



## The Reasons for L1 Use by English Teaching Turkish Teachers in Turkish Schools

Burak TOMAK<sup>1</sup>

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Received: 15 Feb., 2020

Received in revised form: 14 Nov., 2020

Accepted: 31 Mar., 2021

DOI: 10.14689/ejer.2021.94.6

#### Keywords

English language classrooms, Turkish language use, ELT

### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** Some argue that L1 should be strictly prohibited in language classrooms, whereas some studies claim that the integration of L1 (first language) in L2 (second language) teaching will facilitate learning. Thus, in this sense, this study was conducted in eight different Turkish schools to find out how much L1 was used in English language classes and why it was used in those cases. **Research Methods:** With the help of an observation protocol

used to record the lessons' relevant moments, eight different teachers working in eight different schools were observed for at least one lesson hour to figure out whether they turned to L1 during their teaching and why they did it. In addition to on-site observations, open-ended questionnaires were applied to students in two different schools and an interview was conducted with a teacher in one of these schools for this study's purpose. **Findings:** It was found that most of the teachers were trying to use as much L2 as possible though there were times they used their native tongue (which is Turkish in this context) for several reasons, including humour, explanation of a grammatical rule, pronunciation, to encourage learners to learn English, clarification, classroom management, and error correction. **Implications for Research and Practice:** This case study can also be conducted in different contexts to determine the situation and whether the same reasons apply for different contexts.

© 2021 Ani Publishing Ltd. All rights reserved

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding Author: Dr., Marmara University, School of Foreign Languages, Istanbul, TURKEY, e-mail: buraktomak@hotmail.com , ORCID: 0000-0001-6678-431X

## Introduction

The importance of learning another language has been growing and becoming essential day by day. Consequently, language teaching has gained importance and diversity in terms of methods. Educators try to keep up with different methodologies to achieve effective teaching by considering many different varieties, such as their students' profile, environment, culture, and needs.

Whatever practitioners do to apply the theories offered by different scholars, whether they use L2 or L1 in foreign language lessons is still a question of wonder in our field. Kim and Petraki (2009) have argued that "some debate has been going on between foreign language instructors if and to what extent L1 should be used and in what ways L1 can be made use of in L2 classes in order to simplify communication" (p. 58). Therefore, the use of students' first language (L1) in language teaching has been "an issue of ongoing debate in the field of second language (L2) acquisition" (Campa & Nassaji, 2009, p.742). There are different methods, such as maximising the use of L2 or using L1 to enhance the effectiveness of the lessons and achieve smooth learning of the second language. Indeed, the latter has been discussed among educators many times. Throughout the years, L1 was seen as an obstruction and a tool that should not be used in L2 classrooms (Savignon, 1983; Widdowson, 1978). However, in reality, teachers turn to their L1 to facilitate their teaching (Chang, 2009; Ferguson, 2003; Macaro, 2001; Tien, 2004; Turnbull & Arnett, 2002). For instance, in a Turkish context, teachers may use Turkish to make it easier for their learners to comprehend the lesson's topic or switch to Turkish to maintain discipline in the classroom. In short, speaking in the students' mother tongue, either as part of a classroom management tactic or as a teaching technique, is a good way for scaffolding the lesson (Timuçin & Baytar, 2015).

### *The Importance of L2 Use in Language Teaching*

Some researchers appear to be reluctant to recognise the potential benefits of supporting foreign language instruction with L1 because they think it would play an inhibiting role in second language acquisition. Krashen (1982) argues that L1 should be banned in L2 classes overall. Turnbull (2001) also agrees that L1 functions as an obstacle in L2 learning environments. Iswati and Hadimulyono (2018) claim that "the use of L1 turned out to be less essential" in language classrooms (p.125). Furthermore, Ellis (2005) points out that using the target language more than L1 is an aiding key to more successful and quick learning class environments. Exposure to L2 alone makes learning profitable, enjoyable, and a good experience for learners to express their thoughts in a new language (Almoayidi, 2018). This means that the learners' proficiency will naturally improve with the maximum use of L2 in a language classroom (Chaudron, 1988; Krashen, 1982; Macdonald, 1993).

### *The Use of L1 in Language Teaching*

On the other side of the debate, some ideas support the use of L1. For example, Cook (1999), who first argued that L1 should be banned in the classroom, changed his idea to the presupposition that L1 can be functional in L2 classes. Some studies show that students feel comfortable while their native language is used for acquiring another language (Atkinson, 1987; Edstrom, 2006; Kim Ahn, 2010; Schweers, 1999). According to Rhalmi (2009), L1 should be used more in L2 classes because it will efficiently facilitate the foreign language learning process. Ordone et al. (1999) also point out that the first language lays the foundation for developing proficiency in additional languages, showing that native language use is essential for learning a second language. Learners who need "a sense of security in the experience of learning a foreign language" (Darginavičienė & Navickienė, 2015, p. 109) may become stressed with the idea of abandoning the native language. James (1996) agrees that establishing a link between L2 and L1 effectively raises learners' awareness in the learning process. In other words, L1 can be used just to attract the learners' attention to certain points that might be incomprehensible with L2 explanations. This is important because denying the learners' first language competence skills might cause them to feel threatened by another language and a culture they are unfamiliar with. Hence, using some first language elements in a language classroom will make the learners feel safe and secure.

### *The Reasons for the Use of L1 in L2 Classrooms*

Another group of scholars claim that the use of L1 or L2 depends on other factors such as the class, students' profile, and the teachers' competence. Edstorm (2009) states that using L1 or L2 more should be up to the teacher as the students' proficiency levels or needs vary, and results can change. For instance, if a group of students learn L2 to pass a certain test that assesses their competence of grammar and comprehension, they may not require more exposure to the L2 as they aim to internalise the structure of the language necessary for them to understand test questions. Therefore, they may not need any L2 exposure if their listening or speaking skills will not be tested. Thus, these two skills, which might require teachers to expose their students to more English, will not serve the learners' needs in that context. Meyer (2008) confirms that the use of L1 in L2 classes should differ from one class to another in terms of the class purpose and students' comprehension abilities. However, L2 use must be maximised.

