

A NEGLECTED RESOURCE OR AN OVERVALUED ILLUSION: L1 USE IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Dr. Hüseyin KAFES
Anadolu University,
School of Foreign Languages
Eskişehir, TURKEY

ABSTRACT

The role and use of L1 in instructed second/foreign language classroom, especially in intensive foreign language programs, has without any doubt been at the crux of a fair extent of controversy, debate, and discussion. Although some research has been conducted on the attitudes of both foreign language instructors and learners towards L1 in the L2 classroom, very few studies have aspired to investigate the impact of L1 use on the proficiency gains of learners and its purpose. In view of the limited research on this issue, this study aims to report the findings of a specific study on the purpose of L1 use by language instructors in the speaking course in an intensive English course at Anadolu University. The results of the study show a judicious and systematic use of L1 by instructors geared towards facilitating communication and relationship between the teacher and students.

Key words: L1 use, second/foreign language, language learning, input.

INTRODUCTION

The role of the mother tongue in the instructed second/foreign language learning classroom and its use by both language instructors and learners has always been a vexed question of much debate, controversy, discussion and dispute among linguists, methodologists, language teachers, and learners. In short, we could easily argue that everyone concerned with language teaching is engrossed by the argument. As it is widely known, the history of language teaching has witnessed various approaches and language teaching methods which have regarded L1 use in the L2 classroom both in favor or disapproval. While the use of L1 in the foreign language classroom, also known as the Bilingual Approach, gained popularity notably at the peak of Grammar Translation Method, L1 use, was almost vetoed by the Direct Method (Richards & Rodgers, 1986) and the Communicative Approach, easily recognized the exclusively English policy or the Monolingual Approach. The main premise of the proponents of the monolingual approach and the Direct Method was that 'second language learning mirrors first language acquisition, involving lots of oral interaction, very little grammatical analysis, and no translation' (Brown, 1994). Also pivotal in furthering the Monolingual Approach was Krashen, who advocated maximum exposure to the target language in the foreign language classroom (Krashen, 1985). In time, this approach has had its own opponents, what came to be acknowledged as the Bilingual Approach. Unlike the premise of the Monolingual Approach, proponents of the Bilingual Approach profess to moderate approach to L1 use in the foreign language classroom. Contrary to the dominant view when every chance in the language classroom should be made use to increase the amount of comprehensible input, supporters of the Bilingual Approach such as Atkinson (1987), Harbord (1992), and Rinvoluceri (2001) are some of those who are in favor of *judicious* and *minimal* use of L1 in L2 classrooms (italics added).

Despite the belief in the merits of the judicious and minimal use of L1 in L2 classrooms, there does not seem to be a set of occasions where and when it should be used. As such, it rests to the foreign language instructor to decide when, why, and under which circumstances to use. Consequently, under which circumstances L1 should

be used in the foreign language classroom seems to be decided on in accordance with the diverse peculiarities of language classrooms.

Aim and Scope of the Study

Given this versatile yet unresolved issue of L1 use in L2 classroom settings, this study aimed at investigating in which situations L1 is used by foreign language instructors in L2 classrooms. Specifically, it was carried out to find out any recurring common situations and under which circumstances L1 is used by English language teachers.

Statement of the Research Questions

This study aimed at answering the following research questions:

1. For what purpose(s) is L1 used by foreign language instructors?
2. Are there any common patterns among the instructors in the use of L1?
3. Does the amount of L1 use in the L2 language classroom display any change over a period of time?

Review of Literature

In this section, arguments for and against the use of the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom is discussed.

L1 use in L2 classrooms

The use of L1 in L2 classes, be it in multilingual or monolingual settings, has been one of the hotly debated controversial issues in the field of ELT. There have been times when it was viewed and welcomed with complete favor or disfavor. While L1 use, better known as the Bilingual Approach, gained popularity in the heydays of the Grammar Translation Method, the preference to avoid its use in the foreign language classroom stemmed from the advent of the Direct Method, the Monolingual Approach, at the beginning of the twentieth century (Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Harbord, 1992; Harmer, 2001) But this ruthless opposition and attitude towards the use of students' mother tongue, according to Harmer (2001), has seen a significant change recently.

