

The Facilitating Role of Iranian Learners' First Language in Learning English Vocabulary

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Abstract: *This study investigates the contribution of bilingualism in learning English as a foreign language. It is believed that the limited use of mother tongue in EFL classrooms does not reduce students' communicative ability but can assist in the learning process. This study attempts to shed light on the facilitating role of Iranian English Foreign Language learners' first language in learning of English vocabulary. This study used a mixed methods research design. There were two groups of participants in this study, the intermediate-level EFL learners and EFL teachers. Overall, there were 80 participants in the study including 50 EFL learners and 30 EFL teachers. The selected sample of EFL learners involved bilingual learners of English, i.e. they spoke Azerbaijani-Turkish natively and Farsi as their second language and English was their foreign language. After the data were collected, they were coded and fed into the SPSS Software. By analyzing the collected data, the researcher intended to find the interrelationships between the EFL learners and EFL teachers' attitudes with respect to L1 use in vocabulary acquisition.*

Keywords: *first language, second language*

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, vocabulary learning was often left to look after itself and received only incidental attention (Richards & Renandya, 2002). The present study was intended to explore the role of Azerbaijani-Turkish as an L1 in learning English vocabulary for Azerbaijani-Turkish learners of English as a foreign language. The study aimed to discover the bilingual EFL learners and teachers' opinions on whether L1 could facilitate the burden of learning new English words. The present study attempted to answer the following research questions and hypotheses.

Research question 1: What are the learners' opinions towards the use of Azerbaijani-Turkish in learning English vocabulary?

Research question 2: What are the teachers' opinions towards the learners' use of Azerbaijani-Turkish in learning English vocabulary?

Research question 3: Do teachers and learners have the same opinions towards the use of Azerbaijani-Turkish in English vocabulary learning?

Null hypothesis (H₀): Teachers and learners do not have the same opinions towards the use of Azerbaijani-Turkish in English vocabulary learning.

Alternative hypothesis (AH): Teachers and learners have the same opinions towards the use of Azerbaijani-Turkish in English vocabulary learning.

2. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

For adult learners, L1 forms part of their experience which they bring to any learning. As Corder (1992) mentioned, second language learners not only already possess a language system which is potentially available as a factor in the acquisition of a second language, but equally importantly they already know something of what a language is for, what its communicative functions and potentials are.

Corder (1992) further points out that it is inconceivable that this knowledge should not play a part in learning a second language, since all we know about learning suggests that previous knowledge and skills are drawn upon in the acquisition of new ones. Baynham (1983, p. 10) states that the “ignoring of the learner’s own pre-existing knowledge of how language works” recalls the Freirean (1972) criticism of an approach to education which sees the learner as a blank slate and the teacher as the keeper of all knowledge.

Littlewood (1984) in discussing transfer, argues that the learner uses his or her knowledge of language, gained from the mother tongue, to organize the second language data, and that this is both economical and productive since it means the learner does not have to discover everything from scratch. Swan (1985) maintains that if we did not constantly make correspondence between vocabulary items in L1 and L2 we would never learn foreign languages at all.

There is an argument that however much teachers ignore the learners’ L1, it is inevitable that learners will refer back to it. Danchev (1982), in his examination of the roles played by transfer and translation, and their interrelationship in second language learning, maintains that translation is a natural, unconscious, spontaneous process which cannot be checked, and that being so, teachers should try to capture, channel and exploit it. He cites Halliday et al. (1964) who state that: “if one is taught a second language...even by something approaching the ‘direct method’, one usually sets up patterns of translation equivalence”.

In arguing for a greater role for bilingual teachers, Piasecka (1988) describes how their knowledge of two languages can enable them to monitor this process of referring back to L1 and help students to avoid false assumptions and analogies. Atkinson (1987) and Harbord (1992) claim that drawing on the mother tongue is a learner-preferred strategy. Atkinson goes on to point out that there is a contradiction between the fact that we know very little for certain about what constitutes effective language learning, yet teachers are often too ready to impose their views on learners in opposition to what the learners find helpful.