Some studies show that L1 is essential under certain circumstances, especially for some pedagogical goals. Ordone et al. (1999) say that L1 should also be used "to check comprehension and clarify problems" (p.9). Some researchers wanted to see whether L2 use in a classroom is more effective in teaching grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation of words by working on this area. (Carson & Kashihara, 2012; Edstorm, 2009). According to Carson and Kashihara (2012), higher L1 use is needed to make statements and clarifications. Grim (2010) also elaborates on the issue by saying that teachers can make use of L1 for "facilitating comprehension, overcoming grammatical

obstacles, and saving time in lengthy L2 task explanations” (p. 207). Villamil and de Guerrero (1996) show the importance of the L1 use, which is Spanish in their context, as “L1 was an essential tool for making meaning of text, retrieving language from memory, exploring and expanding content, guiding their action through the task, and maintaining dialogue” (p. 60). Swain and Lapkin (2000) showed the importance of L1 use in terms of ‘task accomplishment’, which could not be achieved without the use of L1 with 8<sup>th</sup> graders French immersion students who turned to ‘French’ to negotiate and communicate with each other to be able to complete the task given by their teacher. Timuçin and Baytar (2015) have also found that teachers speak in Turkish to translate from English, check for understanding, provide students with procedures and directions, explain grammar, and manage the class.

In summary, there are various reasons why teachers use L1 in their L2 classes. This study was carried out to determine why different teachers in different teaching contexts use Turkish (L1) in their L2 classes. Thus, the research questions are:

1. How much L1 is used in language classrooms? Is L2 dominantly used in language classrooms?
2. Why do English teachers turn to L1 (which is Turkish in this study)?
3. What are students’ perceptions of L1 use in language classrooms?

## Method

### *Research Design*

For the data collection of this study, 8 different schools, either state or private, under the Turkish Ministry of Education’s observation were visited, and 8 different English language classes were observed in these schools at different times within a month. To observe lessons on different topics, the researcher observed classes at different times. In each school, at least one English language lesson was observed, which lasted 40 minutes. During the observations, an observation protocol, designed by Charles Darwin University School of Education (2019), was used to record what happened in the classroom for later analysis. The teachers and students from different family and academic backgrounds were observed during the lesson in which the researcher was allowed to enter. After the observations, students in two randomly chosen schools, among the ones where the observations were made, were given open-ended questionnaires to check whether the observations reflected the reality and triangulation purposes. The students were asked to give their general opinions on the use of Turkish in their lessons. As this study’s main focus was on teachers’ Turkish use through ‘on-site observations’, all students were not included in the study. Therefore, the students from the selected two schools participated in this study as they were more willing to answer the questionnaire. Additionally, in one of the schools, a teacher was

interviewed considering both the “triangulation” purpose and willingness of the participant teacher to contribute to the study.

### *Research Sample*

Table 1 below shows the schools’ detailed information where the English lessons were observed and the participant teachers and students’ information.

**Table 1**

*Detailed Information about the Schools Where Observations Were Done*

School Code	School Type	Grade	Number of students	Language level	Experience of teacher	Graduation of the teacher
S1	State High School	11	10	A2	30 years	ELT
S2	State Primary School	4	17	A1	11 years	ELT
S3	State Anatolian High School	12	21	B2	15 years	ELT
S4	State High School	12	15	B1	7 years	English Literature
S5	State Secondary School	7	26	A2	18 years	International Relations
S6	Private Primary School	5	20	A1	5 years	ELT
S7	State High School	9	28	A2	17 years	English Literature
S8	State High School	9	16	A2	5 years	ELT

As shown in Table 1 above, eight different English lessons in eight different schools were observed at different education levels based on the Ministry of Education in Turkey. Six of these schools were high schools whereas the other two were primary and secondary schools. All of the schools except S6 were state schools. Still, all of the schools in Turkey, private or state, are under the Ministry of Education’s supervision so the objectives of the curriculums implemented in different schools do not differ greatly. However, private schools can offer more language classes to their students as they have more facilities and opportunities.

### *Participants*

The number of students in the classes ranged from 10 to 28, which is ideal for language teaching. The language levels of six classes ranged from A1 and A2 whereas the other two classes were B1 and B2. Thus, their language proficiencies were not high.

The consents of the students in S7 and S8 were taken, then they were given open-ended questionnaires to share their opinions on their teacher's use of Turkish in English lessons. As for the participant teachers' teaching experience, only two of them had five years of teaching experience, which could be called 'moderately experienced', while five had more than ten years of teaching experience. Only one of the teachers had seven years of experience. When it comes to the participant teachers' educational backgrounds, five were graduates of ELT (English language teaching) department. Two of them graduated from the English language and literature department, and one graduated from the international relations department. Therefore, these three got their pedagogical formation after graduating from their universities to be teachers in the Ministry of Education. All participant teachers were observed in their classes; however, one teacher (S8) was interviewed as she was willing to contribute to this study. She was a graduate of an ELT department; therefore, she was familiar with the concepts and terminology, which was a great asset to this study.

#### *Educational Context*

This study was conducted in schools located in different parts of Istanbul. No matter how metropolitan the city is, the regions' socioeconomic status where the data were collected were neither high nor low. Thus, the schools' students came from middle or upper-middle-class families. Therefore, it can be claimed that these students were exposed to English in a school setting as they did not speak English in their daily lives. Turkey is an EFL country where English is used as a foreign language; students do not need to speak English to meet their daily needs. Hence, in this study, L2 means 'English' (taught as a foreign language in schools), and L1 is 'Turkish' (the mother tongue of both the students and the teachers). Thus, it can be concluded that there was no minority language used for communication between students and teachers.

What was covered in the lessons was another point that needed some attention because the content potentially determined the dominant use of either Turkish or English. However, in all classes, teachers touched upon a grammar point even if the focus was on reading (apart from S2, where the lesson's main focus was to teach vocabulary, specifically nationalities and countries). Thus, no grammar instruction was observed in that class.