In the literature, a number of academics, researchers, and teachers underline the growing methodological need in TEFL for a principled, systematic, and judicious use of mother tongue in the classroom by language instructors. Yet, an ever-increasing body of researches, researchers, academics, and teachers alike, believe in the merit of using only the target language in the foreign language classroom. Those who claim that only the target language should be used in the language classroom base their claim on three grounds:

- a. The learning of an L2 should model the learning an L1 (through maximum exposure to the L2).
- b. Successful learning involves the separation and distinction of L1 and L2.
- c. Students should be shown the importance of L2 through its continual use.

(Cook, 2001: 412).

Proponents of this approach also claim that using L1 in the foreign language classroom does not run in accordance with the second language acquisition theories (Polio, 1994). In underlining the importance of the use of the target language in the foreign language classroom, Brown (2001) draws attention to the crucial role the language teachers' use of the target language has in a foreign language classroom. At this stage, language teachers are virtually the only source of most of the linguistic input learners can be exposed to. Similarly, Cross (1995), who views school as a society claims that the target language should be used in every possible occasion for purposes such as conducting the class and for social interactions as well as managerial purposes. In his attempt to underline the importance of the use of only the target language, (Nunan 1995) claims:

In all types of classrooms, teacher talk is important, and has been extensively researched and documented. In the language classroom it is particularly important because the medium is the message. The modifications

which teachers make to their language, the questions they ask, the feedback they provide and the types of instructions and explanations they provide can all have an important bearing, not only on the effective management of the classroom, but also on the acquisition by learners of the target language.

As can be deduced from the above mentioned quotations, the main purpose of reducing or even abolishing the use of the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom aims to maximize the amount of time spent using the target language to help the language learner to learn the target language efficiently and effectively. In emphasizing the significance of input for language learners, Cross (1995) states that the amount of linguistic input the learners can have is closely related to the richness of the linguistic environment, the classroom where the learners dwell in. As such, given the limited chances, especially monolingual foreign language learners have as their sole source of input is the classroom. Hence, the importance given to making use of every possible opportunity in the class to use the target language may be understood better.

On the contrary, those who have a somewhat moderate approach to using L1 in the foreign language classroom complain that little consideration and attention has been given to the use of the native language in the foreign language classroom. The pretext behind this, according to Atkinson (1987), is the implication that the native language has no role to play in the foreign language classroom. In talking about the causes of this neglect, he claims that many of the claims put forth by those who are in disfavor of the use of L1 in the language classroom were not scrutinized adequately. Atkinson (ibid) states that a number of factors, such as the association of translation with the Grammar Translation Method, the backwash effect whereby native speakers possess, Krashen and his associates' influence, and the truism that one can only learn English by speaking English are responsible for this neglect.

Rinvoluceri (2001), one of the proponents of those who are in favor of judicious and careful use of the mother language especially in the monolingual foreign language classroom, maintains that there is a natural need for the mother tongue on learners' way towards English. He also draws attention to the danger that absolute direct Methodism, paradoxically, can force language learners in reverse mode to the mother tongue considerably more than an open approach can fulfill. He states that both the mother tongue and the target language should be present in the learning activities the class engages in since they are both frequently present in the students' minds. In line with this argument, he claims:

Using the mother tongue in a judicious and highly technical way in the EFL classroom allows the fullness of the learners' language intelligence to be brought into play. By excluding the mother tongue, we feel there is a risk of alienating the student and reducing her mind's openness to pleasurable and creative play, which is essential to fast and deep learning (Rinvoluceri 2001).

