

# Student L1 use in culturally diver ESL classroom

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**Abstract.** This paper discusses the role of students' first language (L1) in culturally diverse ESL classrooms in the US. Drawing from personal experience and classroom observations, it critiques English hegemony and advocates for L1 inclusion to increase motivation, cultural identity, and language learning efficiency. Practical strategies like translanguaging and Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) are highlighted as ways to foster inclusivity and confidence in multilingual learners.

**Keywords:** L1 use, cultural diversity, translanguaging, English hegemony.

## 1. Introduction

When I was an ESL learner in primary school, I experienced for the first time has an immersive English course taught by foreign teachers. At that time, as a very beginner learner of English, my mind was full of doubts: "What is the teacher asking me to do? What's the meaning of that long word teacher just mentioned? Why can't I understand, can the other classmates around me understand? Since the foreign teacher could not understand or speak Chinese, all the communication had to be in English, and even I was forced to interact in English with my Chinese classmates because we needed to show our English skills. I felt frustrated and even stupid. However, the parents were very excited when they saw superficially that we could understand English lessons and have conversations in English, exclaiming "Our children are so fluent in English!" Thus, we were kind of forced to continue this class because it seemed super "effective" (from the parents' point of view). However, as beginners, when are completely restricted from using our L1 Chinese, we are resistant and afraid of the embarrassment of not knowing how to say something in English or saying something wrong that our teacher could not understand. Nevertheless, because schools, parents or families, and the whole society attach great importance and emphasis to English proficiency and the ability to communicate in English, countless children like me are forced to accept immersive English education from a young age, even though we struggle with it. In addition, Chinese people advocate for the "standard language ideology", and support "standard British English" or "Standard North American English" as the most important and optimal goal of language learning [1]

Under this pervasive educational ideology towards English learning and social expectations, I began to dislike, even hate Chinese as my first language. In my opinion, this language, which has almost nothing related to English language manners and grammar, was the biggest obstacle to mastering English. At the same time, I began to envy native speakers of English, those who were born and grew up immersed in an English-dominant environment, or those who could go to international schools to learn English.

Now, studying and living in an English-speaking country to study and live, and now became an English teacher, I think the approach of eliminating native language (L1) participation and maximizing the use of the target language is flawed, especially for beginner learners. I think my students who just have just come to the United States echoes my experiences. Their confidence in learning English will be challenged by the all-English text they cannot understand on the slides, and their self-confidence will be lowered when they cannot understand the teacher's words and instructions. The sense of helplessness and confusion that they have just come to a foreign country will be aggravated when they cannot express themselves in English.

## 2. Teaching Context and students' information

My co-teacher Eive and I have taught together at the same teaching site for both semesters this year: the Free Library of Philadelphia. They are all located in downtown Philadelphia, in areas easily accessible by public transportation. After our fall semester beginner class, many students wanted to continue learning English with us. So, after negotiating with the new library staff and our program manager, we decided to make our spring class Beginner level 2, The "intermediate-high beginners". The class is advertised to recruit students who want to learn more complex basic English, but of course, we welcome both our former students from the previous semester and new students to join us. As a community service organization, Free Library has many subsites throughout Philadelphia to facilitate the access of residents.

Our student group is very diverse, with more than 10 different countries and cultures students speaking different L1 in the last semester and this semester (see Table 1). This diversity brought a lot of new elements and fun to our class as well as varied possibilities for our curriculum design. We have collected students' expectations or goals for English learning, including which aspects of listening, speaking, reading, and writing they would like our class to highlight. More than 90% of students want to learn more about listening and speaking, expect to be able to better integrate into their community, and master more real-life skills, such as making appointments, daily conversation and socializing, job hunting, shopping, and communicative skills that can increase confidence during speaking English. Therefore, our curriculum design can be centered around recognizing students' diverse backgrounds and needs, increasing communication and interaction among students, and creating a student-centered learning environment. By connecting with friends from the same background and culture and establishing new friendships and cooperation with students from different countries and races, they can add fun to their new lives in the United States and also have the opportunity to introduce their own country and culture to more friends. which can help them strengthen their cultural identity and confidence. In our class, we have informed all students in advance that their L1 is welcome at any time in our class. We will also make students who speak the same L1 form a group in class group activities with some difficulties so that they can use L1 to optimize their answers and discuss the results. which is a good way to increase learning efficiency and express confidence.