Interestingly, in Birch’s (1992) study of ESL trainee teachers as second language learners learning in the country where the language was spoken, he found that the teachers had a strong desire for their L1 to be used in class. The finding of Birch’s suggests that inclusion of L1 is a learner-preferred strategy even when the learner is a teacher whose training and prior beliefs have led him or her to advocate an English-only approach.

A broader, more sociolinguistic argument for the inclusion of L1 in the learning process is made by Collingham (1988), Hopkins (1988), and Piasecka (1986), and concerns the role of L1 in the adult’s concept of the self. Piasecka (1986) argues that the individual’s sense of identity is inextricably intertwined with one’s mother tongue, and that if learners are expected to ignore it, their sense of identity may well be threatened. Hopkins (1988) continues this idea, claiming that the first language is part of a person’s essence, and connected with his or her emotions, dreaming, world concepts and group identity. Our understanding of the concept of social identity has expanded considerably since these statements were made. Denying a place for the learner’s L1 in the EFL classroom can, according to some authors, be disrespectful towards the learners’ speech community. It constitutes a denial of their right to maintain, use and be proud of their language and culture.

Norton (1983, pp. 645-668) contention that “at the level of relations between groups, a language is worth what those who speak it are worth” Norton (1997) shows the intrinsic link between valuing a language and valuing, or respecting, those who are its speakers. Using L1 as part of a bilingual approach to teaching, will, as Collingham (1988) maintains, assist in increasing the status of minority languages in the community. This, she argues, will raise the self-esteem of the learners and thus contribute to their more effective learning. She also points out that encouraging

students' contributions in L1 at low levels reduces the likelihood of lesson content being trivial and patronizing. Harbord (1992, p. 350-355) considers including L1 to be part of an overall 'humanistic' approach to teaching, since it allows students to say what they want and to be themselves.

A further argument for the inclusion of L1 in learning L2 is that selective use of comparative and contrastive techniques can help students to acquire awareness of the conceptual, formal and cultural differences between their own language and English (Hopkins, 1988). Baynham (1983) too advocates heightening learners' awareness of the patterns of the target language by contrasting them with equivalent features in their own language.

"The aim of second language acquisition is bilingualism" states Sridhar (1994, p. 800-805), and a monolingual perspective can lead to the obscuring of this truism. Often the goal of second language instruction has been to produce native speaker-like abilities, and since this is rare, not only do learners fail on this account, but more importantly, it sets up a native speaker monolingual instead of a bilingual as the ideal speaker.

Fishman (1976) writes that the goal of second language instruction should be to produce functional bilingualism, and to act otherwise is unrealistic and counter-productive. He maintains that most learners will never want or need to function purely in L2 but will continue to use their first language in some domains. One of the early advocates of cross-lingual teaching methods, (Dodson, 1967 cited in Piasecka, 1986) argued that a true bilingual is able to switch rapidly from one language to another, and leaving L1 out of the learning process is likely to inhibit learners' ability to do this.

In their discussion of an intercultural approach to language learning, Crozet and Liddicoat (1999) emphasize that the bilingual or multilingual speaker is the goal to aim for, since only this is what language learners can become. They will never become monolingual native speakers which have appeared to be the target of instruction in the past. These authors also argue that if learners are to be encouraged to be bilinguals or multilinguals, their first language(s) need to be included in their second classroom instruction. Byram and Risager (1999) describe competence in a second language as involving the ability to see relationships between the two languages and cultures, and to deal with their difference. As they further noted, developing second language competence should not entail casting off one's own social identities and attempting to become a native speaker of the second language.

Since bilingualism is the norm in immigrant minority communities, the teaching of English should have as its aim the addition of another language as opposed to the replacement of the mother tongue. As he further argued, to act otherwise is to waste the language resources available in the community. We can point out the irony of educators lamenting the lack of 'foreign' language skills of English speakers, while ignoring the fact that precisely those skills have been purposely eradicated in non-English speakers through the operation of educational and social policy.

A possible skill for any bilingual is to perform interpreting and/or translation. ESL instruction which ignores the first language also ignores the possibility that learners may wish to pursue interpreting as a profession or to perform it informally within their speech community, a point also made by Stern (1992) and Danchev (1982).

