L1 USE IN L2 TEACHING: THE AMOUNT, FUNCTIONS, AND PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE USE OF L1 IN TURKISH PRIMARY SCHOOL CONTEXT

Research Article

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Abstract

The employment of the mother tongue or first language (L1) in foreign (FL) or second language (L2) teaching is a controversial issue and still continues to take considerable attention from researchers. Hence, the current study attempted to shed light into the use of L1 in Turkish EFL classes. In particular, it focused on the amount and the functions of L1 used by primary school EFL teachers in Turkish context. Moreover, it also aimed to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions towards the use of L1 and compare it with their actual classroom practices. Three EFL teachers participated in the study. The data of the study were collected through observations and semi-structured interviews. The data of the study were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The findings revealed that the three Turkish EFL teachers used comparable amount of L1 in their classes, ranging from 21% to 30% of all classroom instruction. The current study seemed to indicate that Turkish EFL teachers were inclined to use more L1 in lower grades. The findings also revealed that EFL teachers used Turkish in 9 different functions such as giving instruction, translation of unknown words, classroom management, checking understanding, eliciting, drawing attention, giving feedback, grammar instruction, and translation of sentences, respectively. The results also demonstrated that the perceptions of EFL teachers towards the use of L1 comply with their actual practices with minor differences.

Keywords: Language teaching, first language, foreign language, perception

1. Introduction

The employment of the mother tongue or first language (L1) in foreign (FL) or second language (L2) teaching is a controversial issue and still continues to take considerable attention from researchers. Many studies on this issue have been conducted and contradicting results have been found. The supporters of monolingual approach have suggested that the target language should be the only medium of communication in the classroom, which may increase the effectiveness of learning the target language (*see.* Tang, 2002). Krashen (1982) suggested that L1 should be excluded from the classrooms to maximize the exposure to target language. Ellis (1984) also claimed that L1 should be excluded for L2 acquisition because frequent use of L1 may create over-dependency, which in turn prevents learners from acquiring L2. Furthermore, Chaudron (1988) noted that "...the fullest competence in the TL (target language) is achieved by means of the teacher providing a rich target language environment, in which not only instruction and drill are executed in the TL, but also disciplinary and management operations" (p. 121). On the other hand, L1 use is regarded as

essential and proposed to have a facilitating role in foreign language teaching and learning process (Çelik, 2008; Jingxia, 2010). Some previous studies have suggested that foreign language teachers should use *judicious* amount of L1 in order to maximize learning second language (Brooks-Lewis, 2009; Butzkamm, 2003; Thongwichit, 2013). However, the judicious amount is not precise and differs from the use of L1 as a means of tool reducing learners' anxiety (Auerbach, 1993; Meyer, 2008) to a technique to explain complex grammar or vocabulary or to check understanding, and to give instructions (Afzal, 2013; Balabakgil and Mede, 2016; Brooks-Lewis, 2009). Moreover, previous studies showed that not only the quantity of L1 use in the classroom, but teachers' actual practices and perception vary in different degrees (Copland and Neokleous, 2010; Turnbull and Arnett, 2002). Hence, the current study aims to explore teachers' perception towards the use of L1 in L2 teaching and then, to compare their perception with their actual practices. This study also aims to investigate the reasons and the amount of L1 use in L2 teaching. Exploring teachers' perception towards the use of L1 in L2 teaching and comparing it with their actual practices would help teachers evaluate their own foreign language lessons objectively and help them realize the amount of L1 use by creating awareness about their FL classes.

2. Literature Review

Language teaching methods, and the role they assign to the use of L1 vary tremendously. This might be a reason why there is no certainty about the role of L1 in foreign language teaching. Some of the language teaching methods such as direct method, audiolingual methods, total physical response, situational language teaching, silent way and natural approach clearly bans the use of L1 on the grounds that learners could expose to the target language in maximum (Ellis and Shintani, 2014). However, "the theory underlying the banishment of the L1 was never clearly defined." (Brooks-Lewis, 2009). Accordingly, there are a lot of studies in the literature that proves the contribution of L1 use in L2 classes (De la Campa and Nassaji, 2009; Köyl 2018; Manara, 2007; Sarıçoban, 2010). The previous studies investigated the issue from different perspectives. These previous studies can be categorized in two broad groups. A number of studies attempted to investigate the functions and the amount of L1 teachers use in L2 classes (Antón and DiCamilla, 1999; Balabakgil and Mede, 2016; Cook, 2001; Manara, 2007; Polio and Duff, 1994). A bulk of studies tried to examine teachers' perception towards the use of L1 in L2 classes (Ahsan, Ghani and Khaliq, 2016; Balabakgil and Mede, 2016; Edstrom, 2006; Macaro, 2005; Manara, 2007; Sali, 2014; Shabir, 2017; Yıldız and Yeşilyurt, 2017).

