



Students' Attitudes Towards the Use of LI in EFL Classrooms: A Case Study at an English Language School in Iran

Mehdi Shariati *

M.A holder in TEFL, Freelance English Teacher

Abstract

Using LI in English classes has always been the focus of a large number of researchers in the field of TEFL. However, no consensus has been seen among the authorities on using LI in English classes. Therefore, this area is quite challenging and little research has been conducted so far in Iran, the present research seeks to find out the learners' attitudes towards learners' and teachers' using LI in English classes. Fifty language learners at elementary, intermediate and advanced levels in Gooyesh Language Institute, Aliabad Katoul, Golestan province, Iran, were selected as the participants. The participants were studying English at these levels at the institute. The sampling is stratified random because proficiency (three levels of elementary, intermediate, advanced) is a parameter of the population which is important from the point of research. The participants of the sample are male and female and fall into the range of 15-35 years age. The instrument used in the current study is a questionnaire that was used to find out learner's attitude towards using LI in EFL classes. The participants are given the questionnaire Learners' Attitude towards Using LI Questionnaire (LAULQ) which had been developed by the researcher to measure learner's attitude toward their own using LI and their teacher's using LI. They were asked to answer the questionnaire and were informed about the aim of the research. To analyze questionnaire data, each item was discussed separately, and the frequency and percentage of each were reported. The results showed that learners use LI to ask new points, to find correct English words and to explain grammar points for their classmates. In addition, from students' point of view, teachers use LI to make students understand hard words or grammar, to translate difficult English words and to control the class. In addition, the findings showed that there is a negative relationship between learners' proficiency level and their attitude toward using LI. The findings have some implications for teachers, material developers and English institutes policy makers.

Keywords: using LI, learners' attitude, EFL classroom

INTRODUCTION

The debate for using L1 in the L2 classroom has always been a question of discussion by EFL researchers. Auerbach (1993), for instance, lists several different positive uses of L1 in L2 classrooms which include managing the classroom, language investigation, teaching

grammatical instructions, clarifying errors, and checking for understanding. The use of L1 while teaching EFL is one of the chief concerns that have dominated the area of EFL learning for the last few decades. In fact, the general hypothesis that has prevailed for some time is that English should be learnt through English, and not by using L1, which has to be forbidden in the classroom. Many ELT experts even were surprise how students can appreciate target language interactions if they are repeatedly depending on their L1 (Bouangeune, 2009).

According to Ellis (1984), some writers maintain that L1 has no essential role to play in EFL teaching and that too much L1 use might deprive learners of appreciated input in the L2. However, the arguments in contradiction of using L1 in EFL classroom have not provided satisfactory indication for escaping from L1, nor have they given clear reasons for the prohibition of L1. (Bouangeune, 2009); and many researchers and writers emphasize the value of using L1 and the positive role it plays in EFL teaching (Auerbach, 1993; Mukattash, 2003). Thus, many researchers and teachers have started to appreciate the role of L1 in the EFL classroom and think of ways to best include it in EFL teaching. Moreover, EFL learners need to have significant vocabulary knowledge. Cook (1991) holds that vocabulary learning is crucial to the four language skills. As well, using L1 in the EFL classroom has a progressive impact based on Auerbach (1993), especially within the field of vocabulary learning.

Because of the argument surrounding the use of L1, many researchers have investigated the use of L1 in L2 classrooms (e.g., Duff & Polio, 1990; Edstrom, 2006). They have found out the degree to which L1 is used in L2 classrooms and also studied the outlooks and perceptions of teachers and students as to the role of L1 in different fields (e.g., Macaro, 2001). Therefore, in TEFL inquiry, using L1 has been approached by a good number of researchers which shows significance and importance of this issue. What attracted the researcher in different issues on which the related investigations have been conducted was learners' attitudes toward using L1. As attitude toward using L1 is too broad to conduct a research, the researchers decided to narrow it down to learners' attitudes.

In addition, the researcher has experienced a lot of problems on using L1 or not using it in English classes. In other words, there has always been a question in his mind whether a teacher is allowed to use L1 or not. If teacher is allowed, how much and when should he use it? If he is not allowed, why shouldn't he use it? To find the answer of these questions, the researcher referred to different classic books in the field, no clear answered was obtained. This diversity and disagreement on the issue in hand proved that using L1 is quite controversial and challenging. As a result the discussion of using L1 was found interesting enough to conduct an investigation.

The issue was still very broad. What seemed very significant to the researcher to gain a clear answer to his question was to find out learners' attitude toward both learners' and teachers' attitude toward using L1. Since in theory and research no clear answer was given to use L1 in English classes or not to use it, the researcher resorted to the idea that obtaining his learners' attitude can be a better way to refer to in his career. Therefore, the researcher decided to find out learners' attitude toward learners' and teachers' using L1

in English classes due to exploration in the related research and his own experience of teaching.