In arguing for mother tongue use in the foreign language classroom, Harbord (1992) states that the mother tongue should be used for three main reasons; it is a learner preferred strategy, a humanistic approach, and an efficient use of time. Similarly, Atkinson (1987) proposes some uses of the mother tongue, such as eliciting language (all levels), checking comprehension (all levels), giving instructions (early levels), building and/or maintaining cooperation among learners, discussing classroom methodology (early levels), presenting and reinforcing language (mainly early levels), checking for sense, and testing. Harbord (1992) categorizes the purposes for which the mother tongue can be used into three: facilitating communication, facilitating teacher-student relationship, and facilitating the learning of L2. The purposes for which L1 can be used can be summed up as:

Table 1
 L1 use occasions

Harbord (1992)	Piasecka (1988)
<p>Using L1 to facilitate communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discussion of classroom methodology during the early stages of a course -Explaining the meaning of a grammatical item (e.g. a verb tense) at the time of presentation, especially when a correlate structure does not exist in L1 -Student-student comparison or discussion of work done -Giving instructions for a task to be carried out by students -Asking or giving administrative information such as timetable changes, etc., or allowing students to ask or answer these in L1 -Checking comprehension of a listening or reading text -Explaining the meaning of a word by translation -Checking comprehension of structure, e.g. How do you say "I've been waiting for ten minutes" in (L1)?' -Allowing or inviting students to give a translation of a word as a comprehension check - Eliciting vocabulary by giving the L1 equivalent -L1 explanations by students to peers who have not understood -Giving individual help to a weaker student, e.g., during individual or pair work <p>Using L1 to facilitate teacher-student relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Telling jokes in L1 -Chatting in L1 before the start of the lesson to reduce student anxiety <p>Using L1 to facilitate learning of L2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> morphology spelling, formal speech, and writing can be arrived at collectively or explained by the teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Educational counseling -Publicity -Negotiating the syllabus -Access skills -Profiling and record -Integrating newcomers -Personal contact -Classroom management -Setting the scene -Language analysis -Cross-cultural issues -Materials (Worksheets and tapes with mother tongue instruction) -Correcting -Resolving individual areas of difficulty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Assessment and evaluation of the lesson -Focusing on a particular -Rules governing grammar, phonology,
Collingham (1988)	Atkinson (1988)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discussion and negotiation of the syllabus -Role-play -Teaching grammar -Teaching language functions -Teaching vocabulary -Teaching phonology -Teaching literacy -Comprehension -Creative writing -Providing information -Record keeping a recently taught language item 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Eliciting language -Checking comprehension -Giving complex instruction -Discussion of classroom meth. -Presentation and reinforcement of language -Checking for sense -Testing -Development of useful learning strategies -Using translation to highlight

As could be seen from table 1, the functions put forward by the proponents of L1 use in the foreign language classroom are quite similar. It seems that L1 use in the foreign language classroom is viewed just a strategy to facilitate communication and learning, not an end in itself. In a study on the purposes of Turkish secondary school students' code-switching, Elridge (1999) found that using the mother tongue in the foreign language learning classroom had some general and some specific purposes. While the general functions were oriented to classroom tasks, specific functions included equivalence, floor holding, meta-language, reiteration, group membership, conflict control, alignment and misalignment. He claims that there is not a parallelism between the lack of mother tongue use and the quality and quantity of target language use commenting that:

It is worth emphasizing once more that decreasing mother tongue use in the classroom does not increase the quality and quantity of target language use, any more than decreasing one's consumption of meat automatically increases one's consumption of cheese. To prescribe the former under the assumption that the latter will be achieved thus betrays a logic that is entirely spurious. If we want students to speak more English

in the classroom, we should concentrate on that issue, with all the precision and energy at our disposal (Elridge 1999).

Though different writers offer some practical reasons for the use of L1, there does not seem to be overall complete agreement. Harbord (1992) frames this as:

Perhaps the most important point to be made in the discussion on the rights and wrongs of using the mother tongue in the classroom is that translation, and indeed use of the mother tongue generally, is not a device to be used to save time for 'more useful' activities, nor to make life easier for the teacher or the students. Instead, as Duff says, it should be used to provoke discussion and speculation, to develop clarity and flexibility of thinking, and to help us increase our own and our students' awareness of the inevitable interaction between mother tongue and the target language that occur during any type of language acquisition.

The above mentioned writers who are in favor of the judicious and minimal use of the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom do not refrain from drawing attention to possible dangers that may arise due to excessive dependency on it. Atkinson (1987) claims that some or all of the following problems can ensue due to excessive dependency on L1 in the foreign language classroom.

