted from some type of experience.

2.1.2 The Grammar-Translation and the Communicative Approach

Some educators who were against the translation in English classrooms claimed that using L1 in class was old-fashioned. They normally referred to the class which applied the *Grammar-translation method*. When we look at the features of this method, reviewed by Larsen-Freeman (1986), a translation process is used through the lesson. The word-by-word or conceptual meaning of English is translated in the mother tongue language as well as how to use grammar rules. This classical method assumes that the understanding of grammar knowledge could help students to speak

and write in L1 better. On the other hand, it seems that students learn foreign languages to monitor back to their native language, not for obtaining the new language.

In opposite to the Grammar-Translation method, the *Communicative Approach* does not allow L1 to play a role in class. The teachers encourage students to use the target language all the time to get the meaning across. This approach emphasizes the language functions within social context. The speakers have to negotiate meanings with listeners and get the feedback. Most of the time is spent on listening and speaking and usually end with an activity to check the students' comprehension and enhance the practiced patterns. It is certainly that students have a chance to speak in English more than those who are in the Grammar classes.

2.1.3 The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis and Interlanguage

When we shift the view to the foreign language concept, one of the hypotheses from second language theories is usually claimed by those who disagree with using L1 in class: the *Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH)*. Lightbrown and Spada (1996) quoted the hypothesis from Lado (1964) and put it under the behaviorism idea about the error analysis part. When errors occurred, part of them came from the mother tongue interference. The CAH predicts that where there are similarities between the two languages, the learner will acquire target language easily; where there are differences, the learner will have difficulty. The transfer of a first to second language is notably produced by young first language learners. Selinker (1972) argued that some errors are the combination between the native and second language, called *Interlanguage*. It was viewed as a good sign because it showed that students had learned something in a developmental process.

The preference for using L1 in classrooms or not is also up to the belief of teachers and how they view errors.

2.1.4 Using mother tongue language and Translation in Class

An English Only (EO) method was supported by many educators. There was an effect called the 'Disruptive Effect of Switching Language' mentioned by Soares

and Grosjean (1984). They claimed that Portuguese-English Bilinguals, for example, would struggle with English words when they appeared in the Portuguese sentences, on the other hand, the learners could not switch the language immediately to interpret the meaning.

Cook (2003) claimed that apart from exposing students to the language, the use of English could supplement the first language ability.

The argument for the EO has arisen when the English is viewed as a foreign language. Widdowson, H. G. (1979) stated that translation can be a very useful teaching application when learners learn a foreign language for a 'special purpose'. In this sense, he didn't mention about learning in school system or academic purposes.

Grainger (1993) explained that to create the lexicon, the bilinguals needed to refer back to their L1 to visualize the words in their mind and store them in their brain. Dash (2001) conducted research on teaching Korean students in the EO program and found out that there were some difficulties happened if L1 was prohibited in classroom. The students did need L1 to clarify the grammar points and cultural aspects rather than L2 only.

The translation process in English classroom naturally happened in the student's mental process. For the adult beginners, as described by Chen and Leung (1989), they used word translation and child beginners also used picture naming to aid their cognitive process.

Cohen (1990) and Oxford (1990) agreed that translation was one of the learning strategies of EFL learners. The learners seemed to use translation in all four skills to compensate their English comprehension.

In the smaller units of language, for example, words, Kroll and Stewart (1994) explained the word bank or lexicon of the students has two forms: the format and the concept. Bilingual students would make use of translation from L1 to L2 and vice versa.

Weschler (1997) objects to the English only classrooms. He claimed that using L1 in classrooms was not limited to the Grammar-Translation method. On the contrary, the use of L1 can promote the communicative methods by his proposed "Functional-Translation" Method. He commented that English-only classes would be successful if they took sufficient time, had specific and narrow targets and also a

suitable environment (ESL setting). In reality, students cannot maintain 'ideal' factors mentioned. He took Japanese students as his sampling to reflect his idea. His proposal method was an effort to combine the concept of translation with the communicative approach and apply the task-based teaching. He claimed that his 'translation' was not word-for-word and out-of-context. It was the teacher's job to consider when he/she could use L1 to prevent the situation that either L1 or L2 could not make the content clear, so-called a non-communicative moment.

Kecskes and Tünde (2000) proposed that the ESL and EFL settings were different because of the social environment of the acquisition process and the linguistic background of the learners. In foreign language environments, students' experience and activities in the target language were almost always restricted to the time spent in the classrooms. They claimed that the L1 could be used to activate the background knowledge leading to better understanding of the world and better communication.

Owen (2003) gave a new definition for translation in EFL concepts as "a process involving at least one mediator with certain bilingual activities", in which an attempt was made to transfer the meanings established in one language into an oral or written expression.

2.2 RELEVANT RESEARCH

In Thailand, no explicit surveys or studies have been conducted on using Thai in English classrooms in EFL settings. Teachers have a choice to use Thai in class according to their belief. Therefore, the following cited studies are from abroad where English is used as a foreign language.

In Spain, Schweers (1999) found out that there was a high percentage of using Spanish (L1) in English classrooms. Both students and teachers agreed that using a little Spanish in class could help in learning English. The reasons for using L1 are varied. They said that the explanation of difficult concepts and the comprehension checking needed to be done in Spanish. Using L1 also made them feel confident in class. Schweers agreed that English should be a means of communication in class by getting students to produce and negotiate with meanings. However, he emphasized learning English through L1 would be implemented to raise an awareness to the

similarities and differences between two languages. He found that the using L1 led to the positive attitude and enhanced learning.

In the Australia, Chau (2001) conducted classroom-based research in using Chinese in an English classroom. She developed the 'Bilingual Assistants Program' by recruiting postgraduates in TESOL or Linguistics who can speak English and their own mother tongue. All of the bilingual assistants helped the different adult migrants in New South Wales by support teaching such as explaining the curriculum, helping them develop learning strategies, offering teaching support and facilitating learning. They used both L1 and L2 in class and reported that using L1 in classroom was very useful, interesting and informative. The students said that L1 could improve understanding, create self-esteem and confidence. Chau concluded that the tendency to use L1 as a point of reference was a valid strategy at the initial stages of learning as that was the system learners were competent in.

In Canada, Thibault (2001) claimed that providing language instructional support to students with limited or no first language schooling in their home country might make a significant difference in their academic achievement. The longitudinal pilot project of the Ottawa Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) was conducted with minority students in Canada. The study supported the idea that academic knowledge and conceptual development transfer from the first language to the second language. Students with limited academic preparedness (less than 3 years of formal schooling in the first language) might take longer time to catch up their peers.

In China, the research by Tang (2002) makes obvious that more than 70% of students and teachers needed L1 in class to correct misconceptions and help with grammar and vocabulary. The participants of her study were 100 first-year English major students attending a University in Beijing and 20 teachers in the same faculty with ranges in teaching experience. She concluded that when there was a need for a mother tongue language, teachers could use it to assist the teaching and learning process but not to reduce the students' exposure to English.