The present study is significant from three vantage points. First using L1 is one of the controversial issues about which English teachers usually have concerns. In addition, they always have disagreement on using L1 in the classes. Therefore finding out about the different aspects of using L1 can cast light on these existing controversies and disagreements among English teachers. As L1 can be used either by teachers or students, discovering the learners' attitudes on teachers' and students' using L1 is an important aspect which requires inquiry.

Second, currently, especially in Iran's teaching English situation, although majority of English language schools allow teachers to use L1 in certain situations in the class, some major English language schools follow the rule of "only English". Conducting a local research to find out and answer, though partially, the question of using L1 in the class seems necessary. Even though there is ample evidence to back or reject using L1, a localized investigation can be more tangible for the mentioned English schools since it has employed local participants and done in local settings.

Finally regarding global scope of the inquiry on using L1, a voice from Iran on using L1 can be a missing piece of puzzle. In other words, conducting a research on learners' attitude on using L1 can be internationally sound in academic scope of TEFL. All in all considering what has discussed above, this research is significant enough to be carried out. All in all, considering the aims of the study, the following primary research questions are stated:

1. What reasons do Iranian EFL students have for using L1 in EFL classrooms?
2. What are Iranian EFL students' attitudes towards their teachers' use of L1 in EFL classrooms?

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Using L1 in L2 classes has been a debatable topic for a long time in the field of L2 teaching and learning. Even though the use of L1 is supported from several L2 researchers, many researchers believe that the use of L1 should be restricted to L2 instruction. These proponents of L1 use make a lot of controversies to reinforce their status. They claimed that the use of L1 may have negative effect on the teachers' use of L2 because if teachers use L1, the quantity of observable L2 input decreases, which is thought to obstruct learners' L2 learning. They debate that adult L2 learning should be accomplished in the same way as child L1 learning and that the L2 should be basically learned rather than intentionally learned, from message-oriented experience of its use (Mitchell, 1988). These debates may be developed from beliefs in naturalistic approaches to language teaching that emphasize a focus on immersing of the learner in the L2 and offering plenty of opportunities for experiencing the target language (e.g., Krashen & Terrel, 1983). Hence, these people may see the use of L1 as attribute of out-of-date grammar translation method, that mostly concentrated on translation from L2 to L1 as a method of learning L2 (Polio & Duff, 1994). That is to say, opponents of L1 use have an opinion that L2

teaching should be done with no interfering of L1. They also believe that L1 use is a clue of inadequately trained, non native speaker teachers yielding to pressure from students and coworkers not to use L1 constantly (Harbord, 1992). Thus, opponents of L1 use consider exclusive use of L2 in the class as the only way in which language should be instructed and hereupon, contemplate "no L1 use" an unquestionable presupposition (e.g., Chambers, 1992)

On the contrary, there are some researchers who think that L1 should not be rejected in L2 classrooms and they present both cognitive and sociolinguistic reasons for their position. From a cognitive viewpoint, they claim that learners who have learned L1 perfectly, are advanced cognitive individuals, who steadily draw upon their L1 to comprehend the world, new concepts and a new language (Butzkamm, 1998; Cook, 2001). Therefore, the use of L1 would equip them with an extraordinary cognitive tool (Artemeva, 1995). But then, forbidding L1 from the language class would disregard the cognitive fact that connecting new concepts to preexisting knowledge produces better fortune for language learning achievement. Moreover, L1 can be a great sociocognitive tool to gather thoughts that can in turn support mediating the learning of L2 and increasing interaction among learners in the L2 surroundings (Thoms, Liao & Szustak, 2005). Beside, since the use of L1 is a sign of students' sociolinguistic explanation of their rising bilingual status, it links their identity as speakers of L1 with creation of a new self in the L2 (Liebscher & Dailey-O'Cain, 2004).