1. The teacher and/or the students begin to feel that they have not 'really' understood any item of language until it has been translated.
2. The teacher and/or the students fail to observe distinctions between equivalence of form, semantic equivalence, and pragmatic features, and thus oversimplify to the point of using crude and inaccurate translation.
3. Students speak to the teacher in the mother tongue as a matter of course, even when they are quite capable of expressing what they mean.
4. Students fail to recognize that during many activities in the classroom it is crucial that they use only English.

As the use of the mother tongue is a very delicate subject, the right time and place to use it seems to be rather complex. While Brown (2001) maintains that classroom language should be the target language unless some distinct advantage is gained by the use of the mother tongue, Harmer (2001) is of the opinion that the usefulness of L1 use depends on when and for what purpose(s) it is used in the classroom. Nevertheless, there seems to exist a tendency that it can be used especially in beginner and elementary classes. One of the problems that many instructors teaching beginner or elementary levels face is teaching target structures or lexical items. Since the focus of this study is on L1 use in speaking classes, teaching lexical items to these levels is assumed to be problematic as this tends to be based on personal experience of the researcher.

The importance of vocabulary in learning a foreign language has been emphasized on many occasions. Some even view vocabulary as the skeleton of a language, saying that vocabulary knowledge alone without grammatical knowledge of that language may enable one to communicate. Liu and Shaw quote (Willis, 1990; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; and Lewis, 1993) who express this importance noting that "a key element of successful native-like performance in a foreign language is mastery of lexical relations-collocations, lexical phrases, fixed phrases." Similarly, Chastain (1988) claims that vocabulary usually plays a greater role in communication than the other components of language and the lack of needed vocabulary is the most common cause of students' inability to speak during communication activities. Laufer & Hulstijn (2001) and Falk (1973) draw attention to this importance stating that all second language teachers and learners are well aware of the fact that learning a second language involves the learning of a large number of words together with aspects of phonology, syntax, and the writing system of a language.

The usefulness of vocabulary can be better appreciated when the components of communicative competence, which is generally the ultimate objective for language learners, are considered. Communicative competence, according to Brown (1994) and Richards (1992) consists of grammatical competence, which encompasses

knowledge of lexical items and rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence.

For the teaching of such a significant aspect of language, various techniques were developed and suggested. Lewis and Hill (1985) and Akar (1991) put these techniques into three groups; visual, aural, and verbal techniques and subcategorize verbal techniques as: definitions, synonyms, antonyms, word formation and parts of speech, cognates, series and semantic fields, scales/clines, games, riddles, asking others, using dictionaries, contextual guesswork, concept forming, and translation.

As can be seen from the above list, translation is considered to be one of the ways of teaching vocabulary. Although its avoidance is generally advised in the foreign language classroom, there seems to be a tendency to use it to save time, not to bother the students with lengthy explanations, not to confuse the students, when it is rather difficult for teachers to explain, and to make it easy for students to understand complicated terms such as abstract notions, and at times when occasions of teaching unplanned passive vocabulary lexical items arise.

METHOD

Subjects

This study was conducted at Anadolu University, School of Foreign Languages, an intensive program; two months after the semester began, with the participation of five beginner classes, with roughly twenty-five students in each. The classes having the speaking course at the same time of the day were chosen. The assignment of the classes to beginner level was carried out in accordance with the scores the participant students got from a proficiency test given at the beginning of the academic year. These beginner classes all had the same number of speaking course hours a week, and were exposed to the same structure(s) and vocabulary items throughout the same week as they studied the same textbook. In addition to these common points, all of these classes had the same skill courses and the same number of class hours for each course for the whole semester. They also followed the same textbooks in each course. As such, it can be said that they were exposed to nearly the same amount of English. The only difference was that these classes had different teachers.

Instruments/Materials

The data used in this study were collected through tape recordings, which lasted five weeks. The first two speaking course hours of the five classes were recorded for five consecutive weeks. A total of fifty lesson hours were recorded and transcribed by the researcher himself.

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to the five-week recording period, the researcher himself observed some speaking courses for two weeks to form an idea about the use of L1 in L2 classes. The researcher also consulted with some speaking instructors working at the same institution about L1 use in L2 classes.

