

L1 USE IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS IN TURKEY *

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ABSTRACT

It is not a coincidence that the debate concerning the use of first language (L1) in second/foreign language teaching has flourished in the aftermath of a deep interest in the role of focus on form in second/foreign language classrooms. The issues of L1 use and focus on form in second/foreign language classrooms are discussed as different issues in the literature. However, research on L1 use in language classrooms shows that one of the functions of L1 use is to explain linguistic features. This study aims at describing how exactly L1 is used in EFL classrooms to focus on form. Pre-observation interviews and classroom observations of three teachers of EFL show that the main function of teachers' first language use in foreign language classrooms is to focus on form in order to ensure understanding. As a form of focus on form, teachers in general employ L1 as the last resort to focus on form explicitly. Furthermore, two of the three teachers state that explanations in L1 serve as a reassurance of what students already learned in the target language. Finally, the interviews and classroom instances of focus on form indicate that teachers' use of L1 in language classrooms is an extension of their views on the utility of explicit focus on form in foreign language classrooms.

Key words: L1 use, foreign language classrooms, focus on form

ÖZET

Yabancı dil sınıflarında ana dilin kullanılması tartışmasının, yabancı dil sınıflarında yabancı dil yapılarının vurgulanması çalışmalarının yaygınlaşmasının hemen akabinde ortaya çıkması bir tesadüf değildir. Yabancı dil sınıflarında anadilin kullanılması ve yabancı dil yapılarının vurgulanması konuları ayrı ayrı tartışılmaktadır. Ancak yabancı dil sınıflarında anadil kullanımını inceleyen çalışmalar, anadil kullanımının işlevlerinden birinin yabancı dil yapılarını açıklamak olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu çalışma anadilin yabancı dil sınıflarında tam olarak yabancı dil yapılarını vurgulamak için nasıl kullanıldığını tanımlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Üç yabancı dil öğretmeni ile yapılan röportaj ve sınıf içi gözlemler göstermektedir ki yabancı dil sınıflarında anadil kullanımının ana amacı, öğrencilerin anlamalarından temin etmek amacıyla yabancı dil yapılarını açıklamaktır. Yapıları açıklama amaçlı olarak öğretmenler anadili son bir adım olarak yapıları açık olarak anlatmak için kullanmaktadırlar. Üç öğretmenden ikisine göre anadilde açıklama, öğrencilere İngilizce olarak öğrendikleri konularla ilgili de bir güven sağlama amacı taşıyabilmektedir. Son olarak, röportaj ve sınıf gözlemlerinde ortaya çıkmaktadır ki, anadilin yabancı dil sınıflarında kullanımı öğretmenlerin yabancı dil yapılarının sınıflarda vurgulanmasının faydasına inanıp inanmamaları ile ilgilidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Anadil kullanımı, yabancı dil sınıfları, dil yapılarının vurgulanması

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1. INTRODUCTION

Research on focus on form, which in a generic sense refers to language teachers' explicit and implicit focus on linguistic features, has recently gained prominence in the second language acquisition (SLA) field. This recent interest in focus on form, which had fallen from grace for a long time, has mainly been triggered by (1) the research findings that pointed to the limitations of solely meaning-focused second language teaching programs to develop nativelike accuracy and proficiency in second language learners despite many years of exposure to extensive comprehensible input (Doughty and Williams, 1998; Harley, 1992; Harley and Swain, 1984; Spada and Lightbown, 1989; Swain, 1991), and (2) the growing research that has indicated more decisively a positive role for focus on form to develop second/foreign language accuracy and proficiency efficiently (for a review, see R. Ellis, 2002; Norris & Ortega, 2000; Spada, 1997).

Unsurprisingly, the use of L1 in second/foreign language classrooms has followed a similar path with focus on form. As Cook (2001) maintains, the topic of the systematic use of L1 in language classrooms was avoided by the researchers for over 100 years. Cook's article that called for the re-examination of the long-held view that teachers and students should refrain from using L1 in second/foreign language classrooms at all costs sparked a new interest in the study of L1 use in language classrooms. Following Cook's article studies focusing on the amount and the nature of the L1 use (Littlewood and Yu; 2009;Turnbull, 2001; Turnbull and Arnett, 2002) in language classrooms have flourished. Almost all studies of L1 use in language classrooms show that one of the functions of L1 use in language classrooms is to explain or clarify difficult linguistic features or explaining the meaning of unknown words.