Some foreign language teachers believe that the best way for students to develop native-like language proficiency is to think in that language. In order to avoid and eliminate the errors caused by L1 interferences, students are encouraged to suppress the use of L1 as a means of learning the TL. However, second language acquisition research (Dulay & Burt, 1973; Johnson & Newport, 1994) has revealed that the difficulties and errors of foreign language learning cannot be completely attributed to interference by the learners' first language. In an investigation analyzing the sources of errors among native-Spanish-speaking children learning English, Dulay and Burt (1973) found that only 3% of errors came from L1 interferences and 85% of errors were developmental in nature. These findings imply that the fear of using L1 in foreign language classrooms, which results in negative transfer, should be reduced.

In addition to research that demonstrates L1 should not be considered a hindrance to successful learning (e.g. Dulay & Burt, 1973; Johnson & Newport, 1994), some scholars have brought L1's positive effects on both foreign language teaching and learning to light (e.g. Anton & Dicamilla, 1998; Cipriani, 2001; Bergsleighner, 2002; Storch & Willesworth, 2003;). For example, Anton and Dicamilla's (1998) study, in which five pairs of Spanish-speaking EFL adult learners conducted English writing tasks, revealed several of the many functions that L1 can serve. These functions include fostering and maintenance of interest in the task in addition to the development of strategies and approaches for making difficult tasks more manageable. Anton and Dicamilla (1998) believe that the use of L1 is beneficial for language learning because it both helps in the process and completion of the task and creates a social and cognitive space in which students will be able to provide each other with assistance throughout the duration of the task.

Moreover, thinking in L1 results in the production of more elaborate content. Lally's (2000) research revealed that students who prepared a writing task in L1 received higher scores for organization. In another study conducted by Cohen and Brooks-Carson (2001), the experimental group reported that they almost always had more ideas and a greater amount of clear thinking in L1. In an investigation of oral participation strategies in a beginner group, Cipriani (2001) observed that L1 was one of the strategies that elicited oral participation between teachers and students. Her data also revealed that the teacher utilized L1 to explain vocabulary, to communicate tasks, and to encourage students to speak in English. Furthermore, the students' use of L1 as an oral strategy enabled them to continue communicating in English.

In another example of L1 used as an oral communication strategy, Bergsleighner's (2002) examination of grammar and interaction in a pre-intermediate EFL classroom revealed that L1 was utilized by students to achieve better self-expression in interactions with the teacher and to negotiate form and meaning. She also discovered that L1 was adopted by the teacher to effectively facilitate student comprehension of grammar topics.

Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) analyzed data collected from twelve pairs of university ESL students as they engaged in a short joint composition task. They reported that the use of L1 enabled in-depth discussion of the prompt and the structure of the composition, thus allowing the students to complete the task more easily. Moreover, L1 use assisted these students in defining unknown words more directly and successfully.

In a further example of the similar studies, Greggio and Gil (2007) audio-recorded twelve class sessions of Portuguese-speaking beginner EFL learners. They determined that the teacher utilized L1 as an effective teaching strategy for the explanation of grammar and the offering of feedback. Students used L1 as a viable learning strategy to both clarify their understanding of lesson content and as a means of participating in class discussion. Based on these results, they suggest that L1 may play an important role in the facilitation of interaction between classroom participants as well as foreign language learning.

Liao's (2006) investigation into the role that L1 plays for Taiwanese college students learning English as a second language identifies three strategic functions in the students' use of L1. First, students use L1 as a memory strategy to improve their ability to memorize words, idioms, grammar, and sentence structures. Second, L1 is used as an affective strategy for reducing learning anxiety and increasing their motivation to learn English. Third, students utilize L1 as a social strategy to assist them in asking questions or cooperating with others, and this, in turn, promotes their learning outcomes. Building upon these three strategic functions, Kang's (2008) case study of a Korean EFL teacher, showed that the teacher used L1 for pedagogical reasons such as explaining grammar, organizing tasks, disciplining students, and implementing tests. Furthermore, the students in this study exhibited a positive response to their teacher's L1 use in that it improved their understanding of lessons and maintained their interest in learning English.