Data Analysis

A number of steps were followed in analyzing the data. First of all, the purposes of L1 use were categorized into sub-headings such as facilitating teacher-student communication, facilitating teacher-student rapport, and facilitating learning. Then, the purposes for which L1 was used the most and least were identified. And finally, since the analysis of the data showed that the instructors used translation as a vocabulary teaching technique, the researcher sought to find out whether the speaking teachers had any systematic choices for using translation in explaining the meaning of unknown lexical items. These lexical items were first identified. In all of these analyses, calculations were based on percentages.

Considering the possibility that some of the lexical items were not preplanned to be taught, the researcher decided to examine if any consideration was given to their frequency of usage. For this purpose, a vocabulary profile of the words that were identified was applied. A program called “The Complete Lexical Tutor” available at <http://132.208.224.131> was used. This program has three sections available for researches. One of these sections prepares a list of the most frequent words based on corpora. Another section allows one to prepare a concordance sheet. And its final part provides one with a profile of all lexical items in any text based on their frequency. In this research, the final part of this program was used. All the lexical items identified were entered into the program and a profile was run. The lexical items that fall into the most frequent thousand words were considered as systematic choices of teachers, since a significant body of literature suggests that teaching foreign language learners the most frequent 3000 words should be the aim of any language program.

RESULTS

At the end of the two-week preliminary observation which was conducted to have an idea about the use of L1, the researcher sub-categorized why L1 was used the most by the instructors. One of the noteworthy aspects concerning the use of L1 by the language instructors in L2 classes was that L1 use was all related to classroom tasks in one way or another. Another peculiarity of L1 use seemed to be multifunctional or open to different functional interpretations.

As regards to the first research question, which sought to answer the purpose(s) of L1 use by the instructors, it was found that the instructors used L1 the most for some different purposes (Table 1). As can be seen from the table, the speaking instructors used L1 for a variety of purposes, ranging from checking comprehension to explanation of classroom tasks, from managerial issues to building rapport with students. Though some of these can be put roughly into the same category, what is apparent is that L1 use looks really *multifunctional*.

Table 2
 The most and least frequently employed strategies

	The functions of L1 use by the language instructors	No. of Occ	%
1	To ask a question relevant to the lesson/course	221	29.3
2	To explain new/unknown vocabulary items directly in L1	110	14.5
3	To repeat the instruction of an activity-given earlier in English	65	8.6
4	To tell a joke/for humor	49	6.4
5	To warn a student about his/her disturbing behavior	46	6.1
6	To answer a question relevant to the lesson/course	37	4.9
7	To draw students' attention to a certain point/issue	36	4.7
8	To explain how an activity will be done directly in Turkish	32	4.2
9	To repeat the explanation of a vocabulary item given earlier in English	22	2.9
10	To ask a question irrelevant to the lesson/course	21	2.7
11	To explain a new grammar point directly in Turkish	21	2.7
12	To praise a student/student behavior or to make a compliment to a student	20	2.6
13	To explain the purpose of the lesson/activity/topic	13	1.7
14	To end a lesson	13	1.7
15	To chat with students	12	1.5
16	To correct mistakes (vocabulary, grammar)	11	1.4
17	To greet students	5	0.6
18	To explain cultural aspects in English	5	0.6
19	To say goodbye	5	0.6
20	To explain the purpose(s) of the lesson/activity/topic explained earlier in English	4	0.5

21	To give homework	3	0.3
22	To repeat the explanations of a structure given earlier in English	2	0.2
23	To warn a late comer	1	0.1
Total		754	100