Our class sessions are free, and attendance is not required, which means that students can choose which class they want to attend. So, we may have different students in different classes, and the class capacity may be variable as well.

**Table 1.** Three Scheme comparing.

Number	Name	First/native language (L1)	Nationality	English Proficiency Level
1	Stacy	Persian	Iran	High beginner
2	Ivy	Persian	Iran	Intermediate beginner
3	Miwa	Japanese	Japan	Intermediate beginner
4	Satsuki	Japanese	Japan	Intermediate beginner
5	Haley	Spanish	Mexico	High beginner
6	Eddie	Portuguese & Spanish	Brazil	Intermediate beginner
7	Kevin	Spanish	Dominican Republic	Low beginner
8	Quinn	Spanish	Ecuador	Low beginner
9	Wendy	French	France	High beginner
10	Nina	French	Guinea	Intermediate beginner
11	Yue	Mandarin Chinese	China	Intermediate beginner
12	Nana	Mandarin Chinese	China	Intermediate beginner
13	Lia	Russian	Russia	Intermediate beginner
14	Poppy	Russian & Hebrew	Israel	Intermediate beginner
15	Leslie	Russian	Belarus	Intermediate beginner
16	Debbie	Russian	Ukraine	Intermediate beginner

### **3. Challenging Hegemonic Nations of English in a Racially Diverse ESL class.**

I love our class and our students, both my students and I think our students are supportive and tolerance, and our classroom atmosphere is very warm. Even after class or during the holidays, we learn to share blessings in our group chat. This is because the students are all new immigrants or refugees who just came to the United States. They just settle down in a brand-new community and participate in our class. There are more classmates from other backgrounds who share similar circumstances in the United States, so class rapport can be established quickly. The cultural and linguistic diversity in our classrooms is something we cherish and hope to maintain through English learning. However, the hegemony of English and the ideology of white supremacy does permeate in the local community. White supremacy, in this context, is a means of expropriating, assimilating, and exterminating negatively racialized and linguistically minority communities through the mechanisms of Western colonial hegemony and English language instruction [2]

One of my students from Guinea shared her experience of going to a restaurant in class (the topic of our class at that time was ordering food) and she said that most restaurants in downtown are paper menus only in Italian and English as well. She felt neglected in the restaurant, experiencing awkwardness and a lack of confidence because the servers were impatient with her. This experience made her not willing to go to the restaurants later on, preferring order online by herself. In fact, we have many students who have been asked in public places and even at school: "Do you speak English?" or some hidden or intangible "English only" social needs. For example, one of my students from Mexico, who is a Spanish teacher before, also experienced being forced to use English in community meeting dialogues. When sharing the situations that caused her to feel embarrassed and anxious during our "emotion" topic class, she said: "I felt embarrassed and anxious when I couldn't understand others speaking English and had to speak English in front of a group of people."

When we narrow down the range from the society to the school, we can also find that the English hegemony unconsciously rules the students. Multilingual children often face strict language isolation in school education, and a "target language zone" is used to learn specific content in one language at a time [3]. In other words, if a bilingual student's English is not good enough to understand all the math content in a class where the dominant instruction language is English, then his/her math professional ability may still be hindered by English comprehension problems and be given a poor math grade consequently. Additionally, in schools where English is the instructional language in Hong Kong, teachers believe that ethnic minority students should conform to social expectations in order to gain more respect and opportunities [4]. However, this unconsciously strengthens the social stereotype and marginalization of ethnic minority students and further enhances the power of English in schools in China.