L1 use may facilitate TL classroom activities due to the fact that the use of L1 provides a beneficial scaffolding that assists learners in understanding tasks and solving specific problems. While many scholars (e.g. Cook, 2001; Harbord, 1992) agree that L1 can be a valuable resource in foreign language classrooms, they caution that educators should not rely upon it to any significant degree (Wells, 1999).

3. THE STUDY

3.1. Participants

There were two groups of participants in this study, the intermediate-level EFL learners and EFL teachers. Overall, there were 80 participants in the study including 50 EFL learners and 30 EFL teachers. The selected sample of EFL learners involved bilingual learners of English, i.e. they spoke Azerbaijani-Turkish natively and Farsi as their second language and English was their foreign language. Their level of proficiency in English was determined to be intermediate based on a placement test by language institute. The number of the female participants was more than male participants.

3.2. Materials

The first method which was employed to collect the relevant data for the study was the distribution of questionnaires. There were two different kinds of questionnaires in this study. One was given to teachers and the other was given to the learners. The second technique was to conduct semi-structured interview with 10 participants from the teachers' group. The purpose of this was to find the reasons why they had to switch to mother-tongue (L1) and preferred using it over English.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Data Analysis of the Learners' Attitudes

As mentioned previously, in order to investigate Azerbaijani-Turkish intermediate-level EFL learners' attitudes towards the use of Azerbaijani-Turkish in EFL classrooms, the learners responded to the questionnaire items by choosing among choices which ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Next the obtained responses were converted to percentages, as this allowed for easy interpretation of the data.

This section aims at analyzing EFL learners' responses to the questionnaire items in light of the research questions. As mentioned previously, a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire was devised and distributed to fifty EFL learners. This questionnaire included fifteen items. Only forty four EFL learners returned the completed survey questionnaire. The data from the learners' answers to the questionnaire items are used to answer the first research question.

Table 1. Percentages of the Learners' Answers to the Questionnaire Items

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
1	Teachers sometimes can use L1 in the classroom	9 20.5%	26 59.1%	4 9.1%	4 9.1%	1 2.3%	44
2	My first language had better be allowed sometimes during English lessons	6 14.0%	17 39.5%	8 18.6%	9 20.9%	3 7.0%	43
3	Using L1 prevents me from learning English	1 2.3%	9 20.9%	7 16.3%	19 44.2%	7 16.3%	43
4	Teachers should follow an English-only policy in the classroom	7 16.3%	14 32.6%	6 14.0%	14 32.6%	2 4.7%	43
5	Bilingual dictionaries help me understand the new vocabulary for a long time	5 11.4%	21 47.7%	12 27.3%	4 9.1%	2 4.5%	44
6	I do not feel comfortable when students use their first language.	5	7	10	16	5	

		11.6%	16.3%	23.3%	37.2%	11.6%	43
7	It is sometimes appropriate to use L1 to explain difficult vocabulary	12 27.3%	26 59.1%	2 4.5%	1 2.3%	3 6.8%	44
8	It is sometimes appropriate to explain new vocabulary especially abstract items using L1	13 29.5%	24 54.5%	6 13.6%	1 2.3%	0	44
9	Using L1 helps me feel more comfortable/confident	8 18.2%	9 20.5%	14 31.8%	10 22.7%	3 6.8%	44
10	Using L1 builds up a good relationship between students and teacher	7 15.9%	15 34.1%	11 25.0%	6 13.6%	5 11.4%	44
11	I can sometimes ask the vocabulary meaning in my first language	5 11.6%	12 27.9%	14 32.6%	7 16.3%	5 11.6%	43
12	Using L1 helps to recall the new vocabulary	7 15.9%	18 40.9%	10 22.7%	7 15.9%	2 4.5%	44
13	Using L1 helps me to understand the meaning of vocabulary	10 22.7%	18 40.9%	9 20.5%	5 11.4%	2 4.5%	44
14	Using L1 can reduce my stress in the classroom	8 18.2%	16 36.4%	13 29.5%	5 11.4%	2 4.5%	44
15	Using L1 is not necessary in the classroom	7 15.9%	10 22.7%	7 15.9%	13 29.5%	7 15.9%	44

Research question 1: What are the learners' opinions towards the use of Azerbaijani-Turkish in learning English vocabulary?