As can be seen from table 2, the instructors used L1 for a variety of purposes, ranging from purely linguistic to managerial and humanistic aims. Using L1 to facilitate teacher-student communication and relationship achieved the lion's share, since many of the purposes for which L1 were used aimed to establish a good relationship between the language instructor and the students. This finding runs in harmony with Harbord's (1992) view that L1 use in the L2 classroom involves a humanistic approach and a learner preferred strategy. Humanistic views of language teaching believe that students should be allowed to express themselves comfortably in their L1 while learning a foreign language. This finding also supports Schweer (1999), Prodromou (2002), and Juarez and Oxbrow's (2008) studies which all show to some extent that teachers and learners alike favor the use of L1 in the foreign language classroom. Mitchell's (1988) study has shown that the use of L1 in the foreign language classroom to explain grammar and activities and to give background information was acceptable according to the participant teachers of the study. In the same way, learners also feel that using L1 is relieving. In underlying the tranquilizing feeling and the willingness of students in expressing themselves in their L1s, Auerbach (1993) contends that starting with L1 provides a sense of security and validates the learners' lived experiences, allowing them to express themselves, which in turn encourages the learner to be willing to experiment and take risks with the target language.

Another function L1 use served is related to classroom management, such as warning a student about his/her distracting and disturbing behavior and dealing with late comers. Yet, it was found that L1 was used by far the most by teachers to facilitate teacher-student communication, which looks understandable and justifiable given the insufficient linguistic knowledge of the students at the very beginning of the semester.

Although L1 was used by language instructors for most of the purposes underlined by Atkinson (1987), Piasecka (1988), Collingham (1988), and Harbord (1992), interestingly, L1 was not used for some other purposes such as discussion/negotiation of the syllabus, discussion of classroom methodology, educational counseling, teaching cross-cultural issues, and finally teaching phonology. As the study was conducted two months after the semester began, discussion of classroom methodology and educational counseling which are very common among the participant language instructors may have already been done at the very beginning of the semester. As for the discussion/negotiation of the syllabus with students, it could be said it may well have been done at the start of the semester.

As has already been underscored, facilitating teacher-student communication was the most widely observed purpose for which L1 was used. In building a sound communication with students, the instructors used Turkish to explain new/unknown vocabulary items. (The distribution of L1 use by instructors to explain new/unknown vocabulary items according to the weeks is presented in Table 3).

Table 3
 The use of L1 to explain new/unknown lexical items according to the weeks

Inst.	Week 1		Week 2		Week 3		Week 4		Week 5		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
1	2	50	1	25	1	25	--	--	--	--	4
2	3	23	4	31	4	31	1	7	1	7	13
3	3	18	4	23	3	18	4	23	3	18	17
4	3	34	2	22	2	22	1	11	1	11	10
5	3	23	4	31	3	23	2	15	1	8	13

The data presented in the above table seem to offer some very interesting findings. As each beginner class studied the same structures and their communicative functions presented through the same theme, the classes may normally be expected to yield similar result, which is the case as seen in the above table. All of the instructors resorted to L1 to explain the meaning of an unknown vocabulary item consistently using it the least in the final week of the study. As could be seen in the above table, the instructors used L1 the least in the final week. This decrease in the use of L1 over the weeks, small as it may be, could be interpreted as a systematic choice on the part of the instructors. Contrary to the other instructors, instructor 1 made no use of L1 in the final two weeks to deal with unknown vocabulary items, which could be due to the particularities of this class or particular teaching approach of the instructor himself/herself. Interesting findings on the use of L1 to deal with the part of speech of unknown vocabulary items were also projected. As displayed in table 4 below, L1 was used the most to explain new/unknown nouns, phrases, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs respectively.

Table 4
 The distribution of L1 use according to weeks and parts of speech is presented

week	noun		verb		adjective		adverb		Phrase		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1	3	18	4	24	3	18	2	12	5	28	17	20
2	13	81	1	6	--	--	2	13	--	--	16	19
3	19	73	4	15	1	4	--	--	2	8	26	31
4	3	19	5	31	1	6	1	6	6	38	16	19
5	4	44	1	11	--	--	1	11	3	33	9	11
Total											84	

What is striking is that half of the overall use of L1 to deal with unknown vocabulary items aimed to explain nouns, which is quite understandable given that noun phrases in the subject position together with verbs constitute the two most important elements of the clause. As displayed in table 4, teachers' use of L1 to explain phrases and verbs has also a high percentage, which shows the participant teachers' careful and systematic preference for L1 use. Another interesting finding is that this systematic use of L1 could be seen to some degree in the distribution of L1 use to deal with unknown vocabulary items throughout the weeks. Overall, a gradual decrease in the amount of L1 use across the weeks was seen, since L1 was used the least in the final week. This steady decline can be clearly seen in the amount of L1 use to deal with especially nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, which is quite understandable given the low proficiency level of the students. A slight decrease in the use of L1 to explain phrases and verbs was also seen. Yet, this decline seems to have a fluctuating nature.