As teachers, we resist the hegemony of standard English, and do not want students to feel inferior and neglected, simply because they just arrived in the United States and consider their English not good enough. We look forward to taking action to change, and study displays that the school's teachers insisted on allowing students to speak Black English in their classes and firmly believed that the set of standards proposed by white teachers for assessing students using a single standard unconsciously reinforced the white supremacy of English hegemony, thereby widely dehumanizing students of color [5]. We aim to create a tolerant classroom that embraces all cultures, languages, and identities. To let students feel proud of their cultures and languages and make learning English a way to enhance their confidence.

#### **3.1. As a Non-native English Speaker Teacher (NNEST)**

Like our students, both my co-teacher and I are from China, and our native language is Chinese. We have travelled this road of learning English, slowly from English as a second language learner to an English teacher. The difficult transition that our students are going through is something that we have experienced. Therefore, we are more emotionally attuned to the feelings of our students and more aware of the negative marginalization experiences that the hegemony of English brings to those of us who are minorities. We as NNEST should "hold an umbrella" for our students from our own

learning experience in English as a second language learning and ESL teaching. According to the findings of Shin [6], she believes that non-native language teachers have a distinct advantage over native language teachers in that they are better able to explain the features of the second language in a way that students can understand. Other research also mentioned that NNEST is often or has been subjected to culture shock and has adapted to different professional environments [7]. So, these teachers can use their own language learning experience to better understand and support their students' learning process. Chinese teacher's example also proves that NNEST can bring a lot of potential to diverse classrooms, including but not limited to insight into the learning process of English as a second language [8].

As our students are beginners, we never force them to use English to communicate with us; they are allowed to freely use their entire linguistic repertoire when they were confused about how to express themselves in English. I also don't want them to feel lost and helpless, as I felt when I was a child because of the power of English in the classroom. There is a very popular sentence on Chinese social media I think this statement is very much in line with the current situation of me and my students: "Because I have been in the rain myself, I want to hold an umbrella for others." I had been influenced by the hegemony of standard English and speakerism, resulting in a long time I was trapped in an inappropriate cognitive mode: "my English is not good enough to be recognized by Americans and American professors, what should I do?" In this way, I ignored my most valuable and unique characteristics and self-identity: I'm a Chinese international student. I should be proud that I speak two languages and have lived in multiple cultures. I hope my students can feel that their native culture and language are respected when they just come to the United States and start to learn English in my class. As NNEST, we can make our classroom a more inclusive place, and our students can be confident and motivated. Therefore, my co-teacher and I try our best to make our English class rich in intercultural characteristics. We will often share Chinese culture when we teach culturally relevant content or topics, and students are encouraged to share anything about their country/culture. For example, one of our classes fell on Halloween day. Under the theme of "festival", we held a small sharing seminar. Everyone can form a group (students can freely choose to join a group with people from the same country/culture) and search online by themselves and then write or draw their country's famous festivals and celebration ways on poster paper. Then we hang the posters around our classroom. Each group can share their festival, and some students also teach the class some of the greetings in their language (See Appendix #1 for the results). See the examples below.