In order to answer the first research question the percentages of the learners' answers to the questionnaire items are provided in table 4.1. According to these results it can be argued that most of the Azerbaijani-Turkish intermediate-level ELF learners had positive views towards the use of Turkish in learning English vocabulary.

4.2. Data Analysis of the Teachers' Attitudes

This section aims to analyze the EFL teachers' responses to the questionnaire items in light of the research questions. As mentioned previously a five-point Likert scale questionnaire was devised and distributed to thirty teachers.

This questionnaire included fifteen items. Only twenty six teachers returned the completed survey questionnaire. The data from the teachers' answers to the questionnaire items are used to answer the second research question.

Research question 2: What are the teachers' opinions towards the learners' use of Turkish in learning English vocabulary?

In order to answer the second research question the percentages of the teachers' answers to the questionnaire items are provided in table 4.2. According to these results it can be argued that most of the Azerbaijani-Turkish ELF teachers had positive views towards the use of Turkish in learning English vocabulary.

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Table 2. Percentages of the Teachers' Answers to the English Questionnaire Items

		Strongly agree	Agree	neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	total
1	Teachers sometimes need to use their students' first language	4 16.0%	16 64.0%	2 8.0%	1 4.0%	2 8.0%	25
2	Students' first language had better be allowed sometimes during English lessons	6 24%	10 40.0%	2 8.0%	6 24.0%	1 4.0%	25
3	Using L1 prevents students from learning English	1 4.0%	5 20.0%	3 12.0%	10 40.0%	6 24.0%	25
4	Teachers should follow an English-only policy in the classroom	3 12.0%	9 36.0%	2 8.0%	8 32.0%	3 12.0%	25
5	Bilingual dictionaries help students understand the new vocabulary for a long time	7 28.0%	8 32.0%	6 24.0%	3 12.0%	1 4.0%	25
6	I do not feel comfortable when my students use their first language.	7 28.0%	3 12.0%	6 24.0%	5 20.0%	4 16.0%	25
7	It is sometimes appropriate to use L1 to explain difficult vocabulary	9 36.0%	11 44.0%	1 4.0%	3 12.0%	1 4.0%	25
8	It is sometimes appropriate to explain new vocabulary especially abstract items using L1	6 24.0%	14 56.0%	2 8.0%	3 12.0%	0	25
9	Using L1 helps students feel more comfortable/confident	6 24.0%	2 8.0%	12 48.0%	4 16.0%	1 4.0%	25
10	Using L1 builds up a good relationship with students	5 20.0%	12 48.0%	4 16.0%	2 8.0%	2 8.0%	25
11	Students can sometimes ask the vocabulary meaning in their first language	3 12.5%	10 41.7%	7 29.2%	1 4.2%	3 12.5%	24
12	Using L1 helps to recall the new vocabulary	5 20.0%	9 36.0%	7 28.0%	3 12.0%	1 4.0%	25
13	Using L1 helps students to understand the meaning of vocabulary	8 32.0%	10 40%	3 12.0%	3 12.0%	1 4.0%	25
14	Using L1 can reduce student's stress in the classroom	7 29.2%	7 29.2%	7 29.2%	1 4.2%	2 8.3%	24
15	Using L1 is not necessary in the classroom	2 8.0%	5 20.0%	5 20.0%	6 24.0%	7 28.0%	25

In addition as was previously mentioned, 10 of the EFL teachers were interviewed after the returning of the questionnaires. The aim of the interview was to provide a more thorough

understanding of these teachers' reasons for using or not using the learners' L1 in their classrooms. These interview sessions were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Next the transcriptions were qualitatively analyzed by the researcher to find out the EFL teachers' ideas about the use of the learners' L1 in L2 classrooms. The interview questions together with the teachers' answers are provided below:

4.2.1. Interview Items

1. Do bilingual dictionaries help students understand the new vocabulary?
2. Can using L1 reduce student's stress in the classroom?
3. Does using L1 help students to understand the meaning of vocabulary?
4. Is it sometimes appropriate to use L1 to explain difficult vocabulary?
5. Does using L1 build up a good relationship with students?