As has already been underlined, L1 was used the most to deal with unknown nouns. As such, one is tempted to ask whether there are any common features of these nouns. Interestingly enough, a great majority of nouns for the explanation of which L1 was used referred to concrete nouns, denoting physical objects mostly, which could have easily been explained or described by simply showing the objects themselves, if no other way had worked. The only two nouns denoting mental phenomena were '*possession*' and '*dream*'. Thus, it seems that the rationale behind using L1 in the explanation of these nouns is not related with the difficulty or ease of explanation. The same thing can be said to be true for the verbs. Most of the verbs which were explained using L1 were verbs expressing physical actions. Only three of the verbs were phrasal verbs, the explanation of which can be said to be difficult. When the prepositions and phrases/chunks are examined, the instructors' use of L1 for their explanations could be appreciated, since at times it can be rather difficult for an instructor to get the meaning of some prepositions like '*via*' across the learners, especially at beginner level learners.. Similarly, most of the phrases/chunks such as '*What's up?*', '*It's my turn*', '*It sounds fun*' and the likes were explained in

the mother tongue which may be rather difficult to explain, especially students with insufficient target language proficiency.

DISCUSSION

The role and use of L1 in the instructed second/foreign language classroom by both language instructors and learners alike has been a controversial issue throughout much of the history of research into second/foreign language teaching. While some have viewed the use of L1 in the foreign language classroom as a valuable resource, some others have seen it as an overestimated and overvalued, yet abused resource/matter. Despite a century-long contentious nature of the issue, not enough research with satisfying results concerning the right time to use L1 for sound but functional purposes in the foreign language classroom have been done. Although a number of studies have been conducted on the attitudes of both language teachers and learners towards L1 use in the foreign language classroom, very few studies have been carried out on the relationship between the amount of L1 use in the foreign language classroom and its effects on the proficiency gains of students. Another gap in the relevant research is related with the purposes of L1 use in the foreign language classroom. With this need in mind, this descriptive study was conducted to investigate the purpose(s) of L1 use by language instructors in the foreign language classroom.

Overall, the major finding of the study is that L1 use by language instructors was mainly communication facilitative. The participant language instructors used L1 by far the most to facilitate teacher-student communication and relationship. They also resorted to L1 to facilitate the learning of L2, incomparably less, though. These two observations support some of Eldridge's (1990) findings in that L1 use is a purposeful phenomenon which facilitates communication. Another interesting observation is related to the systematic and judicious use of L1 by the participant instructors. L1 use by the participant instructors was systematic in that its use showed a gradual decrease across the weeks, having been used the least in the final week of the five-week study period. L1 use was systematic and judicious in that it was used by all of the participant instructors to deal with unknown nouns the most, followed by unknown phrases, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs respectively. The distribution of L1 use across the weeks also shows that the instructors used L1 lesser and lesser as the weeks progressed. This systematicity shows that the participant instructors are well aware of the importance of the functions of the content words in written and spoken discourse.

The purposes of many of the instances of L1 use by the participant instructors seem to aim to address the students with linguistic deficit of one kind or another: linguistic and structural. This deficiency could be due to a number of reasons, which are beyond the scope of this study. No matter how complete the reasons may sound, one cannot but question how rational it is to use L1 in this kind of an intensive program, so to speak, waste these invaluable times and stages during which learners are most liable to break down barriers and feel the need for the bits and pieces of classroom language. In underlying the inevitability of using L1 in the L2 classroom, Ellis (1984:133) draws attention to the crucial importance of using the target language, based on just assumptions not on sound evidence, for both language and classroom management related issues revealing that:

...In the EFL classroom, however, teachers sometimes prefer to use the pupils' L1 to explain and organize a task and to manage behavior *in the belief that this will facilitate the medium-centered (language-related) goals of the lesson*. In so doing, however, *they deprive the learners of valuable input*. (Italics added)