#### *Research Instruments and Procedures*

Three different data collection instruments were used for this study: an observation protocol, an open-ended questionnaire, and interview questions.

##### *a. Observation Data*

The primary data for this study were collected through observations. 8 different classrooms were observed for this study, and during the observations, the researcher used an observation protocol designed by Charles Darwin University, School of Education in Australia (2019). This data collection tool was suitable because it gave the

researcher the chance to record the time of the moment that was specifically related to the study's purpose (the teacher behaviour, student response, and the reason/explanation/discussion of that specific case). Thus, after the observation, the researcher could easily follow what was witnessed during the observations. Student reactions were also significant because student perceptions were also within the scope of this study.

The researcher observed eight different classes for at least one lesson, which lasted 40 minutes. Therefore, 320 minutes of classroom observations were done in total. During the observations, audio recordings were taken because the teachers were reluctant to allow video recordings. Audio recordings were kept for the data to be easily transcribed by the researcher and not to miss any significant moments.

#### *b. Open-Ended Questionnaires and the Interview*

Along with the observations, in two schools (S7 and S8), students were also given open-ended questionnaires to learn more about the students' perspectives on the issue. The researcher wrote the questionnaire's questions following this study's purpose, considering the research questions (mentioned above). These questions were formed to determine students' reactions to Turkish use in the lessons and whether they were satisfied with the teachers' implementation.

Additionally, the researcher interviewed one participant teacher from one of the schools. The researcher also wrote the interview questions according to the research questions and the purpose of the study. The participant teacher (S8) was interviewed about her Turkish use after the observation was completed to check whether there were inconsistencies between what she had done and what she said. The interview was also recorded to be able to transcribe it later for the data analysis. The interview was conducted in Turkish, the participant teacher and the researcher's mother tongue, for the participant teacher to feel comfortable sharing her ideas. Furthermore, with the interview data elicited, it was determined to what extent there was an overlap between the teacher's thoughts and students' perspectives about Turkish use in English lessons.

#### *Data Collection*

Data were collected from different sources for triangulation purposes to increase the reliability and validity of this study. Creswell (2012) defines it as "the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data or methods of data collection to ensure that the study will be accurate because the information draws on multiple sources of information, individuals or processes" (p. 259). Thus, the researcher collected data from teachers and students with the help of different data collection tools.

The data collection started with the determination of different school contexts for this study. The schools were chosen as a result of the correspondences between the researcher and different school administrations. The ones who were willing to help the

researcher collect his data were selected to do the observations. Upon arrival, the administrative staff guided the researcher to one of the English language teachers who was available and willing to cooperate at that time. The ones who were ready to help were observed for a whole lesson, and the lessons were audio recorded with the teachers' consent. With this procedure, the researcher visited eight different schools and had the chance to observe eight different English lessons given by eight different English language teachers. In addition to these observations done via an observation protocol and recorded audio files, students in S7 and S8 were given an open-ended questionnaire at the end of their lessons. In S8, the researcher interviewed the teacher right after completing the open-ended questionnaire given to the students. Thus, the teacher in S8 allocated one more hour for the researcher to conduct the interview.

### *Data Analysis*

The analysis was conducted considering the research questions, and as Cohen et al. (2007) state, "analysis here is almost inevitably interpretive" (p.469). Analysis was defined by Gall et al. (2003) as "a process of examining case study data closely in order to find constructs, themes, and patterns that can be used to describe and explain the phenomenon being studied" (p. 453). The researcher fully transcribed the audio recordings and the teacher interview. The questionnaires filled by the students were already in a written form, which made them available for analysis. After the transcriptions, the data were firstly classified and categorised. Later, structuring narratives to describe the contents was made to interpret the data (Cohen et al., 2007). 'Thematic' analysis was chosen because the researcher organised transcriptions into themes and combinations of categories (Krippendorp, 2004); these categories are defined as "the main groupings of constructs or key features of the text, showing links between units of analysis" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 478). Certain codes, which are "the smallest element of material that can be analysed" (Cohen et al., 2007; p. 477), were identified to compare what was observed and told by the teacher and students. The codes were descriptive and included 'situation codes', which are perspectives held by subjects; ways of thinking about people and objects, according to Bogdan and Biklen (1992). The data were ready for analysis when the 'codes' were available and thematically categorised.

Some quotes from the transcript were provided in the results section, as Gall et al. (2003) claim that "direct quotes of the remarks by the case study participants were particularly effective because they clarify the emic perspective, that is, the meaning of the phenomenon from the point of view of the participants" (p. 469). These quotes will make it easier for readers to understand the case better. The recorded data were also used to understand what was witnessed in the lesson, along with the transcripts. The field notes were great assets to the themes created by the transcripts.

The analysis of the open-ended questionnaires and the teacher interview (S8) were also done qualitatively by finding certain codes. The researcher transcribed the audio files due to confidentiality issues. The researcher also tried to determine the amount

of Turkish use in these transcriptions through manual calculations of the sentences or words used in the lessons to provide the results section ratios. Furthermore, translations were also done by the researcher and checked by colleagues to increase the reliability of the data. The teacher interview was done in Turkish; thus, the researcher manually coded both the interview transcription and the students' open-ended questionnaires. As this is a contextual case study whose results cannot be generalised to other contexts, the codes created from the interview, open-ended questions, and the interviews' transcriptions were related to the study's research questions.

## Results

### *The Amount of L2 Use*

In these eight different schools, eight different classes were observed, and the first thing that attracted the researcher's attention was the amount of English used. In almost every class, the amount of English used was higher than Turkish use. It can be stated that the use of Turkish accounted for 30 % of the interactions occurring in these classes. In S1, 90 % of English was used, whereas 82 % of English was used in S7. S8 used English 95 % of the time, which was the highest among the researched schools. These percentages were obtained from the recording transcriptions. For instance, in S2, the teacher used English 90 % of the time, even though her class was full of A1 level 4<sup>th</sup> grade students. She used flashcards to achieve this; she used visuals to teach nationalities and flags.