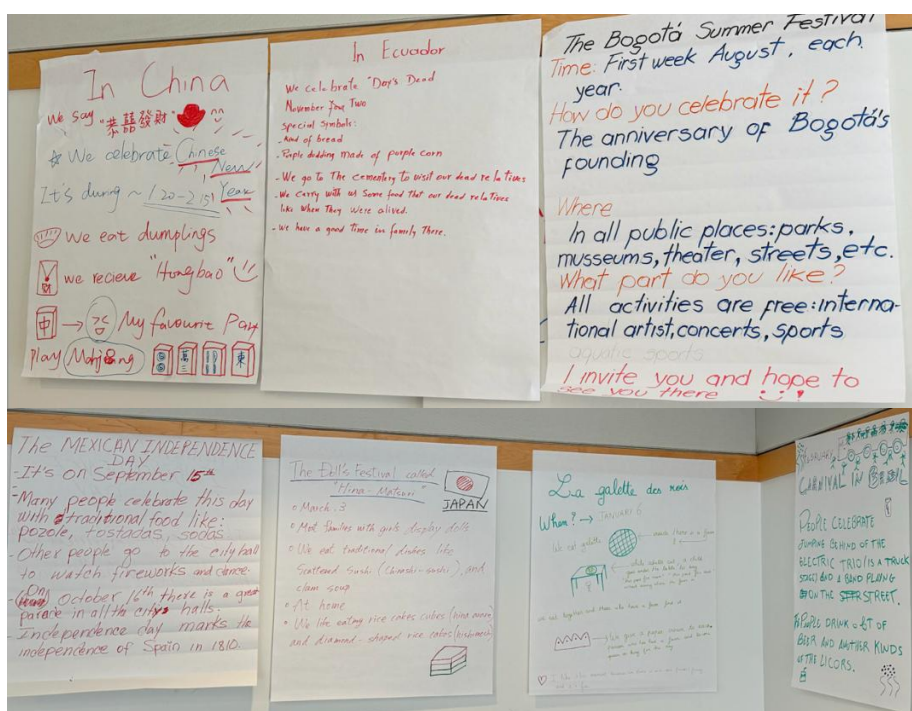


Fig 1. Famous festivals in different countries and culture.

In this class, all languages were treated equally, and everyone was looking forward to other students sharing the festival culture and language of their country. Students from the same country got super excited to write and draw together, looking forward to introducing their own country's festivals proudly with the whole class. I loved this atmosphere; the hegemony of English was not able to appear to stop the spread of happiness in our class. At the same time, students were also curious about the interesting festival details of other countries and looked forward to having the opportunity to have a deeper understanding of them, and the communication between students was far more frequent than in usual classes. The fight against English hegemony and intercultural communication is perfectly realized in this class.

### 3.2. Teaching practice against English hegemony in ESL classroom

In our diverse class, we as NNEST can use our own knowledge and understanding of students to develop teaching practices that benefit students of different races, making diversity and cross-cultural communication a major feature of our classroom. The theory of self-classification for the development of cross-cultural culture is proposed in research articles [9]. Although language teachers have realized the importance of belonging to national groups, they have not done enough to interact with and practice multicultural identities. Therefore, we not only need to learn from the former's experience but also need to further improve the practice of multicultural communication by teaching multiple topics in our class and observing students carefully. For instance, researcher proposed a special method for learning English in the context of the diversity of ethnic minorities in China: Digital Multimodal Composing (DMC) [10]. It can be regarded as a cultural maintenance strategy in mainstream English classrooms. Minority students can use multimodal creation, such as videos, blogs, audio, and other multimedia forms, to help them gain peer support, collaborate, and use their national knowledge as cultural capital. This special way can make students more actively participate in learning and overcome the obstacles they face in the traditional EFL environment. They can freely utilize the diverse resources of their own culture or involve multimodality to assist in English learning. The author believes that this creative approach not only effectively improves the language skills of minority students but also enhances their identification and expression of their cultural identity.

Looking back to our classes, multimodal teaching is also a method that we frequently employ. For instance, when we were discussing the topic of "different emotions", we chose the movie "Inside Out" as our listening material. Before playing the video to practice listening skills, we first showed the students pictures of the characters with "inside out" emotions as examples to illustrate the appearance and names of different emotions. See the example below.

