

Task: What follows are some common classroom functions that are used by the teacher. In which of those functions do you usually use L1 and in which L2? Why?

Suggested Answer

Instructing: giving instructions.

It depends on the instructions. Instructions that are routinely employed will be given in L2 (English) as learners have to get used to listening to them and be able to understand them. Complicated instructions (e.g. for games) may be given in learners' mother tongue as this is more economical and less frustrating.

In case you have decided to provide instructions less commonly used in the L2, you might consider checking the instructions you have given by asking children to repeat them in the L1.

Explaining: explaining how to do an activity, a project, etc.

Long explanations on an activity or a project may be given in L1 (for the same reasons as those stated above).

Storytelling (narrating): reading or telling a story.

This is an activity that should be carried out in L2 (see also relevant material on *Teaching through storytelling*).

Eliciting: getting information from our learners rather than giving it to them, e.g., "what can you see in this picture?"

This is also a function that can be carried out in English, as it usually involves pictures, visual material, realia and objects as well as classroom language that learners need to be able to understand in L2.

Prompting: saying something to help learners think of ideas, or to remember a word or phrase by giving them part of it.

It depends on the difficulty of the language learners are trying to remember. Providing prompts in L1 might be easier and more economical.

Checking learning or understanding: making sure that children can follow or understand what we present.

This function involves classroom language that learners should be able to understand, e.g., “Do/did you understand?”, “Is that easy?”, etc.

Conveying the meaning of new language: showing the meaning of new words by bringing in realia, using mime and by translating

The meaning of new language (e.g., vocabulary) is expected to be given through miming, gestures or realia. Translation into L1 may be rarely employed in case of abstract concepts – which are, anyway, rarely taught at this age.

Feedback session: In a feedback session, the aim is for children to express their feelings and attitudes.

In such a session it would be counter-productive to expect learners to use their limited knowledge of English. It is important that the children feel comfortable to express their feelings, comments, impressions, likes and dislikes.