### *The Reasons for L1 Use*

#### *Humour*

Humour was one of the most common reasons why teachers spoke in Turkish. Teachers attempted to integrate 'humour' in their classes to attract the students' attention and make the lessons more interesting. The extract below was taken from the transcripts from S1.

T: A teacher must be humble..

S: What does "humble" mean?

T: Hani "I am the best forget the rest" hocalar var ya bunlar "humble" olmuyor (teachers who think I am the best forget the rest are not humble)..

S: (laughs)

This extract shows how teachers may explain the meaning of unknown vocabulary with jokes, in Turkish, making students laugh. Thus, the teacher jokes in Turkish to make her explanations funny and clear. Additionally, the teacher observed in S8 was interviewed after the class. She said;

Actually, some of my students want me to speak Turkish all the time, but this is not the way I teach. However, I am sure that all of them want me

to make jokes in their own language to make it clearer and make them laugh without hesitating to notice the humour. I don't avoid making Turkish jokes.

It can be understood that students want teachers to have a sense of humour, but this should be done in their own language for it to be understandable. The use of Turkish for humour in the class atmosphere was observed in S1 and S8.

#### *Explanation of a Grammatical Rule*

Apart from humour, 'explanation of a grammatical rule' was another factor that affected the use of Turkish in foreign language classes. In S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, and S8, the teacher used Turkish to explain a grammatical point. Here is the dialogue between a teacher who tried to explain a grammatical point and a student in S3.

T: No, you can't use many with homework. It is uncountable.

S1: But it's homework. Why I cannot say I have many homework. Bir odev, iki odev (One homework, two homeworks, three homeworks)

S2: Yes, Ahmet'nin dedigi gibi odevleri sayamaz miyiz? (As Ahmet has said, can't we count homework?)

T: No, çocuklar odevi İngilizce de sayamazsiniz (Children, we cannot count homework in English)

S2: Ama bir odevim var diyemez miyim? (but can I not say I have one homework?)

T: Sen dersin onlar diyemez. (You can in Turkish, but they cannot in English).

In this extract, the teacher used Turkish to explain the countable/uncountable rule over an uncountable English word (homework). Students also triggered the use of Turkish because they asked their teacher Turkish questions so the teacher felt the need to speak in Turkish for a more detailed explanation. This was just a sample, and the other varieties of this case were also seen in other classes.

#### *Pronunciation*

Pronunciation was another reason why teachers turned to Turkish in S3, S4, and S5. Words are pronounced as they are written in the Turkish language; Turkish students find it hard to pronounce some English words since their pronunciation and written versions differ. They have to know the "International Phonetic Alphabet" (IPA) to learn the English words' appropriate pronunciation. However, they do not know IPA if it is not taught in the lesson. Thus, teachers explain the pronunciation with the help of L1. If students are familiar with IPA, the teacher will not need to use Turkish. However, IPA is usually taught in higher education, and it is not a part of primary or secondary schools' curriculum. The following dialogue was taken from S4.

T: Who wants to give an example with "could"?  
(Waits for her students' response)

S: Could (/kold/) you give me your pencil?

T: Grammar olarak guzel bir ornek ama "could"u "l" sesi olmadan okumaya ozen gosterelim. (It is grammatically correct, but we should do our best to pronounce "could" by paying attention to the silent "l")

This extract showed that the teacher tried to explain the word's appropriate and accurate pronunciation with a Turkish explanation to make it clearer to the students who were likely to mispronounce the word.

#### *Encouragement*

Another reason why teachers turned to Turkish was to encourage students to learn English. In S5 and S8, it was found that teachers spoke in Turkish to encourage their students to learn the language. The following is a part of the transcription from S8;

S1: He does not talkative.

T: He is not talkative. Okay, but this is not the answer that I want.

S2: I think he is not confident.

T: He is not confident, so...?

(Students seem lost)

T: (switches to L1) Yaklaşıyorsunuz ama... Boyle... Bir tik kaldı (Come on you are close to it.. like.. one step more)

In this extract, the teacher aimed to make students more enthusiastic about finding the correct answer, so she turned to Turkish to make them more alert to what she expected from them and make them feel capable of doing so. Thus, she expressed her feelings in Turkish to make them realise what they could do.

#### *Clarification*

Clarification was another contributing factor to the use of Turkish. Teachers felt the need to explain, in Turkish, what they explained in English; for students to understand the points the teacher touched upon. This case was observed in S5, S7, and S8. Here is an extract from S7;

S: There is a table in the room.

T: It must be a question.

S: There is a ...

T: Çağrı, Çağrı! It must be a question.

S: Soruyu okuyum ama hangi soru. (I can read the question but which one?)

T: Çağrı bu bir soru olmalı çünkü "Yes" diyerek cevap verilmiş. (Çağrı, this must be a question because the answer starts with "yes").

S: Is there a table in the room?

T: Yeah, that is right.

In this extract, it can be seen that the teacher realised that the student could not understand what he had to do in the activity. Thus, even though she explained what

he had to do in English, the student expressed what he had understood in Turkish; therefore, the teacher felt the need to clarify the activity by explaining it in Turkish.

#### *Classroom Management*

Teachers spoke in Turkish for classroom management purposes (for the stability of the class environment). When they felt that the order in the class was at risk and saying something in English would do nothing to fix it, they spoke in Turkish for students to understand and act accordingly. In S6 and S8, where the teachers had 5 years of experience, teachers spoke Turkish to control their classes. Here is a part of the transcription of S6;

T: so we have learned "can" model. We have done some activities with it. Now, I will write some more example sentences with it on the board.  
[Meanwhile, students talk to each other to realise what they are doing]  
T: Ama kendi aramızda konuşmuyoruz. Simdi tahtaya bakın. Bunları yazın. (But we won't talk to each other. Look at the board and write them down now).

In this extract, the teacher turned to Turkish because she thought students did not understand her instruction; she explained it in Turkish to make sure that they understood what they had to do. If they kept chatting among themselves, she might feel as if she was losing control of the class.

#### *Error Correction*

Finally, error correction was another reason teachers turned to Turkish in their English lessons. This was observed in S6 where the teacher made a correction in terms of lexical and grammatical context. The extract below shows the grammatical correction made with the use of Turkish.