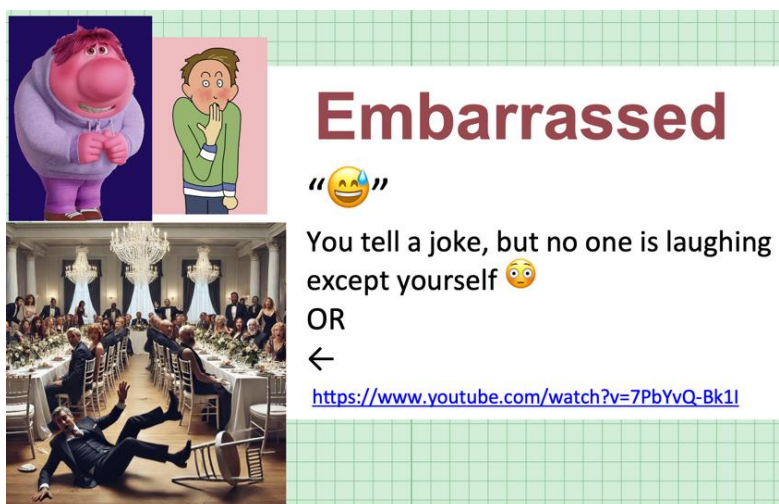


Fig 2. Using multimodal examples to explain abstract vocabulary.

Thus, the students had a preliminary understanding of the emotional characters in the "Inside Out" movie through the combination of pictures and text. Before starting to play the video, we also asked the students to translate and search for the unfamiliar words in the text first and make annotations

beside them to facilitate understanding during listening. We played the video on YouTube, and students gradually progressed from watching without subtitles at 0.5x speed to 0.75x speed to normal speed to try their best to complete the “fill in the blanks” listening practice. Then, we played the version with English subtitles to let the students confirm their answers again. At the same time with multimodal instruction and practice methods, we also encouraged the students to use multimodal methods for output and creation, such as drawing timelines and using pictures or performances to express their understanding of different emotions. The cultural diversity in our class always stimulates many very interesting expressions because the students are curious about how their classmates from different countries express specific events or emotions. When they discover the differences between themselves and others, more conversations and exchanges will start, which is one of the most effective ways to increase participation and activate the class atmosphere in our current class.

#### **4. Fostering Students’ Engagement in a Culturally Diverse ESL Classroom**

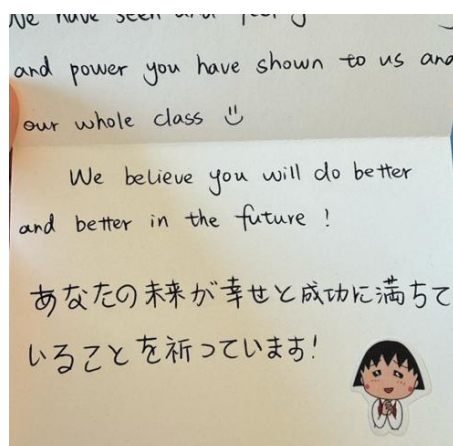
At the beginning of our teaching, while we were excited to see so many students from various countries in our class, we also worried about how to design the content we needed to teach and how to build friendly relationships among our students. Since most of our students were low beginners, it was difficult to achieve efficient communication in class relying only on their current communicative competence. Moreover, our students were extremely diverse. For instance, in one class, there were 17 students from 10 different countries speaking 9 different languages and none of the students spoke Chinese. Therefore, me and my co-teacher and I could not share the first language with the students. This was the most difficult moment for us. We could not completely grasp the English proficiency and learning goals of all the students from one or two weeks of teaching, who were a very beginner. Filling out questionnaires was not feasible because most students had difficulty understanding extended text in English. Even our explanations were hard for them to fully understand. At the beginning of our first teaching semester, we were very confused. Our previous teaching experiences and professional backgrounds didn't involve much cross-cultural communication and teaching, nor did we have experience in teaching ESL with multiple ethnic groups. Most of our preparation time for each week was spent on deciding how to scaffold, how to conduct in-class activities, and how to explain and make sure students understood a specific knowledge point. Now we have nearly a year of teaching experience, and we have accumulated more multicultural communication experiences in the US. I am also doing an internship as a literacy tutor in a primary school in Philadelphia, and I have come into contact with more and more people from different countries, different age groups, and with different goals for learning English. After gaining more experience, we gradually summarized how to optimize the advantages of racial diversity in our classes and create an inclusive and supportive classroom for students. Moreover, many studies have provided us with inspiration, which enables us to draw upon to develop directions for teaching practice and content planning that are suitable for our students.