However, although research on focus on form is abound and deals with the issues of different forms of focus on form diligently, there is no mention of L1 use as a form of focus on form (see Doughty and Williams, 1998). This study aims at describing how L1 is used in Turkish language classrooms to focus on form and how teachers' cognition regarding focus on form drives the use of L1 in foreign language classrooms.

Background to the Study

After a long period of equating second language learning to the learning of linguistic features of a language, beginning in the 1970s, the necessity of providing learners with explicit knowledge of the forms of a language came under attack. Especially, research pointing to the existence of a developmental sequence and order in the acquisition of some certain morphological features, such as progressive -ing, plural -s, third person -s, and past tense -ed (Dulay and Burt, 1973; Bailey, Madden, and Krashen, 1974; Larsen-Freeman, 1975; 1976) and some grammatical features, such as relative clauses and negation (Cook, 1973; Schachter, 1974) and the resistance of this sequence and order to the nature of instruction was used to support the claim that focus on form did not play a role in the acquisition of a second/foreign language, and that the only kind of input that learners needed to learn a second/foreign language was comprehensible input.

With their meaning-focused instruction, the immersion programs provided a perfect opportunity to see if learners exposed to only comprehensible input can develop second/foreign language proficiency. The comparison of French immersion students with core French as a second language students who studied French in more traditional manner with emphasis on grammar instruction for about one hour a day, showed that immersion students consistently do better than core French students on all tests (Swain, 1991; Doughty, 1998). However, considering the amount of exposure to French under the two conditions, the comparison of the two programs in terms of the efficiency of meaning and grammar-focused instruction was at best not justified because the immersion students are exposed to French for much longer hours than core French students.

However, research that took a closer look at the linguistic proficiency of the students in the immersion programs pointed to a series of shortfalls regarding students' accuracy and proficiency levels displaying the limitations of exclusive meaning-focused programs. Studies that

investigated the language proficiency of second language learners in immersion programs found that despite years of meaningful input, students did not develop a targetlike morphology and syntax knowledge although they were able to communicate effectively (Harley, 1986; 1992; Harley & Swain, 1984). Various studies that investigated whether different forms of focus on form integrated into the immersion programs could improve learners' accuracy and proficiency found positive results for focus on form (Tomasello and Herron, 1988; 1989; White; 1991; White, Spada, Lightbown, and Ranta; 1991).

The lack of development in immersion program students on accuracy was explained later by learners' failure to notice the linguistic features during exclusively meaning-focused instruction (Long & Robinson, 1998) This realization, which is the underlying view of the concept of 'noticing' (Schmidt, 1993), in a way, determined the role that focus on form should play in second/language teaching: drawing learners' attention to linguistic features.

The positive role of focus on form in immersion programs renewed interest in research on focus on form. Research dealing how and why teachers should focus on form flourished (Ellis, 2002; Doughty and William, 1998; Norris and Ortega, 2000). However, in none of these works L1 was dealt with as a form of focus on form although research shows that despite views against using L1, L1 use is rather common in language classrooms.

Compared to the research on focus on form, research on L1 use in language classrooms is limited and most L1 use studies are conducted within the frame work of code-switching in language classrooms (see Ustunel and Seedhouse, 2005). The limited number of research on L1 use in language classrooms is mostly because almost all language teaching methodologies that dictated the field of second/foreign language teaching for so long, except for lesser known Community Language Learning and Suggestopedia, prescribed the sole use of TL in language classrooms. Especially with Krashen's (1985) renowned argument that languages are best learned when learners are exposed to comprehensible input, the use of L1 in language classrooms was at best viewed as depriving students a valuable exposure opportunity to the target language, and maximum use of the TL was constantly emphasized.