S: He is speak two language.  
T: [stops student with using her hand] He can speak... He can speak two languages. "He is speak" is false. Degil mi Arzu? (isn't it, Arzu?) [waits for a second]  
S: Yes, teacher, sorry. He can speak two languages.  
T: He can speak Turkish and English.

This extract showed that the teacher tried to attract the student's attention to draw attention to the mistake using Turkish. In another case observed in the same class, the teacher made a correction for vocabulary improvement.

S: She is Turk.  
T: Country and nationality. We learned it before. Our country and nationality in English? [waits for the students to remember] Ulkemizin İngilizcesi neydi çocuklar? (What is the English equivalence of our country?)

Ss: Turkey!  
T: What about nationality?  
Ss: Turkish..!  
T: She is Turkish.

In this extract, it can be understood that the teacher pointed out the lexical deficiency that her students had. Hence, she spoke in Turkish to remind them of the importance of the word that had already been taught.

These were the reasons why teachers spoke in Turkish in the observed L2 classes. In addition to the observations, perceptions of the students and the teachers were also given some importance. Thus, in two schools, students were given open-ended questionnaires, and an interview was conducted with the teacher in S8. These data showed us the students and teachers' perceptions about the use of Turkish in English lessons.

#### *Perceptions*

As the teachers and the students are the two important key factors for a successful foreign language lesson, their perceptions on an educational implementation are significant contributors to education in terms of efficiency and applicability. Unless teachers are sure about the efficacy of what they do, they will be unable to reflect it on their practices, ending up with failure even if it is beneficial for students. Therefore, the teacher in S8 was interviewed after the observation; this was a random choice. The others could not be interviewed because of the time restrictions and availability issues. During the interview, the teacher made comments about the use of Turkish in lessons and here are the highlights;

Students are happy with my efforts to use English in my class even though I have some worries about whether all of them thinks in the same way as I do. However, some of them have some difficulty in understanding my speaking English. Thus, I make most of the grammatical explanations in Turkish in case they may not understand everything totally. What is more, the humour must be made in their own language for the students, to make them feel safe in the class. However, I would like them to use English as much as possible...

This interview showed an overlap between what the teacher thought and what she did in her classroom environment.

As for students' perspectives, they expressed themselves regarding L1 use in the open-ended questionnaire. Most of them said they were glad that they were exposed to the English language in their English lessons. They agreed that they had to use as much English as possible, but they added that they wanted to have Turkish grammatical explanations; they said this was followed in their classes. Some of them pointed out the difficulties they had while their teacher spoke in English, whereas some shared their satisfaction with their teachers' speaking English. Students also said

that they preferred making and receiving jokes in Turkish. This showed student satisfaction in L1 use, and there was an overlap between the students and teachers' perceptions.

### Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

Turkish use in English lessons has always been questioned in terms of efficiency and practicality in foreign language education. This research also shows that Turkish use in English lessons is inevitable because teachers integrate it with their lessons for several reasons. However, L1 use must be limited. As stated by Atkinson (1993), "L1 can be the 'single biggest danger' in the foreign language classroom if it threatens the primacy of the target language or 'the most important ally a foreign language have' if it is used 'systematically, selectively and injudicious doses'" (p.13). Therefore, teachers should do their best to avoid Turkish use, benefiting the learning and teaching processes. They should be aware of the reason why they are using it.

Most of the teachers observed for this study spoke in Turkish to explain some important grammatical points so they intended to use L1 in L2 lessons. Cao (2018) confirms that "strategic use of L1 by both teachers and students can be a useful resource in the L2 classroom" (p. 28). By doing so, teachers can make confusing points clearer for students, or students can easily ask questions to their teachers, which accelerates the pace of learning and teaching. It can be seen that no matter what the level the classroom observed is, L1 is used for explaining unclear grammatical points. In S3 and S4, whose language proficiency levels were B1 and B2, teachers used L1 to make grammatical explanations even if the students' language level was proficient enough to understand L2 instructions and elaborations. However, according to Cook (1999), this is reasonable because the constant use of L2 is preferred and required in multilingual classes even though the sole use of L2 will not work properly in classes where the students share a common L1. Therefore, in this study, where all students have the same L1, teachers naturally turned to L1 regardless of their learners' language levels.

Solhi and Büyükyazi (2011) state that using L1 when necessary is acceptable and that teachers do not need to limit themselves to only using L2. Sali (2014) also states that non-native Turkish teachers turn to their L1 in classes because of academic reasons such as explaining grammar rules, eliciting, reviewing, and translating, which were also detected in this study.

The use of L1 depends on the content and the topic of the lesson because if something simple on a lexical level is taught, teachers rarely need to use L1. This was also observed in this study. In S2, the teacher rarely used Turkish because she was teaching nationalities and countries. She used visual aids and flashcards that reflected the countries' flags, so she did not turn to Turkish. Thus, the topic, which was being covered at the time of the observation, also played a key role. Tognini and Oliver (2012) claim that "when L2 was used, especially in teacher-learner interaction, it tended to be restricted to simpler and more predictable exchanges for all instructional contexts"

(p.74). This shows that when it is unnecessary to use L1, teachers always try to use L2, especially when they teach something understandable in L2.

This study found that fewer students teachers had in their classes, the more English they spoke. Teachers greatly used L2 in S1, S2, S4, and S8 compared to other schools because they had less than 17 students; this could be considered an easily controllable group of people considering the 28 pupil group of S7. Therefore, in these crowded classes, teachers used L1 as a facilitative tool for learning and teaching. Sharma (2006) confirms that “total prohibition of mother tongue in an English classroom will certainly deprive the students of certain opportunities to learn more and better” (p. 86). Thus, with Turkish, teachers can save time and energy in such crowded classes that might have low-level learners with weaker proficiency than their peers in the class.