2.1. The Functions and Amount of L1 Use in L2 Classes

The various functions of L1 use in L2 classes are also related to the amount of total L1 use of the language teachers. The general tendency about the issue showed that although the primary aim in the classroom is to maximize the teaching of L2, there is no consensus about the proportion of L1 used in FL classes. Therefore, previous studies have found that teachers used L1 for various purposes and in different amounts in FL teaching. Duff and Polio (1990), for example, found that L1 use by university foreign language instructors varied considerably ranging from less than 10% to more than 90%. Moreover, the instructors were found to be consistent in the amount of L1 use across different lessons. In a follow-up study, Polio and Duff (1994) identified a number of different functions of L1 teachers use in university foreign language classes ranging from explaining grammar and classroom management to translation. Macaro (2001) investigated the amount of L1 use by student teachers in secondary school L2 classes and found that L1 use varied considerably ranging from completely exclusion of L1 to 23.8% with the mean of 6.56. The amount of L1 use was not consistent across the lessons. In a similar vein, Littlewood and Yu (2011) examined the

proportion of L1 teachers use in their lessons and identified that the percentage of L1 use ranged from less than 10% to over 75%. The study also showed that teachers' purposes for using L1 were establishing social relations, checking understanding, explaining grammar, giving the meaning of unknown words, and classroom management. In an explanatory study to discover the use of English (L1) and French (TL) by four secondary level French second language teachers, Turnbull (2000) ascertained that the amount of L1 used by teachers differed from 24% to 72%. Similarly, Kim and Elder (2005) conducted a cross-linguistic study on the language choice made by teachers of Japanese, Korean, German and French in the FL classroom in New Zealand secondary school context. The researchers found that although the teachers used English to some extent as the medium of instruction, the amount of L1 (English) used by teachers differed ranging from 12% to 77%. The study also showed that as in the amount of L1 use, the pedagogical functions of L1 use by the teachers also differed considerably. Similarly, De la Campa and Nassaji (2009) investigated the functions of L1 use in German-as-a-foreign-language classes. The result of the study showed that instructors used L1 for 14 different purposes such as translation, giving activity instructions, personal comment, administrative issues, and elicitation. Tang (2002) revealed that Chinese instructors use L1 while they were explaining abstract or culturally specific words and giving instructions in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Investigating the purposes of L1 use in Indonesian university EFL context, Manara (2007) noted that L1 is mostly used by instructors for explaining grammar, emphasizing important points, establishing rapport, and giving feedback. Consequently, the previous studies on the use of L1 in L2 classes showed that the amount and the functions of L1 use varied considerably even in similar contexts.

2.2. Teachers' Perception towards the Use of L1

Some of the previous studies examined the perceptions and beliefs of teachers towards the use of L1 in FL classes. Previous findings indicated that most of the language teachers supported the judicious amount of L1 in FL classes (Ahsan, Ghani and Khaliq, 2016; Edstrom, 2006; Macaro, 2005; Manara, 2007; Shabir, 2017). Conducted at state colleges and universities with 156 participants, Ahsan, Ghani and Khaliq, (2016) found that teachers had positive attitudes towards the use of L1 in FL classes and they believe that L1 is necessary. On the other hand, Manara (2007) found that 57% of the teachers agreed that L2 should be the only medium of instruction and concluded that majority of the teachers have supported monolingual teaching but there is still room for L1 use in L2 classes. A scale questionnaire applied to 23 student teachers by Shabir (2017) revealed that limited use of L1 is necessary especially in certain classroom activities and L1 should not completely banned from the classes. Macaro (2005) noted that majority of teachers regard L1 use *unfortunate* and *regrettable* but *necessary*. Similarly, comparing her perception towards the use of L1 and her actual practice, Edstrom (2006) discovered that although she aimed to maximize the use of TL, she found herself using L1 for some classroom activities, which made her feel regretful. These studies showed that most of the teachers had positive attitudes towards the use of L1 and they believed that if used carefully and judiciously, L1 can facilitate L2 learning and teaching.