Despite the recommendation of the maximum use of the TL in language classrooms, studies in second/foreign language classrooms research show that L1 use in language classrooms is popular among most teachers. Studies show that L1 use varies considerably from teacher to teacher (Duff and Polio, 1990; Littlewood and Yu 2009; Turnbull, 2001; Turnbull and Arnett; 2002). In their study of 13 different university lecturers, Duff and Polio found that the range of TL to L1 ranged from 10% to 100%. Duff and Polio argue that factors such as departmental policy on TL use, lesson content and objectives, pedagogical materials, and formal training of the instructors affect the frequency of L1 use. On the other hand Turnbull & Arnett (2002) observed that in the classes of four teachers of French in Canadian secondary schools L1 use ranged from 28% to 76%. This common use of L1 is contrary to the recommendations of especially Turnbull (2001) and Turnbull and Arnett's (2002) that in language classrooms L1 should be used judiciously maximizing TL use.

On the other hand, research on L1 use shows that the three most common functions that L1 use serve in language classrooms are building rapport with students, explaining linguistic features and vocabulary (Cook, 2001) , and maintaining discipline (Macaro, 1997; Mitchell; 1988). Although the primary function of L1 use vary depending on the context, explaining linguistic features is one of the common functions of L1 use in language classrooms (Macaro, 1997; Polio and Duff, 1994). Despite this, focus on form studies do not view explaining linguistic features of the target language in L1 as a form of focus on form, and no research so far has addressed the effectiveness of L1, or the lack there of.

This study aims to describe how L1 is used to focus on form in foreign language classrooms by three Turkish speakers of EFL teachers in Turkey. It first addresses how L1 use is considered as a form of focus on form by language teachers and what functions teachers attribute to L1 use. Then by providing instances of the use of L1 as focus on form in language classrooms,

the study discusses where L1 use fits on a continuum of implicit and explicit focus on form.

2. METHODOLOGY

The data examined in this study were collected through interviews with three teachers of English as a foreign language and observations of a total of 9 class hours, three class hours from each teachers. The main focus of the interviews was obtaining teachers' views about explicit and implicit focus on form. The language teaching experience of the teachers interviewed and observed ranged between 4 to 14 years. At the time of the study, the students, whose ages ranged between 15-16, had been exposed to four months of intensive English. The intensive English program the study was conducted in aimed to prepare the students to follow some content classes in high school in English.

Upon collection of the data, both the interviews and videotapes of the classes were transcribed. In the interview data, predominant themes related to explicit focus on form and L1 use were identified and the raw data were coded according to these themes. The classroom observation transcripts were similarly coded to determine explicit focus on form and L1 use instances. The data were then sorted to synthesize the teachers' comments and classroom practices as they relate to explicit focus on form and L1 use. The summary of the results of the analysis can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The summary of the findings of the study.

	When to provide explanations in L1	The function of L1 explanations
T1	At the end of the units and any time when students find it difficult to understand; to give Turkish equivalent of English words	To ensure understanding, to reach more learners, as a short-cut to teach relatively complex concepts, to save time
T2	When it is really necessary (when the teacher gets stuck); after students develop speaking skills	To prepare students for standardized tests, to develop consciousness about the structures
T3	At the end of the units; to explain important and difficult concepts and vocabulary	To tailor the instruction to the learning styles and preferences of learners; to organize learners' knowledge through linguistic terms; to reassure learners of their knowledge of the target language

3. FINDINGS

Teacher 1 (T1) is one of the three teachers who was observed in this study. T1 is a female teacher. She graduated from the Department of English Language and Literature in a Turkish university. She had had a six-year English language teaching experience by the time the study was conducted. She had been teaching English for three years at the high school where this study was conducted. She participated in several in-service courses while she was teaching English as a foreign language.

T1 teaches the main course book which focuses on language use as well as linguistic features. In terms of her views about explicit grammar instruction, at the beginning of the interview she said, "As you will see in my classes, I am one of those that include grammar instruction in my classes. I know about the popularity of the communicative method but when I think about our context, I cannot see how we can use it without adapting it to our situation." In the interview, T1 replies to the question of what she thinks about explicit grammar teaching in her classrooms by making reference to CLT and the need to supplement CLT with explicit focus on form mostly because of the limitations of the context. In her response in Extract 1, the 'tension' to compromise CLT and explicit focus on form is visible.