For instance, the well-known Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) strategy proposed by Villegas and Luca advocates that language teachers should be aware from a social and cultural perspective that individual worldviews are not universally applicable; teachers need to hold an affirmative view of diversity and believe that students from marginalized social groups are capable learners [11]. Therefore, in the beginner courses of the first semester, we will group students from the same country or the same language together when they participate in group activities or need to discuss or speak, and our teaching site manager also gave this suggestion. This arrangement not only facilitates students to use their full language repertoire as resources for output to help them understand the content and instructions in class and give effective responses but also provides them with opportunities to produce output that is more confident and related to their culture, which also enables us teachers to better understand their language culture and habits.

Idrus and Sohid demonstrated the significance of CRT for students' classroom participation through an analysis of a cultural exchange practice case in a school in Malaysia [12]. This analysis

also proved the effectiveness of CRT in enhancing students' participation. The teaching activities related to culture, positive reinforcement, curriculum adjustment, and group projects/peer teaching mentioned in the text are also the aspects that we will frequently involve in our classes now. Through various activities, my co-teacher and I have also agreed that CRT is an effective way to enhance students' engagement in a diverse classroom. For example, students from the same country or who speak the same language are placed in the same discussion group or sharing preparation group. Being assigned to the same group means that they can freely use their L1 during discussions. This not only enhances the efficiency of the discussions but also provides an opportunity for the cultural communication of their native language to play its maximum role in ESL classrooms to help students understand and progress. At the same time, we will design interactive sessions or cooperative tasks related to students' cultural backgrounds. For example, when discussing the precautions for taking a plane, we will ask students to share the differences and similarities between their countries' airports and the US airports. When learning the theme of describing appearance and dressing style, we will also ask students to share what clothes people usually wear or how they dress themselves on different occasions in their countries. Through these cultural-related interactions, we aim to increase students' self-identity affirmation and confidence in their country and language culture in English classes through intercultural interactions. After class, we also have discussions with students about daily life, and encourage students to share the characteristic foods, landscapes, and things they like to do in their spare time from their countries. When my co-teacher and I come across some food or daily necessities packages with descriptions in languages other than English, we ask students whose native language is those languages to act as our teachers.

Such culturally responsive teaching and interaction always heightens students' enthusiasm because they can see the relevance of content in the English class to their own country or culture. As teachers, we strive to understand students' backgrounds while trying to incorporate more cultural elements into our classes. At the end of our first Fall semester, I prepared congratulatory cards for all the students who came to attend the end-of-class celebration. Besides the congratulatory messages written in English, I also used a translator to write encouraging words in their native languages for students from different countries. See the example below.



**Fig 3.** Culturally responsive feedback to the students.

I hoped that while they were learning English and acquiring English knowledge, they could cherish their unique characteristics, which could be their native languages or their distinctive personality traits. I believe that learning English should be an additional skill that preserves and values their original features, like native language and cultural related virtues (politeness, modesty, passion, etc.), making them more confident. Many studies have also confirmed the effectiveness of CRT through teaching practices. For instance, Chen and Yang's research confirmed that in adult ESL classrooms in Asian countries, implementing CRT could significantly increase students' frequency of classroom participation [13]. Some other experts also proposed that role-play, can enhance the quality of multicultural courses in ESL classrooms and increase students' participation [14]. We often employ role-play when discussing topics related to daily life, such as shopping at supermarkets or ordering

food in restaurants. Such role plays are very good ways to integrate different cultures because students can give their performances a unique cultural identity; we also encourage them to share more details if they want to. For example, there is a student from Ecuador in our class. In the role-play activity of ordering food in a restaurant, she played the role of a server. She shared her recommendation of the flavors of the dishes. She mentioned that in their country, salty dishes are more popular than sweet ones. After the performance, we encouraged her to share some specific Ecuadorian salty-flavored dishes. She not only recommended several famous dishes but also introduced several restaurants in the city center to us.