2.3. The Use of L1 in Turkish Context

Studies conducted in Turkish context are not different from the overall literature about the use of L1 in FL classes. Çelik (2008) reexamined the role of L1 in foreign language teaching by elaborating views concerning the use of L1 in L2 classes. He concluded that "use of the first language should not be perceived as a sin that must be avoided at all times. Instead, it should be seen as an invaluable resource that language teachers can, and should, utilize for successful language instruction" (p. 81). Balabakgil and Mede (2016) investigated the

perceptions of native and non-native instructors working at a state university about the use of L1 as teaching strategy. The result of the study supported the use of L1 as a teaching strategy and showed that both native and non-native instructors used L1 for checking understanding, eliciting, explaining grammar, and translating vocabulary or sentences. To discover the theoretical and practical positions of English teachers in the use of the L1, Kayaoğlu (2012) administered questionnaire and interviewed English language instructors working at a state university. The result showed that a great majority of the teachers think that teachers should use L1 in their instructions and L1 is a facilitator in FL teaching. As the purpose of using L1, the participants stated that L1 is used for simplification of difficult topics, classroom management, and instructions. Similarly, Köylü (2010) aimed to seek answers why, how and, how much, EFL instructors switch to their L1 during L2 instruction. The study showed that there were 7 factors triggering EFL instructors code-switching. These factors were linguistic differences between L1 and L2, attitudes towards L1, modes of communication, vocabulary teaching, pedagogical tool to promote learners' comprehension, perceived comprehension of the learners, and clarification. Yıldız and Yeşilyurt (2017) investigated the issue from pre-service teachers' perspective. Majority of the pre-service teachers believed that L1 should be used in the process of FL teaching. Pre-service teachers expressed that L1 should be used for explaining new words, explaining grammar, giving instructions, checking understanding, providing feedback, joking and discussing classroom activities with students, and testing. Timuçin and Baytar (2015) investigated the instances of code-switching and their functions while teaching L2 at university setting. The findings showed that teachers used L1 for translation, to check understanding, directions, explaining grammar, classroom management and other reasons, respectively. In the same vein, in a secondary school setting, Sali (2014) probed into EFL teachers' views about the use of L1 in FL classes and aimed to find out the functions of L1 used by Turkish EFL teachers. The researcher categorized the functions of L1 as *academic*, *managerial*, and *social-cultural*. As for the academic functions of L1, the research showed that EFL teachers used L1 for teaching aspects of English, eliciting, reviewing, translating words and sentences, talking about learning, and checking understanding. As for the managerial reasons, teachers stated that they use L1 for giving instructions, managing discipline, monitoring, and drawing attention. Social/cultural functions of L1 was stated to be establishing rapport, talking about cultural expression, and praising.

All these studies contributed to the literature and shed light into how L1 is used in FL classrooms and how the use of L1 is perceived by L2 teachers and instructors. However, most of the previous studies were conducted at university setting with instructors (Balabakgil and Mede, 2016; De la Campa and Nassaji, 2009; Duff and Polio, 1990; Kayaoğlu, 2012; Köyl 2010; Littlewood and Yu, 2011; Manara, 2007; Tang, 2002) or pre-service teachers (Macaro, 2001; Yıldız and Yeşilyurt, 2017). Moreover, most of the previous studies did not compare teachers' perception with their actual practices. As foreign language teaching at different context may have their unique characteristics, there seems to be a need in the literature about the perceptions and actual practices of in-service teachers' L1 use especially at primary school context. Therefore, this study attempts to reveal perceptions of English language teachers towards the use of L1 in primary school context. The current study also aims to compare teachers' perceptions with their actual classroom practices.

3. Methodology

Since the main aim of the current study is to find out EFL teachers' actual practices regarding their L1 use and compare it with their perceptions in Turkish primary school context, the study adopted mixed methods using both qualitative nd quantitative data. One of the characteristics of qualitative study is "to explore a problem and develop a detailed

understanding of central phenomenon" (Creswell, 2012, p. 16). The present study employed qualitative data collection techniques to have in-depth knowledge about the perceptions of EFL teachers towards the use of L1. The quantitative data collection was also employed to gather information about the functions and amount of L1 use.