Teachers' answers:

Teacher 1

1. Yes it has good effect on learning the meaning of words.
2. Sometimes students need to speak in L1 because they can't say in English in this time teachers should let them to speak in L1 it can reduce the stress.
3. Yes using L1 can help students to know the meaning of words.
4. First, teacher must teach in English then she/ he can use L1.
5. It can reduce the stress. The relationship depends on teachers' behavior.

Teacher 2

1. If we could lead students to the English translation and examples as the only accepted words to be heard in the class, and then they find themselves free enough at home to use the L2 part, so it's useful.
2. Yes, but the way you use is vitally important. Teacher should be a complete example of English speaker in the class. Maybe writing is the only admitted way.
3. Of course. But just meaning, it never helps them to use it in an English sentence.
4. Just writing on the board for a very short time can be done.
5. Yes, it helps a lot. But not in the class while teaching of course

Teacher 3

1. For the aim of understanding yes but it is not helpful for learning at all.
2. Yes of course, because it makes the class environment friendly.
3. In the cases that they cannot understand in second language yes.
4. Yes it is the best way for understanding.
5. Yes it can help both students and teachers to have good relationship which makes the better environment for learning.

Teacher 4

1. No, it won't be helpful because in that case students used to think and learn in two languages.
2. In some cases yes it is not bad but a good teacher must control the mood of the class in second language.
3. Yes, because they are more familiar with their first language but I disagree with it because they should understand the meaning of the vocabularies in second language.

4. Giving explanation in first language is not appropriate but just saying the exact meaning of the vocabulary not more can be helpful when there is no other way to explain it in second language.
5. Yes but I think it is not an appropriate way.

Teacher 5

1. Yes, because sometimes understanding in second language is not possible at all and students can learn in first language better.
2. No, because the students' stress is because of using second language, it is clear that in using first language there is no stress. Again when they want to speak in SL the stress will occurs.
3. Yes, obviously understanding in first language is easier.
4. No not at all, because students cannot learn in meaningfully.
5. Yes, it can help students and teachers in their teaching and learning.

Teacher 6

1. Yes, it is the easiest way for understanding the new vocabularies, but students will forget it sooner.
2. Yes, because using first language makes the class environment friendly.
3. Because it is very easy for the students to understand in first language.
4. Yes, sometimes the long explanation in second language can be understood in just one word in first language.
5. Yes, students feel better and stress less learning happens.

Teacher 7

1. English to English dictionaries are useful for translation and it can help learners to remember the words.
2. When learners speak in their mother tongue they have less stress. But in English classes using of mother tongue is easy and makes the students lazy. It is better to use English
3. It is better to use that language we want to learn.
4. The teacher must try to teach difficult vocabularies in English with different sentences examples.
5. The learning is more important than the teachers and students relationship. The first aim is learning English .speaking English in classes can improve the students speaking.

Teacher 8

1. At first step they should use monolingual dictionaries .sometimes when they couldn't understand the meaning they can use bilingual dictionaries.
2. Yes, it can reduce the stress when the students couldn't speak and they cannot transfer their concept.
3. Sometimes for learning some vocabularies it is useful.
4. It is better to teach in English. If the students need, the teacher can translate the vocabularies to their language.
5. The relationship between teacher and students doesn't relate to language with every language we can have good relationship.

Teacher 9

1. Students use bilingual dictionaries unconsciously.
2. When the students couldn't speak .they prefer not to speak, at that times the stress overcomes.

3. Using L1 for some vocabularies is good. Student can get the meaning easily.
4. Students can't understand the meaning of difficult vocabularies in English because of that the teachers should explain them in their first language
5. When sometimes teacher speaks in their students' first language the students feel relax in the class.