Teachers use L1 to control the classroom; this was observed in S4, S6, and S8, in which the teachers had less than 7 years of teaching experiences. Thus, less experienced teachers used L1 for managerial purposes. Cook (2006) states that teachers prefer using L1 to ‘discipline’ their class. Teachers probably think that using L1 is the easiest and quickest way to control the class because there will be no obstruction in comprehending the commands and instructions. Turnbull (2001) states that using L1 is alluring as a time-saving tool, especially when the teacher is tired, or students are anxious to go on. Therefore, it is natural for teachers to use L1 in situations they do not feel safe, as for the quietness of the class. However, using Turkish too much might not lead to appropriate consequences in a language class. Edstrom (2006) warns that using L1 purposelessly may have negative results for teachers and students because if students feel that they do not need to use L2 in their language lessons, they will not force themselves to practice it. Thus, teachers should have a logical reason when using L1 because they might unconsciously make students acquire a bad habit in L1 use in the class.

Turkish use mostly derived from the “humour” factor in this study, no matter the classes’ language level. Teachers used Turkish to increase cheerfulness because humour is an inextricable part of the human experience and, thus, a fundamental aspect of humanity’s unique capacity for language. Therefore, using humour in English lessons can positively change learners’ attitudes towards learning the language. Humour creates a warm environment, which encourages learners and motivates them to learn English due to its relaxing, comforting, tension-reducing effects, its humanising effect on teacher image, and its effect of maintaining/increasing student interests and enjoyment (Neulip, 1991). Therefore, according to Bryant et al. (1979), when teachers integrate humour relevant to the topic, the material is more enjoyable, and students will easily memorise the information. As a result, this study’s participant teachers did not miss the chance to facilitate these moments and used L1 to attract their students.

This study was conducted with the observations made in eight different schools. Thus, the conclusions are contextual and cannot be generalised. Unfortunately, only eight classes were observed for a couple of hours per class. Suppose the observations

had been carried out for a whole semester. In that case, this study could have given better results, but this could not be achieved because of the time limitations and permissions.

Additionally, not every teacher observed could be interviewed due to their unwillingness and their personal time restrictions owing to their other duties. Moreover, only students in the two classes were given open-ended questionnaires; this number could be higher, but not all students accepted to fill in the questionnaire, which could not be applied without their consent. However, these data collection tools (teacher interview and the open-ended questionnaire applied to students) were supplementary considering the main data collection tool (observation protocol); therefore, these numbers might not be considered as the deficiency but can be considered as the limitation of this study. Therefore, further studies can be conducted in different research contexts, more observation can be made, the student questionnaire could be applied to every class observed, and interviews could be arranged with every teacher.

### References

- Almoayidi, K. A. (2018). The effectiveness of using L1 in second language classrooms: A controversial issue. Retrieved from Academy Publication: <http://www.academypublication.com/ojs/index.php/tpls/article/viewFile/tpls0804375379/1458>
- Atkinson, D. (1987). The mother tongue in the classroom. *ELT Journal*, 41 (4), 241-247.
- Atkinson, D. (1993). *Teaching monolingual classes*. London: Longman.
- Bogdan, R. G., & Biklen, S. K. (1992). *Qualitative research for education (second edition)*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bryant, J., Comisky, P., & Zillmann, D. (1979). Teachers' humor in the college classroom. *Communication Education*, 28, 110-118.
- Carson, E., & Kashihara, H. (2012). Using the L1 in the L2 classroom: The students speak. *The Language Teacher*, 36 (4), 41-48.
- Cao, Y. K. (2018). Chinese learners' L1 use in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programme. *TESL Reporter*, 50 (2), 18-30.
- Campa, J. C., & Nassaji, H. (2009). The amount, purpose, and reasons for using L1 in L2 classrooms. *Foreign Language Annals*, 42(4), 742-759.
- Chang, C.-Y. (2009). *Teacher's use of students' L1 in an EFL classroom*. Unpublished master's thesis, National Cheung Kong University, Taiwan.
- Charles Darwin University (2019). Observing classroom management. Observation protocol. School of Education. Retrieved from

<https://www.cdu.edu.au/sites/default/files/school-education/docs/ins-observing-classroom-management.pdf>

- Chaudron, C. (1988). *Second language research: Research on teaching and learning*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education (6th edition)*. London: Routledge.
- Cook, V. (1999). Going beyond the native speaker in language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 33 (2), 185-205.
- Cook, V. (2006). Using the first language in the classroom. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 57 (3), 402-423.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational Research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Darginavičienė, I., & Navickienė, V. (2015). Use of native language in learning English for specific purposes. *Bridges / Tiltai*, 71(2), 109-123.
- Edstrom, A. (2006). L1 use in the L2 classroom: One teacher's self-evaluation. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 63 (2), 275-292.
- Edstorm, A. M. (2009) Teacher reflection as a strategy for evaluating L1/L2 use in the classroom. *Babylonia*, 1(9), 12-15.
- Ellis, R. (2005). Principles of instructed language learning. *Asian EFL Journal*, 7(3), 9-24.
- Ferguson, G. (2003). Classroom code-switching in post-colonial contexts: Functions, attitudes and policies. *AILA Review*, 16, 38-51.
- Gall, M. D., Gall, J. P., & Borg, W. R. (2003). *Educational research*. Boston: Pearson.
- Grim, F. (2010). L1 in the L2 classroom at the secondary and college levels: A comparison of functions and use by teachers. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 7 (2), 193-209.
- Iswati, L., & Hadimulyono, A. O. (2018). The role of L1 in L2 classes. *Edulite: Journal of English Education, Literature, and Culture*, 3(2), 125-134.
- James (1996) A cross-linguistic approach to language awareness. *Language Awareness*, 5(3-4), 146-147.
- Kim Anh, K. H. (2010). Use of Vietnamese in English language teaching in Vietnam: Attitudes of Vietnamese university teachers. *EFL Journal*, 3 (2), 119-128.
- Kim, Y., & Petraki, E. (2009). Students' and teachers' use of and attitudes to L1 in the EFL classroom. *The Asian EFL Journal Quarterly*, 11(4), 58-77.
- Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. New York: Pergamon Press.