3.1. Setting and Participants

The current study was carried out in a public primary school in Eskişehir, Turkey. Before the data collection process, the school administration and English language teachers were informed about the study. Three English language teachers (T1, T2, T3) agreed to participate in the study. The primary school and teachers were selected for the study because these classes and teachers were familiar to student teachers observing the lesson, which minimalized the interaction between the researcher, teacher and students. All the teachers were female and native Turkish speakers. Their age ranged from 26 to 35. Their teaching experience ranged from 2 to 11 years. The data of the current study were collected in 2015-2016 academic year and composed of 9 lesson hours of recordings. Each lesson was 45 minutes. The classes had about 25-30 students.

3.2. Instruments

In order to understand EFL teachers' perceptions towards the use of L1 and their actual classroom practices, interviews and observations were conducted. According to Spradley (1980), observation is one of the most frequent data collection form and researcher should be able to adopt different roles in the process. This is why, in the observation process the researcher had non-participant observer role in which he collected data through semi-structured checklist and field notes without participating any activities. Each teacher was observed three lesson hours and all the lessons were audio recorded. The observation process was based on two criteria. The first one was that the lessons should cover the same topic. The second one was that the lessons should be observed for 2_{nd}, 3_{rd}, and 4_{th} grades because grade difference may affect teachers' L1 use. One week after the observation, the participants were interviewed for about 20 minutes in order to get their perception towards the use of L1. The individual in-depth interviews were conducted in Turkish or English depending on the teachers' preferences. Ten open-ended questions (*see* appendix I) were asked to the participants. The semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and translated into English.

3.3. Data Analysis

In order the find out the amount of L1 used by the teachers, the recordings were listened over and over again by the researchers and all the utterances of teachers were transcribed. While determining the amount of L1 use, word count function of Microsoft Word was used. Following the previous literature (De la Campa and Nassaji, 2009; Rolin-Ianziti and Brownlie, 2002), the number of L1 words was extracted from the total number of words. Then, the percentage of L1 use was calculated for each grade and for each teacher. The number of L1 words, L2 words used by the teachers and their percentages are presented as a table.

The functions of L1 were defined as giving instruction, translation of unknown words, classroom management, checking understanding, eliciting, drawing attention, giving feedback, grammar instruction, and translation of sentences based on the previous literature. Each L1 utterances of the EFL teachers were independently classified by the two researchers. Then, the classifications made by the two researchers were compared. To provide reliability between the researchers, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated and inter-rater reliability of the researchers was found to be .87. The different classifications made by the researchers were

reached on a consensus by discussing over them. As for the perceptions of the teachers towards the use of L1, some direct quotations from the interviews were given.

4. Results

In order to find out the amount of L1, all the L1 and L2 words used by the teachers were counted and the number of L1 words was extracted from the total number of words, and their percentages were calculated. As seen in table 1, the percentage of L1 used by the teachers ranged from 17% to 39%. The table shows that T1 used 145 (39%) L1 words and 228 (61%) L2 words while teaching to 2nd grade students. T2 used 157 (37%) L1 words and 263 (63%) L2 words while teaching to 2nd grade students. T3 used 63 (17%) L1 words and 312 (83%) L2 words while teaching to 2nd grade students. Therefore, looking at the percentages, T3 used less L1 than T1 and T2 while teaching to 2nd graders. Comparing all the percentages, it can be seen that T3 used less L1 compared to T1 and T2 while T1 used more L1 than T2 and T3. Comparing grade levels in terms of L1 use, 2nd grade was the group where L1 is used more than 3rd and 4th grade while 3rd grade was the group where L1 is used less than 2nd and 4th grade. In other words, while teaching to 2nd grade students, teachers used more L1 than that of 3rd and 4th grades.

Table 1. *The number of L1 and L2 words used by EFL teachers*

	T1				T2				T3			
Grade	L1	%	L2	%	L1	%	L2	%	L1	%	L2	%
2nd	145	39	228	61	157	37	263	63	63	17	312	83
3rd	84	23	275	77	93	19	389	79	67	14	412	86
4th	194	28	492	72	187	26	524	74	183	31	415	69
TOTAL	423	30	995	71	437	27	1176	63	313	21	1139	79