Excerpt 1.

In order to follow CLT closely, we need to have more time for learners to be exposed to the target language and books that they actually learn something from. Our books are not designed that way. Our books teach grammar, too. We generally follow our course books. I know we do not have to follow them but time constraints and crowded classrooms make it difficult for us to follow CLT closely. Still, we try to benefit from CLT but we supplement it with grammar.

Although T1 displays an apologetic tone about employing explicit focus on form, she justifies the use of explicit focus on form readily with reference to specific contextual limitations. The contextual factors she recounts are also important to indicate the functions that T1 attributes to explicit focus on form. Explicit focus on form is viewed as a tool to save time and address the problem of crowded classrooms.

T1, in her description of how she provides explicit focus on form, states that her classes progress from implicit to explicit focus on form, and since during implicit focus on form only a limited number of the students can infer the linguistic features that are focused on, the rest of the students are better served by explicit focus on form. She explains the progression as

Excerpt 2.

T1: First, I present the topic we are studying to the classroom with no focus on linguistic features Then, before exercises I try to figure out how much they were able to understand what we were trying to do.... Let's say we have 37 students; seven or eight of them understands it. After that I need to find a way to teach other students, too. I just cannot say whoever learns it, learns it; the others can learn it from somewhere else.

Interviewer: How do you teach them too?

T1: To teach them I explain first in English what we were doing. Some of them still don't understand and so then I explain in Turkish. The best learning occurs in the mother tongue. Even for those who can learn it in English, if they hear it in Turkish they confirm what they learned, and they become more self-confident about what they learned. If you don't give explanations in Turkish even if they understood in English they question themselves. Students definitely need reassurance.

Interviewer: Some teachers use it to teach vocabulary, too.

T1: With vocabulary too, you take a long time to explain a word in English and most of the time in the end you give the Turkish equivalent. Instead of that you can give its Turkish equivalent directly.

Interestingly, the progression from implicit to explicit focus on form ends with Turkish explanations. Turkish explanations follow explicit focus on form in English, in other words explaining linguistic features in English. As the excerpt shows T1 stresses the necessity of explicit focus on form to ensure that all students are given a chance to learn the subject matter. She adds that as a last resort she uses Turkish explanation, so that everybody understands it. For T1, in the progression from implicit to explicit focus on form, Turkish stands as the most explicit form of focus on form. Also, both within the context of providing explanations in Turkish and providing explicit focus on form, T1 states that Turkish explanations and explicit focus on form help learners confirm what they know. This is consistent with findings that one of the functions of L1 use is to ensure understanding and reassure the students of their understanding (Littlewood and Yu, 2009).

In the excerpt, T1 touches upon other important issues too: she believes that using Turkish saves time. In other words Turkish serves as a short cut to explain a linguistic structure or

a vocabulary. Interestingly she also states that learners learn best in their first language.

T1's views in the interview regarding focus on form and L1 are reflected in her classroom teaching, too. As can be seen in Excerpt 3, T1, following an activity that focused on reporting what someone else said asks the students in Turkish what kinds of changes are made on a statement when that statement is reported.

Excerpt 3.

T1: Duyduklarımızı aktarırken burda neler değişti? Duyduğumuz bir cümleyi, bir sözü aktarırken cümlede neleri değiştirdik?

Translation:

(T1: When we were relating what we heard, what changes were made on this sentence? When we were reporting a sentence or an expression that we heard, what did we change?)

The question in Excerpt 3 was followed by students' responses in Turkish. Students mentioned the subject, the tense, and the pronouns as the parts of the sentence that were changed. The teacher, for each of these answers, asked the students if it was necessary to change these items all the time.

An instance that T1 provided Turkish explanation was when a student asked a question about the difference between *have to* and *must* in Turkish. T1's explanation regarding the difference between *have to* and *must* was the longest explicit focus on form instance, which was mostly provided in Turkish.