- Krippendorp, K. (2004). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Macaro, E. (2005). Codeswitching in the L2 classroom: A communication and learning strategy. In E. Llorca (Ed.), *Non-native language teachers. Perceptions, challenges and contributions to the profession* (pp. 63-84). New York: Springer.
- Macdonald, C. (1993). *Using the target language*. Cheltenham, England: Mary Glasgow.
- Meyer, H. (2008). The pedagogical implications of L1 use in the L2 classroom. *Maebashi Kyoai Gakuen Ronshu*, 147-159. Retrieved from <https://133.8.93.45/dspace/bitstream/10087/7250/1/2008-meyer1.pdf>
- Neuliep, J. W. (1991). An examination of the content of high school teachers' humor in the classroom and the development of an inductively derived taxonomy of classroom humor. *Communication Education*, 40(4), 343-355. doi: 10.1080/03634529109378859
- Rhalmi, M. (2009). Should L1 be used in EFL classes. [web log post]. Retrieved from <https://www.myenglishpages.com/blog/l1-efl-classes>
- Sali, P. (2014). An analysis of the teachers' use of L1 in Turkish EFL classrooms. *System*, 42, 308-318.
- Savignon, S. (1983). *Communicative competence: Theory and classroom practice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Schweers, W. Jr. (1999). Using L1 in the L2 classroom. *English Teaching Forum*, 37(2), 6-7.
- Sharma, K. (2006). Mother tongue use in English classroom. *Journal of NELTA*, 11 (1-2), 80-87.
- Solhi, M., & Büyükyazi, M. (2011). The use of first language in the EFL classroom: A facilitating or debilitating device? *In the proceedings of 1st International Conference on Foreign Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics May 5-7 2011 Sarajevo*, 860-866.
- Swain, M., & Lapkin, S. (2000). Task-based second language learning: The uses of the first language. *Language Teaching Research*, 4, 251-274.
- Ordon, M., Sandhu, S., & Zhang, N. (1999). English language learners: balancing the L1 and the L2 in the classroom. Retrieved from <http://blogs.ubc.ca/myraeducation/files/2017/07/CaseNineResearchPackage.pdf>
- Tien, C.-Y. (2004). *Code-switching in two freshman English classrooms in a university in southern Taiwan*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Leicester.
- Timuçin, M., & Baytar, İ. (2015). The functions of the use of L1: Insights from an EFL classroom. *Kastamonu Eğitim Dergisi*, 23(1), 241-252.

- Tognini, R., & Oliver, R. (2012). L1 use in primary and secondary foreign language classrooms and its contribution to learning. *Utrecht Studies in Language & Communication*, 24(2), 53-77.
- Turnbull, M. (2001). There is a role for the L1 in second and foreign language teaching, but ... *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 54 (4), 531-540.
- Turnbull, M., & Arnett, K. (2002). Teachers' uses of the target and first languages in second and foreign language classrooms. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 22, 204-218.
- Villamil, O., & de Guerrero, M. (1996). Peer revision in the L2 classroom: Socio-cognitive activities, mediating strategies, and aspects of social behavior. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 5, 51-75.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1978). *Teaching language as communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

### **Türk Okullarında İngilizce Öğreten Türk Öğretmenlerin Anadilini (Türkçe) Kullanma Sebepleri**

#### **Atf:**

- Tomak, B. (2021). The reasons for L1 use by English teaching Turkish teachers in Turkish schools. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research* 94,125-146, DOI: 10.14689/ejer.2021.94.6

#### **Özet**

*Problem Durumu:* Son zamanlarda dil öğretim tekniklerinde sıklıkla alanda tartışılan "öğrencileri olabildiği kadar çok hedef dile maruz bırakıp hedef dili sınıfta kullanma" dil öğretimi yapılan sınıflarda teşvik edilmektedir. Bu durum İngilizce öğretilen sınıflarda da aynı şekilde hedef dil olan İngilizce'nin olabildiği kadar sınıfta çok kullanılıp derste öğrenciyi İngilizce'ye daha çok maruz bırakmak şeklinde yorumlanmaktadır. Fakat sınıflardaki öğrencilerin ve öğretmenin ortak bir kültür ve anadile (Türkçe) sahip olmasının sınıfta sürekli İngilizce kullanımına etkisi de araştırmaya değer bir konu olduğu aşikardır. Zira, her ne kadar amaç İngilizce öğrenmek ve de konuşmak olsa da öğrenciler de öğretmenler de anadilleri olan Türkçe kullanımına başvuracaktır. Bunun olmaması imkansızdır. Tüm bunlar göz önüne alındığında, İngilizce öğretiminin yapıldığı sınıflarda ne kadar sıklıkla ana dil kullanımı yapıldığı her zaman merak konusu olmuştur. İngilizce sınıflarında sürekli İngilizce konuşmak teşvik edilse de bazı durumlarda öğretmenlerin Türkçe konuştuğu gözlenmiş ve dil sınıflarında öğretmenlerin Türkçe kullanımına öğrencilerin dil becerisi ve eğitim kademesine bakılmaksızın karşılaşılmıştır.

*Araştırmanın Amacı:* Bu çalışmada Türk okullarında çalışan Türk kökenli İngilizce öğretmenlerinin dil öğretirken ne kadar hedef dilden (İngilizce) faydalandıkları ve ne kadar ana dilleri olan Türkçe'ye başvurdukları teşhis edilmeye çalışılmış ve öğretmenlerin hangi durumlarda ve neden Türkçe kullandıkları ve öğrencilerin bu durumdan ne kadar memnun olup olmadıkları incelenmiştir.