Table 2 shows the purposes for which L1 was used by EFL teachers in the primary school context. As seen in table 2, L1 was used for 9 different functions and 263 times, but the frequencies of these functions were varied. EFL teachers mostly used L1 to give instructions. L1 is used in the function of giving instructions for 42 times, which constitutes 15.9% of all the functions of L1. As these EFL teachers were working with young learners, they might employ L1 to explain what the young learners need to do for carrying out classroom activities. The second most frequent function for which the EFL teachers switched to L1 was found to be giving the meaning of unknown vocabulary. The teachers used L1 for providing the young learners with Turkish equivalents of English words. Translating unknown words constitutes 14.8% of all the functions of L1. Following the unknown words, the next most frequent function of L1 was found to be classroom management. As young learners have short concentration span and might get bored easily, they may create discipline problems. In order to deal with discipline problems, EFL teachers switched to L1 in their FL instruction. The use of L1 for checking understanding was the 4th most frequent function found in the data. Checking understanding or comprehension constitutes about 12% of all the functions of L1. EFL teachers switched to L1 when they wanted to ensure their students' comprehension. EFL teachers switched to L1 for the purposes of eliciting, drawing attention of the students, giving feedback, grammar instruction, and translation of sentences. Grammar instruction or translating sentences was the less frequently used functions of L1. The result also showed that among these three EFL teachers, T3 switched to L1 for fewer functions (*n*= 69) while T1 and T2 used L1 for similar number of functions (*n*=.98, *n*= 96).

Table 2. *The functions of L1 used by EFL teachers*

Functions of L1	T1	T2	T3	TOTAL	%
1. Giving instruction	15	18	9	42	15.9
2. Unknown vocabulary	18	10	11	39	14.8
3. Classroom management	16	5	13	34	12.9
4. Checking understanding	9	16	5	31	11.7
5. Eliciting	12	14	3	29	11.0
6. Drawing attention	5	9	10	24	9.1
7. giving feedback	7	9	7	23	8.7
8. Grammar instruction	11	8	4	23	8.7
9. Translation of sentences	5	7	7	19	7.2
TOTAL	98	96	69	263	100

Table 3. *Functional categories and example of L1 used by the EFL teachers*

Functions of L1	Example
Giving instruction	*T:* Listen and repeat the colors *T:* Şimdi, dinleyip tekrar edeceğiz. (Now, we are going to listen and then repeat)
Unknown vocabulary	*T:* Repeat after me! scared, scared. *T:* Yani korkmuş. (means scared.)
Classroom management	*T:* Ali ben ders anlatırken yerimizde oturuyouruz değil mi? (Ali, while I am teaching, you should sit down.)
Checking understanding	*T:* what time is it? it is quarter past ten. it is quarter to ten. çeyrek varsa to kullanıyoruz. yrek geçiyorsa past kullanıyoruz. Anladık mı? (we are going to use to if the time is quarter to ten. Did you understand?)
Eliciting	*T:* What color is it? *T:* it is neydi? (it is what was it)
Drawing attention	*T:* Do you like swimming? Cevabı? Herkes buraya baksın. Burası önemli (The answer is... Everybody, look at here! This part is important.) *T:* Yes, I like swimming. or No, I don't like swimming
giving feedback	*T:* How do you feel? *S:* I feel tired. *T:* Harika. (wonderful)
Grammar instruction	*T:* What time is it? it is quarter past ten. it is quarter to ten. yrek varsa to kullanıyoruz. yrek geçiyorsa past kullanıyoruz. (we are going to use 'to' if the time is quarter to ten. We are going to use 'past' if the time is quarter past ten.)
Translation of sentences	T: What do you like doing? yani ne yapmayı seversin? (which means what do you like doing).

The interview conducted with the three EFL teachers showed that EFL teachers' perceptions towards the use of L1 varied considerably. T2 and T3 stated that they switched to L1 in their instructions but they are completely opposed to it. On the other hand, T1 was in favor of using L1 and believed that L1 is necessary in teaching the TL. All the teachers stated that they use L1 if the students do not understand the topic. However, using L1 in teaching

L2 was not a desired situation for the teachers. The following comments were made by one of the teachers:

> "I try a lot of methods and after that, if I still see the unclear look in their eyes, I explain a few words in Turkish there. But apart from that, I prefer to speak English as much as possible until the end of the lesson". (T1)

> "I do not have good feelings about English teachers' using Turkish during class. Because students should be exposed to (target) language. So much as the child is exposed to (target) language the more s/he will have input/knowledge and s/he will feel her/himself comfortable at that environment". (T1)