Translanguaging strategies are also an important aspect of diverse ESL classroom participation. Students in ESL classrooms can use multiple languages and translanguaging to express their conceptual understanding of second language vocabulary knowledge [15]. By using translanguaging resources, students can not only externalize their thinking process but also provide important diagnostic information for teachers to assess their current knowledge status. Combining the various related strategies of cultural exchange mentioned above, the researchers and teachers involved have provided me with professional experience. Additionally, the integration of my experience in cooperative teaching with my co-teacher. I believe that our diverse classrooms will develop in a better direction. For instance, during the class where we were learning about the issues and solutions related to living, one of our students from Russia shared the type of house he was living in. He said that he was living in a house in Philadelphia, but when he was back in his hometown Russia, he was living in a "dacha". We encourage him to explain the term "dacha" in simple English, or to share what a dacha in Russia is like. This kind of translanguaging practice not only enables students to express their thoughts to the fullest extent by using translanguaging but also facilitates multilingual and multicultural communication in the classroom.

## **5. The effects of L1 use on learning motivation and self/cultural identification.**

Because of my diverse student group and teaching experience this semester, I explore whether validation of identity and cultural affirmation of non-native English speakers will have an impact on their English learning. Last semester we found that when the students' proficiency level was not high, but the teacher could only use English as the medium of teaching, students had no choice but to use L1 to discuss with classmates who share the same L1 with them or to use fellow students as interpreters. However, through more than three months of teaching in the last semester, we found that teachers' tolerance of L1 use will also affect students' motivation to learn English. The positive attitude of the teachers towards L1 enables students to feel that their native language is respected in the English classroom. In addition to learning more and more English, their vocabulary is also steadily increasing. Their eagerness and enthusiasm for communication will also make them more proactive in class and communicate with more students who do not share the same L1 as them. They can use L1 to communicate with friends from the same language region, or to share the culture and characteristics of their country with other classmates. The more friends they made, the more active our classroom atmosphere will be, which is also an effective way to increase their chances to use and practice English.

### **5.1. The effects of L1 use on students' motivation**

Many studies demonstrate that students' use of L1 in early learning stage plays a supportive role in language learning, especially in reading and writing [16]. Even for students with good proficiency, allowing translators to intervene in English writing expression can help learners improve their awareness of independent learning and learning motivation [17]. The role of the translation is very important in beginner ESL class; it can effectively improve the efficiency of mutual understanding when communication obstacles occur and can also reduce student's anxiety. This phenomenon is not limited to English learning classrooms. In the language teaching classrooms in Norway, researchers found that while Norwegian teachers faced challenges in multilingual classrooms, teachers who

adopted a first language integration strategy reported higher levels of student engagement and excitement, as well as greater comprehension [18].

In our class, since we mainly practice our listening and speaking skills, we design many activities to practice after the knowledge points in each class. However, sometimes students may not fully understand the activity instruction, such as some key verbs such as describe, decide, and identify. This is when we assign students who speak the same L1 into a group. In this way, with the mutual help of classmates and the assistance of L1, all students can well participate. When they share their practice results, they are fully prepared, they have used their L1 efficiently and thoroughly understood the question and are ready to answer. The use of L1 makes them confident in their answers, without the ambiguity and hesitation that can result from not being able to understand some key information. With a great amount of practice with the allowance of using L1 or translanguaging in our class activities, we can find that many students, especially some lower-level students, made a great progress, especially in orally speaking. The attendance and participation are more stable as well. Because students can feel that they have acquired a lot of knowledge and useful skills in this class, and the help of L1 allows them to get out of the confusion as soon as possible. In addition, students who help each other in the same L1 group also help them find people with common identification in this new city more quickly, and our English class has become a place where they can make new friends.