Teacher 10

1. Bilingual dictionaries should be useful for the students above upper intermediate levels. However, if used for elementary levels it might not have accepted consequences
2. Using L1 may reduce stress at early steps whereas it may cause serious problems in learning the language later o
3. It helps students understand the meaning within L1 though it prevents the pupils use a challenging mind to get the meaning within L2
4. Using L1 occasionally can help them get the idea and move faster in a particular topic however it may not be a method in teacher's priority
5. Using L2 can establish much better atmosphere than L1 because it creates a new environment in students' mind.

The qualitative analysis of the results of the interview sessions supports the results of the questionnaires, and reveals that almost all of these EFL teachers believed that the use of the learners' L1 in language classrooms has beneficial effects on the learners' vocabulary acquisition.

4.3. Comparing the Learners and Teachers' Attitudes on the Role of L1 in L2 Classrooms

In this part the percentages of the learners and teachers' responses to the questionnaire items are compared to reveal the similarities and differences between their attitudes about the role of their L1 (Azerbaijani-Turkish) in EFL classrooms. The data from both the EFL learners and teachers' answers to questionnaire items are used to answer the third research question.

Research question 3: Do teachers and learners have the same opinions towards the use of Turkish in English vocabulary learning?

According to the results of data analysis (see Tables 1 & 2), the percentages of the EFL learners and teachers' attitudes regarding the role of their L1 in EFL classrooms are very similar to each other. But the question is whether the differences between the attitudes of these groups reached statistical significance. For this reason the mean values of the EFL learners and teachers' attitudes regarding the role of their L1 (Azerbaijani-Turkish) in English vocabulary learning were compared.

Table 3. Comparing the Learners and Teachers' Attitudes regarding the role of L1 in EFL classrooms

Group Statistics

GROUP		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
ATTITUDE	1.00 Student	44	61.1742	19.69307	2.96884
	2.00 Teacher	26	62.6603	19.56935	3.83786

According to Table 4.3 the mean value of the teachers' attitudes about the role of L1 in EFL classrooms (M=62.6603) is very close to the mean value of the students' attitudes regarding this issue (M=61.1742). In order to find out whether this difference reached the statistical significance or not an Independent-Samples T-test was employed.

Table 4. *Independent Samples Test*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Difference Interval of the	
								Lower	Upper
ATTITUDE	.016	.900	-.306	68	.761	-1.4860	4.86012	-11.18424	8.21221
Equal variances assumed									
Equal variances not assumed			-.306	52.866	.761	-1.4860	4.85214	-11.21874	8.24672

According to Table 4.4, the probability figure marked as (Sig) is more than .05 (it is .761), therefore it can be argued than the difference between the learners and teachers' attitudes regarding the role of L1 in EFL classrooms cannot be regarded as significant. This lack of statistical significance is graphically depicted in Figure 4.1 below:

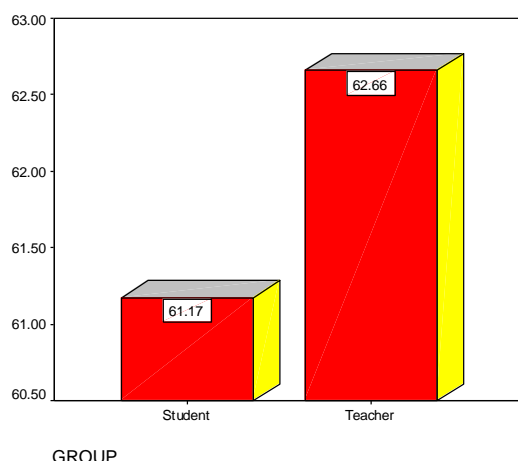


Figure 1. *Comparison between the Learners and Teachers' Attitudes regarding the Role of L1 in EFL Classrooms*

Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the first alternative hypothesis of the study is supported. This means that EFL teachers and learners had similar views about the role of their L1 (Azerbaijani-Turkish) in EFL classrooms.

5. DISCUSSION

According to Atkinson (1987) and Harbord (1992), the results of many experimental studies dealing with learners' attitudes about the role of first language in second language classrooms, show that drawing on the mother tongue is a learner-preferred strategy in most of the second/foreign language classrooms.