The second teacher (T2) that was interviewed and observed in classrooms is a male teacher. He graduated from School of Foreign Languages in a Turkish University. He had a 16-year English language teaching experience by the time the study was conducted. T2 had been teaching English for 10 years at the high school where this study was conducted. He spent one year in the United Kingdom studying English language teaching methodology. He participated in several in-service courses both as a trainee and as a trainer.

T2 teaches reading and writing skills and follows a different course book from T1. Of the three teachers studied, T2 is the most dismissive of explicit focus on form and keen supporter of implicit focus on form. He says

Excerpt 4.

In intensive English classes, I do not think that we should teach grammar in the traditional way: This is called Simple Present Tense, this is called Passive Voice, if you do that you will have a passive structure etc., because some researchers say that it impedes speaking. I think this is partly true. Grammar instruction does not help communication. Knowing the names of the tenses or parts of speech does not make one able to use the tenses or the adjectives correctly.... At the beginners' level the emphasis should be on using the foreign language. Later, they can be taught in detail.

As the excerpt shows, T2 makes reference to English language teaching literature to support his views on explicit focus on form. More importantly, he defines the purpose of language learning in intensive language classes as learning how to use the language, and, based on that, he sees no role for explicit focus on form in these classes. This is different from T1, who stated that explicit grammar teaching is needed and as the course book contains grammar they teach grammar, too.

Regarding focus on form, T2 argues that the focus should be on the use, not on the form, and what needs to be done is to provide instruction "... through examples, by exposing students to grammatical structures through texts" which Doughty (1998) calls input flooding (see Figure 1). T2 responds to the question of how he leads learners to use language structures as

Excerpt 5.

T2: For instance, for passive voice you can write sentences on the board about the recent news and ask students to make similar sentences. For instance, you say 'A bank was robbed in Istanbul yesterday.' When you do that they understand how this structure is different. Of course you should give more examples. You shouldn't rush it...

Interviewer: Do you ever tell them we are studying that structure or?

T2: No, I don't. The important thing is that they can use it. In other words, noticing what to say in different situations. Creating opportunities to use the language is more important. Of course, when you get stuck you can give some explanations. You can sometimes introduce the topic in Turkish, too, you can tell them in Turkish.

T2 also sees a role for explicit focus on form after students learn to use the structures for communication. When he was asked explicitly if he sees any role for explicit grammar teaching he stated that students could be provided with explicit information about English structures later. He says, "Later they can be taught in detail what is what." By later he means after students learn to communicate in the language. He thinks that students need to develop consciousness about the structures later for especially tests, like the University Entrance Examination. T2's approach to explicit focus on form is more in the form of letting students acquire consciousness about the language that they can already use meaningfully. Apart from that he sees a very limited role for explicit focus on form and L1 use and state that they should be employed only when teachers are stuck and at a loss.

Consistent with his views, T2 never provided Turkish explanations for linguistic features during his three classes observed. This can, on one hand, be explained by his views about exposing learners to implicit focus on form only but on the other hand it should be noted again that he was teaching a skills book that was different from T1's course book.

The third teacher (T3) that was interviewed and observed within the same high school is a male teacher. He graduated from Department of Foreign Languages Teaching in a Turkish University. T3 is the least experienced teacher among the three teachers observed. He had a four-year English language teaching experience. He had been teaching English at the high school where the study was conducted for four years. T3 participated in four in-service courses during his English language teaching experience.

T3 teaches the same course book as T1, and shares similar views with T1 that both explicit and implicit focus on form are needed for language learning in the context that they are teaching English. However, T3 explains the necessity for explicit focus on form mostly by the students' language learning style. According to T3, learners are used to studying English explicitly and this method is what they feel most comfortable with. He explains this as

Excerpt 6.

We are teaching grammar and I think it is necessary too ... Instead of beginning a lesson by saying that today we are going to study past perfect tense or simple present tense, if we simply begin by speaking about the theme we are going to study, students ask us what we are studying today. I think, in a way, they feel like things are taking place in a vacuum. If we address it by explicit instruction, students feel more confident.

T3 argues that, during implicit focus on form, students wish to know the purpose of the activities in terms of the linguistic focus of the activities. Metalinguistic terminology contextualizes implicit focus on form. In other words, learners organize their learning through metalinguistic terms and, according to T3, this helps them feel confident about what they learned. T3 relates learners' preference to learn English explicitly to their past language learning experiences.