Looking at the excerpt above, T1 stated that she used L1 as a final pedagogical tool. After trying many different methodologies, if the students did not understand the topic, the teachers employed L1 as a final alternative. EFL teachers also stated that they switch to L1 when they need to talk about extracurricular issues such as making fun, giving information about exams, motivating students or classroom management. The following comments were made by the teachers:

> "If I joke with the students during the lesson or talk to them during the break time, I speak in Turkish. Besides, our job is not just teaching. There's also behavior education in our job. When I interfere with their attitudes or if I want to talk about something, for example, we have to talk nearly for 5 minutes". (T3)

> "Grades 2 do not know any English at all and they are incredibly afraid of English classes. I mean, they think, 'If I can't make it, if I can't talk, if the teacher gets mad at me…' That's why I use Turkish in order that their motivation does not fall. I used Turkish a lot especially in the 2nd grade this year." (T2)

All the teachers stated that they switch to Turkish when they teach grammar. However, looking at table 2, the function of grammar teaching was found to be one of the least preferred functions of L1. The reason of this inconsistency might be students' proficiency levels. In other words, the students were young learners and their textbook did not include many grammar topics. The views of the teachers were as follow:

> "…because I try to use English when I am making my explanations for example, when I explain some grammatical structures. If they find it too hard, I sometimes switch to Turkish, but I do not want them to ask me their simple questions in Turkish". (T1)

> "I especially use Turkish while I am teaching grammar. For the others, it cannot be done in Turkish in the first place. Speaking, reading, I mean these are basic skills. Of course, grammar is also a basic skill, however, the others cannot be established if they are done in Turkish. It deviates from (our) main aim. But I use Turkish to teach grammar in a way". (T2)

Actual classroom practices of the EFL teachers showed that the most preferred function of L1 was giving instruction. The EFL teachers also stated that they switch to L1 when they were giving instruction. With regard to using L1 for giving instruction, the perceptions of the teachers complied with their actual practices. The following opinions were stated by the teachers:

> "Actually, I do not want my students to speak in Turkish. I do not like it very much. Because I use Turkish when I am giving instructions or while I am trying to explain some grammar points. (T3)

"While introducing, explaining what we are going to do, for example the structure, sentence or dialogue they have learnt, I gave (give) the instructions in Turkish of where and how to use it." (T2)

Interview data revealed that the EFL teachers had positive attitude towards the use of L1 in their classes but they also stated that L1 should be used in judicious amounts. They accepted that classroom is the only place where students can expose to L2. However, the actual classroom practices of the students varied considerably in terms of L1 use. Therefore, it can be concluded that although these EFL teachers worked in the similar context, their perception towards the use of L1 and the amount of L1 changed considerably. The following statement was made by one of the teachers:

"Children do not have any other opportunity, I mean, outside the classroom, where they can use English again?! They do not use it in any way. The more it is spoken in the classroom, the more they listen to and speak, the better it is for them". (T3)

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study attempted to shed light into the use of L1 in Turkish EFL classes. In particular, it focused on the amount and the functions of L1 used by primary school EFL teachers in Turkish context. Moreover, it also aimed to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions towards the use of L1 and compare it with their actual classroom practices. The findings revealed that the three Turkish EFL teachers used comparable amount of L1 in their classes, ranging from 21% to 30% of all classroom instruction. Nonetheless, there were considerable differences between some of the teachers' classes in terms of L1 use, ranging from 14% to 39%. Although there were not similar studies to make direct comparison, the findings of this study were mostly in line with the previous findings. De la Campa and Nassaji (2009) revealed an average of 11.3% L1 use in German-as-a-foreign-language university context. Duff and Polio (1990) found that L1 use ranged from 0% to 90% in L2 classes with average of 32.1%. In self-evaluation, Edstrom (2006) used L1 ranging from 17% to 42%. Therefore, the amount of L1 use found in this study is comparable to the averages found in the previous studies.