*Araştırmanın Yöntemi:* Bu çalışma bir durum çalışması olduğundan nitel araştırma yöntemleri kullanılmıştır. Öncelikle 8 ayrı dil sınıfındaki İngilizce öğretmenlerinin İngilizce derslerinde gözlem yapılmıştır. Gözlem yaparken araştırmacı Charles Darwin Üniversite'sinin Eğitim Fakültesi tarafından geliştirilmiş gözlem protokolünü kullanmıştır. Gözlem protokolü araştırma sorularına uygun şekilde kullanılmış ve araştırmacı araştırmanın amacı doğrultusunda gözlem yaparken ve protokol üzerine notlar alırken aynı zamanda gözlem yapılan sınıfta sesli kayıt almıştır. Sesli kaydın amacı ne kadar oranda Türkçe konuşulduğunun ölçülmesi ve ne gibi durumlarda Türkçe konuşulduğunu anlamaktır. Sesli kayıt dosyalarının daha sonra transkripsiyonları çıkartılıp gözlem protokolleri üzerine alınan notlar ile karşılaştırılıp araştırma soruları ile bağlantılanıp gerekli tema ve kodlar çıkartılmıştır. Aynı zamanda nitel araştırma olduğu için bulunan tema ve kodların neye dayanarak çıkarıldığını okuyucuya göstermek adına alınan kayıt dosyalarından çıkarılan transkripsiyonlarda sınıf içinde geçen örnek diyaloglara da sonuçlar kısmında yer verilmiştir. Gözlemlerin yanı sıra iki ayrı okulda öğrencilere araştırmacı tarafından araştırma soruları baz alınarak oluşturulan açık uçlu anket soruları dağıtılmıştır. Böylelikle öğrencilerin gözünden de durumun incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Ayrıca gözlem için gidilen okullardan birindeki katılımcı hoca ile konu ile ilgili mülakat yapılmış ve görüşleri alınmıştır. Mülakat katılımcı hocanın kendisini daha rahat hissetmesi ve fikirlerini daha rahat beyan etmesi adına Türkçe yapılmış olup aynı zamanda mülakat sırasında ses kaydı alınmıştır. Hoca ile yapılan mülakatın ses dosyası da araştırma sonuçlarında paylaşılmak üzere transkripsiyon olarak yazı dosyasına dönüştürülmüştür.

*Araştırmanın Bulguları:* Bu araştırmaya göre öğretmenler belirli sebeplerden ötürü sınıflarda Türkçe kullanmaktadır. Sınıfta bir mizah konusu açmak veya esri yapmak için öğrencilerin seviyesine bakılmaksızın hatta dil becerisi yüksek sınıflarda bile mizah söz konusu olduğunda ana dil olan Türkçe'ye dönülmüştür. Ayrıca, İngilizce dilbilgisi ve fonetik bilgilerini öğrencilerine açıklamak için, bazı belirsiz noktaları netleştirmek için, sınıf yönetimindeki disiplini sağlamak ve bazı yönergeler vermek için, öğrencileri dil öğrenmeye karşı cesaretlendirmek için ve onlarla motive edici konuşmalar yapmak adına ve son olarak da öğrencilerin yanlışlarını düzeltirken Türkçe kullanımı sınıflarda yapılmaktadır. Ayrıca öğrenciler de sınıfta hedef dil olan İngilizce'nin olabildiğince çok kullanımından son derece memnun olduklarını belirtmiş fakat İngilizce dilbilgisi ve kural açıklamalarında ana dil (Türkçe) kullanmanın da onlara faydalı olduğu görüşünde birleşmişlerdir.

*Araştırmanın Sonuçları ve Önerileri:* Türkçe kullanımının bazı bağlamsal (çevresel) faktörlerle de doğrudan ilişkili olduğu bulunmuştur. Örneğin öğrenci sayısının daha az olduğu sınıflarda daha az Türkçe kullanımı gerçekleşmiştir. Bunun sebebi öğretmenin yönetsel açıdan sınıf kontrolünü sağlamakta kullandığı Türkçe'ye ihtiyaç duymaması ve interaktif bir ortam olan dil sınıflarında öğrencilerle birebir iletişim

sağlayabilme kolaylığı öğretmenin daha az Türkçe kullanmasına sebep olmaktadır. Böylelikle öğretmen öğrencilerini daha çok İngilizce'ye maruz bırakabilme şansı bulacaktır. Ayrıca işlenen konuya göre de Türkçe kullanımı değişiklik göstermiştir. Gramer (Dilbilgisi) anlatılırken Türkçe kullanımı daha çok olurken kelime öğretiminde ve görsellerle desteklenebilecek kelime öğretimlerinde daha az Türkçe konuşulmuştur. Dahası öğretmenler Türkçe açıklama yapmak zorunda kalmadığı bir durumda İngilizce konuşmayı tercih etmişlerdir. Ayrıca sınıfın seviyesine bakılmaksızın öğrencilerin dil yeterlilikleri ne kadar yüksek olursa olsun "mizah" söz konusu olduğunda öğretmenlerin ve öğrencilerin de ana dili olan Türkçe'ye başvurulmuştur. Bunun sebebi öğretmenlerin ve öğrencilerin ortak kültürü paylaşmaları ve anadillerinin aynı olması olabilir. Ayrıca öğretim değil eğitim ön plana çıktığında (öğrencilerin sınıf düzenini bozan davranışsal sorunları) Türkçe kullanımı yaygın şekilde görülmüştür. Burada Türkçe'ye dönülmesindeki asıl amaç herkesin yapılan açıklamayı ve sınıf ortamında oldukları için kurallara uyulmasının önemini anladığından emin olmaktır. Bu çalışma durum çalışması olduğundan bağlamdan bağlama değişiklik göstereceğinden farklı yer ve zamanlarda farklı sonuçlar çıkabileceği ön görülmektedir. Bundan dolayı farklı eğitim kademelerinde ve farklı okullarda çalışma tekrarlanabilir. Ayrıca zaman kısıtlamasından dolayı gözlemler her okul ve her ders için 1 kere düzenlenebilmiştir. Her öğretmen bir kez gözlemlenmiş olup zaman kısıtlamaları ve uygulanabilirlik durumlarında dolayı daha fazla gözlem yapılamamıştır. Tüm dönem gözlem yapılması daha sağlıklı sonuçlar doğurabilir.

*Anahtar Kelimeler:* Türkçe kullanımı, Birinci dil kullanımı, İngilizce öğretimi, dil sınıfları

Copyright of Eurasian Journal of Educational Research (EJER) is the property of Eurasian Journal of Educational Research and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.