Excerpt 7.

These students studied a foreign language in that way before they came here. What they were used to is “Today we are going to study simple past tense. Simple past tense is formed by ...” kind of language learning. This is how they were taught before they came here and this is the method they feel more comfortable with. If we do not do it that way they do not feel that they are actually learning.

T3 emphasizes learners’ language learning styles and their effects on his language teaching more than other teachers. He compares his students this semester with his students the year before and states that his students last year were not so keen on explicit focus on form. T3 explains the need for explicit focus on form through the learners’ preference for learning explicitly and states that what he studied in college is not applicable here.

T3, who thinks that explicit focus on form is needed in his classes, is also cognizant of some limitations of teaching through explicit focus on form and he emphasizes the importance of teaching grammar in context. Concerning explicit focus on form, based on his experience, he states that if grammar is given mechanically, students can use this knowledge only in contexts that are similar to the context that grammar instruction is provided in. He states

Excerpt 8.

If we do not teach grammar in context, students cannot use it when they encounter it in new situations. Once I taught passive voice in my class and the students were quite good at doing the exercises but when they had to do a cloze-test which required the students to use passive voice they could not do it well. They said they had not done any exercises like that before. What I want to say is that they cannot transfer what they have learned through decontextualized, rule learning method into new situations if we do not expose them to context.

T3, too, associates implicit focus on form with the use of language; more specifically, being able to speak and write. T3 argues that in order for learners to practice English out of the classroom, since students cannot speak English outside the classroom, writing should be emphasized.

Excerpt 9.

My feeling is that we cannot provide enough opportunities for our students to use the language... Speaking and writing are the two skills at which the students are the weakest.... Students cannot get much speaking practice because the only place that they can speak English is the classroom; however, their writing can be better because they can easily do writing at home. Also we should encourage them to listen to radios and watch movies in English. I think in general we emphasize grammar too much.

Regarding how he uses implicit and explicit focus on form, he states that he likes the way the book teaches grammar. He agrees with the books’ method of presenting linguistic features: first implicit focus on form through reading and speaking activities and then more explicit focus on form. He states, “Learners use the structures before they learn about the structures. After that, comes a *Grammar Box* which gives the structure that the unit is about. The grammar box is followed by semi-structured activities and each unit ends with a writing activity.”

Focus on form instances that included Turkish in T3’s classes were in the form of giving an explanation in English first and then providing its translation to students. After practicing *passive voice*, T3 provides the following explanation first in English then in Turkish.

Excerpt 10.

T3: When the action,... when the action rather than the doer is important, we use *passive voice*. (*İşi yapan değil de, işin kendisi önemliyse passive kullanıyoruz.*)

Similarly, after practicing *reported speech*, T3 gives the following explanation in

Turkish. Along with Excerpt 11, these explicit focus on form types are provided following an activity in order to provide the learners with metalinguistic awareness about the target structure that the students can already use. In Excerpt 11, the teacher describes reported speech in Turkish following an activity that focused on *reported speech*.

Excerpt 11.

T3: ... Konumuz tahmin ettiğiniz gibi bize soylediğini ..., ... başkasından duyduklarımızı bir başkasına aktarmak. (*T: As you might have guessed, we were studying what we were told ... how to relate what we heard from others.*)

Finally T3 uses a similar approach to explain vocabulary too. First he explains what rush hour is in English then he explains it in Turkish.

Excerpt 12.

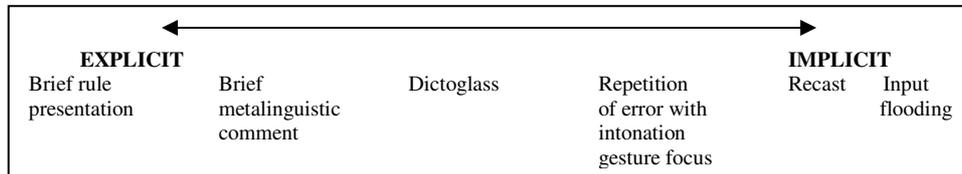
T: Rush hour? Do you know what rush hour means? Rush hour. Rush hour means ... rush hour is the time when people go home from work.