In a similar vein, upon stressing two important features of natural communication; the former being purposeful such as greeting, apologizing, criticizing, enquiring, informing and so forth and the latter being unpredictable involving slips and hesitations, creativity, spontaneity, economy, intonation and stress, comprehension and checks, and turn taking, Cross (1995) underlies that managerial roles creates countless opportunities for meaningful language use. Resorting to the mother tongue at such moments, according to Cross, gives the impression that the foreign language is for *practice alone* (Italics added). In drawing attention

yet to another voluble dimension of using the target language in the foreign language classroom, Wong-Fillmore (1985) emphasizes the role of the use of the target language in the foreign language classroom noting that 'an integral part of the foreign language learning is trying to 'figure out' what others are saying and adds that 'translation short-circuit this process'.

At first glance, the use of L1 by the language instructor in the foreign language classroom where the language instructors are almost the sole source of input may well sound justifiable, even appreciable, considering its communication facilitative nature and the insufficient foreign language proficiency level of the students. However, many of the instances of the observed teacher-student communication and relationship facilitation situations, let alone using L1 to facilitate the learning of L2, are meaningful, contextualized, genuine and authentic opportunities for students to pick up the target language. What is more, these are contextually rich real-life situations by the help of which students can easily need, see and appreciate the communicative functions of the target language. By making use of these contextually rich and genuine occasions, students may feel that they are learning the target language as a means of communication, not just an end in itself, which is rather rare given the learners are considered.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms previous research (Elridge, 1999) which has shown that L1 use in the instructed second/foreign language classroom appears to be purposeful and functional which notably facilitates communication and relationship between the teacher and the student. These particular research findings along with some literature and some earlier studies show a judicious use of L1 in the foreign language classroom. However, given the fact that the teacher is the sole source of foreign language input in this kind of intensive program, one is tempted to question how rational and useful it is to use L1, especially in speaking courses, let alone other skills. What is more, we, as language instructors, need to consider two crucially important questions: does the functionality of L1 use in the foreign language classroom, especially in intensive ones, justify wasting invaluable but limited time using L1 given that every instance of L1 use could be functional? And to what extent is it possible to have a solid agreement among so many language instructors with different educational and characteristic features on the relative parameters of judicious L1 use?

In view of the limited scope of this study, its findings in no way can be generalized to either the home setting of the study or any other similar institutions in Turkey, though it may present a very small view of the whole picture. Therefore, more in-depth studies with representative participants on the benefits of L1 use in the four skills are needed. Further research may focus especially on the impact of L1 use in the foreign language classroom on the linguistic gains of students.

Pedagogical implications

Taking into consideration the reality that language instructors from diverse backgrounds may have different conceptions of the role of L1 and its judicious use, especially in intensive foreign language programs, consciousness raising on this delicate issue is worth exploring. First and foremost, given the diverse backgrounds of language teachers, a consensus on the pros and cons of L1 use in the foreign language classroom should be analyzed. It is a necessity to underline the fact that L1 use in the foreign language is not a taboo subject in itself, as long as it helps enhance foreign language learning. It is also essential to stress the need to use the target language at every opportunity in the foreign language classroom. For one thing, the foreign language classroom presents many various occasions for language learners to practice the foreign language, though naturally most times it appears to be artificial. Given the very few opportunities available for learners to practice their language outside class, we cannot underestimate the importance of the use of the target language in the classroom. Hence, it would be worthwhile to focus on L1 contribution towards this end.

BIODATA AND CONTACT ADDRESS OF THE AUTHOR



Hüseyin KAFES holds an MA and a PhD on English Language Teaching from Anadolu University and is currently teaching at the School of Foreign Languages at the same university. His research interests include discourse analysis, genre analysis, text analysis, academic writing, rhetoric, argumentation, and writer stance in academic writing.

Dr. Hüseyin KAFES
Anadolu University
School of Foreign Languages
Eskişehir, TURKEY
Tel: +90 (222) 335 05 80/6187
E- Mail: hkafes@anadolu.edu.tr

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