Lally's (2000) research revealed that students who prepared a writing task in L1 received higher scores for text organization. According to her, thinking in L1 results in the production of more elaborate content in language tasks. In another study conducted by Cohen and Brooks-Carson (2001), the experimental group reported that they almost always had more ideas and a greater amount of clear thinking in L1.

In an investigation of oral participation strategies in a beginner group, Cipriani (2001) observed that L1 was one of the strategies that elicited oral participation among the students. Furthermore, the students' use of L1 as an oral strategy enabled them to continue communicating in English. Bergsleighter's (2002) examination of grammar and interaction in a pre-intermediate EFL classroom revealed that L1 was utilized by students to achieve better self-expression in interactions with the teacher and to negotiate form and meaning.

Storch and Wigglesworth's (2003) study revealed that the use of L1 enabled in-depth discussion of the prompt and the structure of the composition, thus allowing the students to complete the task more easily. Moreover, L1 use assisted these students in defining unknown words more directly and successfully.

Greggio and Gil's (2007) research showed that students used L1 as a viable learning strategy to both clarify their understanding of lesson content and as a means of participating in class discussion. Based on these results, the researchers suggested that L1 may play an important role in the facilitation of interaction between classroom participants as well as foreign language learning.

The first research question of this study tried to determine the attitudes of Azerbaijani-Turkish intermediate-level ELF learners towards the use of Azerbaijani-Turkish in learning English vocabulary. The results of data analysis revealed that most of these learners had positive views regarding the use of their first language in learning English vocabulary. These results support the claims of Atkinson (1987) and Harbord (1992) that the use of mother tongue in foreign language classrooms is a learner preferred strategy. Furthermore as Cipriani (2001) argued, the results of the present study revealed that most of the learners regarded their first language as a very practical means for oral participation.

Finally as Greggio and Gil (2007) noted, the results of the data analysis of this study revealed that the learners believed that their first language may play an important role in the facilitation of interaction between classroom participants.

Cipriani's (2001) study revealed that the EFL teachers utilized L1 to explain vocabulary, to communicate tasks, and to encourage students to speak in English. Bergsleighter (2002) argued that in her study L1 was adopted by the EFL teachers to effectively facilitate student comprehension of grammar topics. Greggio and Gil's (2007) study showed that the EFL teachers utilized L1 as an effective teaching strategy for the explanation of grammar and offering feedback.

Kang's (2008) case study of a Korean EFL teacher revealed that the teacher used L1 for pedagogical reasons such as explaining grammar, organizing tasks, disciplining students, and implementing tests. Schweers' (1999) study revealed that EFL teachers wanted more use of the L1 to aid the learners' comprehension, particularly of new vocabulary and difficult concepts.

The second research question of this study aimed to investigate the attitudes of Azerbaijani-Turkish EFL teachers towards the learners' use of Azerbaijani-Turkish in learning English vocabulary. The results of data analysis revealed that most of these EFL teachers like the EFL learners had positive views about the role of Azerbaijani-Turkish in learning English vocabulary. As Kang (2008) argued, most of these EFL teachers believed that the learners' first language can be used for pedagogical reasons such as explaining grammar, organizing tasks, disciplining students, and implementing tests.

Furthermore as Cipriani (2001) claimed, the results of the present study revealed that most of these EFL teachers believed that L1 can be used to explain vocabulary, to communicate tasks, and to encourage students to speak in English. Finally as Greggio and Gil (2007) noted, most of these EFL teachers believed that the learners' first language can be used to explain difficult grammatical points in EFL classrooms.

The third research question of the present study aimed to determine whether Azerbaijani-Turkish EFL teachers and intermediate-level learners have the same attitudes towards the use of Azerbaijani-Turkish in English vocabulary learning. The results of the statistical data analysis revealed that the EFL teachers like EFL learners had positive views about the role of their first language (Turkish) in English vocabulary learning.

Moreover the results of data analysis revealed that the difference between the learners and teachers' attitudes regarding the role of first language in EFL classrooms was not significant and therefore the null hypothesis of the study was rejected and the alternative hypothesis of the study was supported. Finally based on these results, it can be argued that Azerbaijani-Turkish EFL teachers and intermediate-level learners have the same attitudes towards the use of Turkish in English vocabulary learning.

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