## **5.2. L1's use to form a multicultural learning environment**

In the United States, a multilingual and multicultural society, there are many people with multiple identities. Tadayon and Khodi's article clearly point out that language may affect the speaker's thought and identity, and the impact of language erosion and acculturation in the communities has not received the attention it deserves [19]. However, the native language and the language of the host country are not equal in the social system [20]. In an English immersive classroom where teachers don't share the same L1 with students, students have to passively receive and use, L1 students' L1 is inevitably suppressed consequently. But we as teachers don't want that to happen, because the purpose of students learning English is not to become "local", but to use English to make their life in the United States smooth and convenient. I also don't want them to be like me when I was a child and reject their native language because of the high social status and importance of English.

In 1979, Cummins put forward the key idea that "the education system should use students' first language as a bridge to learning a second language and academic content, rather than as a barrier" to support the use of L1 in educational settings [21]. We recognize the need to equalize all languages in the student's language repertoire resources that students can mobilize. Thus, we fully consider this point when planning our class. We have designed classroom activities that enable students to incorporate their native language and original culture into the classroom and facilitate cross-cultural communication.. For example, we introduce the theme of "famous food" in the class of "restaurant ordering" topic. We ask students to introduce their hometown's famous foods, the most popular dishes they will order in restaurants, and their name in their L1s; we've also tried the teacher and students' roles exchange activities, allowing students to become their L1 language teachers, teaching us and other students their native language. We aim to create a multi-cultural and translanguaging classroom, so that students have more opportunities to communicate and share the characteristics of their own country's culture and language, and consequently, their native language and culture are respected enough in our English classroom, they can use L1 more confidently in our future classes.

There is much research confirming the benefits of multicultural and multilingual classrooms. For example, multicultural practices using different language backgrounds not only enhance learners' abilities but also have a positive impact on their academic performance [22]. This approach not only validates students' existing language skills but also integrates them into the learning process, thereby increasing motivation to learn. Moreover, the dynamics of foreign language classrooms in China, finding that both students and teachers benefit from translanguaging practice [23]. These practices help maintain the effectiveness of communication and keep students engaged, creating a more inclusive and stimulating learning atmosphere.

## 6. Conclusion

I spent a whole year with my students, and I witnessed their progress. The messages they sent me privately after class expressing gratitude and their gradually more confident expressions made me repeatedly experience the happiest moments as a teacher. I was surrounded by love, felt a sense of achievement, and remained passionate forever. The continuous practice in the classroom enabled the students to integrate their L1 and their original culture into the class, and I also learned a lot from them, including but not limited to some scarce knowledge that I had never heard of and attitudes towards language learning.

While being moved and achieving a sense of accomplishment, I also gained and reflected upon many things. Language should not be a shackling lock that restrains our confidence, but rather a key that unlocks the door to the world for us. My students come from all corners of the earth and gather in the small classroom of the library. Why should the shadow of the hegemony of the English language cast a gloom over the friendly environment where we can speak and interact with multiple languages with confidence? We should have cherished the essence of "who we are originally" rather than being forced to become what society expects us to be. My students have also achieved remarkable accomplishments in their home countries or during their youth, and they have had lives as bright as the morning sun. They should not have all their past glories wiped out just because they have moved to a new social and cultural environment. At their age of 20, they don't lack the opportunity to start anew; at their age of 60, they also don't lack the courage to have a brand-new beginning. As language teachers, we should provide them with a platform or opportunities so that they can continue to blossom like different kinds of flowers in different piece of land.

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