The current study seemed to indicate that Turkish EFL teachers were inclined to use more L1 in lower grades. In this context, Butzkamm (2003) stated that "with growing proficiency in the foreign language, the use of MT (mother tongue) becomes largely redundant" (p. 36). Similarly, Cole (1998) noted that L1 is most useful at low proficiency. Antón and DiCamilla (1999) expressed the necessity of L1 use with low L2 proficiency learners. The high amount of L1 use especially in young learners' L2 classes might be due to their low proficiency level. Therefore, it can be concluded that, L1 use is necessary and useful in facilitating the teaching learning process especially at the beginner levels

Apart from the amount of L1, the current study concentrated on the functions of L1. The finding revealed that EFL teachers used Turkish in 9 different functions. The most frequently used function of L1 was found to be giving instruction, followed by translation of unknown words, classroom management, checking understanding, eliciting, drawing attention, giving feedback, grammar instruction, and translation of sentences, respectively. The result regarding the functions of L1 was mostly in line with the results of previous studies. For example, Polio and Duff (1994) identified a number of different functions of L1 such as classroom administration, vocabulary, grammar instruction, classroom management etc. Littlewood and Yu (2011) showed that teachers' purposes for using L1 were establishing social relations, checking understanding, explaining grammar, giving the meaning of unknown words, and classroom management. Similarly, De la Campa and Nassaji (2009)

investigated the functions of L1 use in German-as-a-foreign-language classes and found that instructors used L1 for translation, giving activity instructions, personal comment, administrative issues, and elicitation. In Turkish context, Sali (2014) found the major functions of L1 as explaining aspects of English, eliciting, giving instructions, reviewing, managing discipline, establishing rapport, and translating words and sentences. Similarly, Tang (2002) revealed that Chinese instructors use L1 for explaining abstract or culturally specific words and giving instructions. In Indonesian university EFL context, Manara (2007) noted that L1 is mostly used by instructors for explaining grammar, emphasizing important points, establishing rapport, and giving feedback. Consequently, research indicated that teachers used L1 in various functions. It is used to perform the goals and procedures for carrying out classroom activities, translating culturally specific words, managing discipline problems, and checking understanding.

The findings also showed that EFL teachers' perceptions towards the use of L1 comply with their actual practices with minor differences. Interview data demonstrated that the EFL teachers had positive attitude towards the use of L1 but they also expressed that L1 should be used in judicious amounts. Previous studies also suggested judicious amount of L1 use in L2 classes (Balabakgil and Mede 2016; Butzkamm, 2003; Köylü, 2018; Macaro, 2001, 2005; Swain and Lapkin, 2000). The EFL teachers accepted that classroom is the only place where students can expose to L2 and they wanted to maximize the use of TL in their classes. Therefore, it can be concluded that EFL teachers have the perception that the use of L1 in L2 classes is necessary but undesired, which was also in line with the findings of Edstrom (2006) and Macaro (2005).

6. Implications and Limitations

The use of L1 in L2 classes may seem a subjective issue and judicious or appropriate amount of L1 use cannot be determined universally because it is related to teachers' experience, students' proficiency level, the skills that are taught, and students' need to communicate with their teachers. Therefore, extensive use L1 in a class may be more justifiable than another class. Depending on students' needs and proficiency levels, teachers can benefit from the use of L1, rather than prohibiting its use in their L2 instruction. However, EFL teachers should maximize the use of TL in their classes and encourage their students to use the TL as much as possible.

Another consideration might be that language teachers should evaluate themselves, their responsibilities, and their objectives for language learning process. In other words, they should raise their awareness in this regard, which might be helpful in preventing inconsistencies between their perceptions and actual classroom practices. One way of creating awareness in L1 use would be though asking teachers to video-tape their class and evaluate the amount and the purpose of L1 use. Such an activity could provide an opportunity to evaluate themselves.

The current study has some limitations. First of all, the sample size of the study is limited to only three EFL teachers. Therefore, these results cannot be generalized. Second, the data of the study was collected by observation of three EFL teachers covering the same units. If the data collection of the study had been skill-based, different results would have been acquired. Further studies are suggested to take into consideration different skills such as reading, speaking, listening, or grammar.

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Appendix I

The questions asked during the interviews

1- How long have you been teaching?
2- What do you think about students' speaking Turkish in foreign language lessons?
3- What about your students?
4- What do you think about English Language Teachers' use of L1 in their classes? Why?
5- Do you use L1 in your classes?
6- To what extent do you use L1 in your classes? Why?
7- In which cases do you think it is necessary to use L1? Why?
8- Is there any special topics that require the use of L1? Which cases? Can you exemplify it?
9- Is there any skill (speaking, reading, writing, listening, grammar) that you use more L1? Which one? Why? Can you exemplify it?
10- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using L1 in FL classes?