T:(İnsanların işe gidiş geliş saatleri. Bir yerden bir yere koşuşturmak.)

As with other teachers, T3's method of providing explicit explanation of forms is consistent with his cognition about explicit focus on form. During the interviews, he stated that explicit focus on form serves to help learners organize their learning around metalinguistic terms, and this knowledge organization helps learners feel confident about what they already learned.

Overall, the common thread across all three teachers is that they all believe that language learning should follow a path proceeding from implicit knowledge to explicit knowledge consistent with Doughty's (1985, p.145) continuum (see Figure 1.). Although they vary in terms of when and how much explicit knowledge and Turkish explanation they should provide to learners, they believe that Turkish can be used (1) to ensure understanding, (2) to organize their learning, and (3) to develop consciousness about the target structures. With T1, Turkish explanations serve the role of reaching more students and ensuring understanding. While T1 and T3 choose to provide Turkish explanations following a practice of a certain linguistic feature, T2 believes that developing consciousness providing explicit information and Turkish explanations in general should come following learners' acquisition of speaking skills.

Figure 1. Range of FFI techniques. (adapted from Doughty, 1998, p.145)



Finally, it should be noted that in the language classes observed, Turkish was not used as only as a form of focus on form. Consistent with previous findings, in this context too, the teachers used L1 to give instructions or to explain instructions and to deal with discipline problems. These uses of L1 share a common function with the use of L1 as a form of focus on form, which is *ensuring understanding*; however, these uses are the subject of a different discussion.

4. DISCUSSION AND RESULT

The main findings in the study are that teachers view L1 as a form of focus on form, employ L1 as a form of focus on form, and teachers' views on the utility of explicit focus on form determines the amount, time and form of the L1 that comes about in language classrooms. During

the interviews, when teachers are discussing utilizing focus on form in general in their classrooms, they touched upon using L1 as part of the focus on form process. This shows that teachers identify L1 as a form of focus on form.

On the other hand, the classroom instances show that in foreign language classrooms L1 is used as an explicit form of focus on form. In classes progressing from implicit to explicit focus on form, L1 is used either as the last resource after giving the rules in English or to translate the rule explanations provided in English. This finding suggests that on an implicit and explicit focus on form continuum (see Doughty, 1998) L1 use should be placed on the most explicit end of the continuum with *brief rule presentation* or to the left of it as a more explicit form of focus on form.

Also, it is clear that to a large extent, teachers' views on focus on form determines their use of L1. The teachers who view explicit focus on form as a viable tool in foreign language classrooms tend to use L1, too. Teachers who emphasize the use of implicit focus on form use L1 less. This is mostly because all three of the teachers believe that rule presentation in the target language and L1 use in language classrooms serve similar functions. This function of L1 use for two of the teachers is to reassure students of their learning and for one of the teachers to develop consciousness about the target structures.

These findings suggest that time for viewing L1 use as a form of focus on form and dealing with the use and effectiveness of L1 more fully is long overdue. Treating L1 in language classrooms as a form of code-switching only as it occurs in natural contexts with bilingual or multilingual speakers is, though leads to valuable findings in terms of the different uses of L1, hampers understanding the real effect of L1 use in language classrooms. On the other hand, debating the disadvantage of L1 use in terms of the time it takes away from the learners' valuable exposure time to the target language is rather limiting because as the focus on form studies and researchers indicate the employment of forms of focus on form both reflect and change the focus of language classrooms in terms of whether the focus is on meaning and communication or linguistic features (see Doughty and Williams, 1998).

Finally, treating the use of L1 as a form of focus on form and dealing with its benefits and drawbacks within the context of forms of focus on form in general will better inform practice. Although this study shows that teachers already identify L1 use as a form of focus on form, lack of research dealing with L1 use as a form of focus on form in terms of its effectiveness and how it affects the focus of second/foreign language classrooms in terms of focus on meaning or linguistic features prevents understanding the real effects of L1 on learning a second or foreign language.

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