Because of the argument surrounding the use of L1, many researchers have investigated the use of L1 in L2 classrooms (e.g., Duff & Polio, 1990). These papers have found out the degree to which L1 is used in L2 classrooms and also studied the outlooks and perceptions of teachers and students as to the role of L1 in different fields (e.g., Macaro, 2001). Generally speaking, they have detected that however teachers appreciate the importance of teaching in L2, most of them still use L1 to a certain degree in their classes (Levine, 2003; Macaro, 1995). Researches have also explored a large variability of L1 use among instructors. Duff and Polio (1990) studied the use of L1 in foreign language classes taught at the University of California and indicated L1 use ranging from 0 to 90%. Polio and Duff (1994), also found that instructors used L1 for a range of aims, from performance to grammar instruction and classroom handling. Likewise, in a Chinese university, English as a foreign language (EFL), Tang (2002), observed that the most common goals for which L1 was utilized, were giving activity guidance and describing abstract or culturally particular words, while Kaneko (1992), noticed in a Japanese secondary school (EFL) context that teachers used L1 to present statements and activity instructors, administer the lesson, and make agreement with students. Rolin-Ianziti and Brownlie (2002) studied the use of L1 at a university in Australia. These scholars indicated an average of 8.8% and a range from 0 to 18.1% L1 use in five first-year French courses. In a case study of six student teachers of French with adolescent students across four State schools in southern England, Macaro (2001), investigated a low amount of L1 use, between 0 and 15.2%, with an average of 6.9%. Conversely, in investigating the use of L1 in L2 English classes at a Japanese high school, Kaneko (1992), noted that teachers and students used L1 51 to 74% in senior classes and 64 to 83% in junior classes. These

articles propose that the teaching context may have a significant effect on L1 use in L2 classrooms.

Sarıçoban (2010) analyzed the code-switching of EFL young learners in a Turkish secondary school. The study showed that there was “no empirical evidence to support the notion that restricting mother tongue use would necessarily increase learning efficacy, and that the majority of code-switching in the classroom is surveyed the outlooks of teachers and students towards the use of L1 in EFL classes in a Saudi intermediate girls” school, Sarıçoban, (2010). The participants were 30 students and three teachers of English. Three research instrument were used for data gathering: questionnaires, interviews and observing the classes. The results revealed that teachers and students generally had positive attitudes towards the use of L1 in the classroom. The participants preferred to use Arabic for specific reasons: explaining grammatical terms, introducing new vocabulary and giving exam instructions.

In another research of Spanish learners of English language, Schweers (1999) investigated the validity of L1 usage in EFL classrooms at a university. He found that 88.7 % of the students and 100 % of the teachers in the study believed that Spanish should be used in their classes. 86% of the students believed that their L1 should be used to clarify difficult concepts and 67 % said that their L1 helped them to feel relaxed. Tang (2002) conducted the same study in China with Chinese speakers. The results indicated that L1 was used by the majority of the teachers participated, and that both students and teachers supported its use in the EFL classroom.

Kovacic (2011) studied different ideas on the use of L1 in English classrooms. He searched deeper into the idea of whether the first language should be used in English classrooms or it should be avoided. The article analyzed the first language discourses in terms of necessity, frequency, efficiency, and appropriateness. Students and teachers agreed that the first language could be used reasonably in English classrooms to provide certain learning goals. However, there were some differences in idea between teachers and students in regard to the situations in which the first language could be used. About 56.1 percent of learners taking part in this study reported that they *sometimes* chose to use Croatian while only 45percent of the teachers had the same idea. Also, about 50.9 percent of the students in the Kovacic’s study said that he chose his instructors to use the first language *temperately* in English class. Regarding the advantage of using first language, about 73.1 percent of the students and 80 percent of the teachers thought that using L1 is both significant and beneficial to boost students’ English learning. The paper noticed that most participants agreed that the first language use is more important in describing grammar points, hard concepts, and ideas and speaking activities these findings align with findings of other studies mentioned in this paper.

Levine (2003) conducted a study based on an online questionnaire about the attitudes of university students and instructors regarding the use of the first and the second language. His participants were first and second year students of French, German, and Spanish. All the participants were either native speakers of English or bilingual speakers. The study indicated that teachers and students generally used the first language to discuss class assignments, course policies, and for class ministration. Besides, the first language was

used to explain grammar in FL (Foreign Language) classrooms. Levine claimed that the second language was usually used for activities within the course book while the first language was often applied when discussing subjects that were not related to classroom activities. This study indicates that first language use and purpose is similar through different languages and not only when English is taught as a second or foreign language. Another significant result in Levine's study was the degree of anxiety connected to target language use among students. Participants indicated a higher degree of anxiety as the amount of target language used in class was increased. The article was concluded by contending that the first language has a considerable role in target language learning, and that teachers need to find ways to integrate the first language and use it efficiently in the classroom. Although this study investigated the students' beliefs about first language use in the target language classroom, it looked at the students who spoke English as their first language and not at English language learners. The current study analyzes the students' opinions about using their first languages in English classrooms.

METHOD

Participants

In the present research, 50 language learners at elementary, intermediate and advanced levels in Gooyesh Language Institute, Aliabad Katoul, Golestan province, Iran, were selected as the participants. The participants were assigned in each level based on the level they are in the mentioned institute. The sampling is stratified random because proficiency (three levels of elementary, intermediate, advanced) is a parameter of the population which is important from the point of research. The participants of the sample were male and female and fell into the range of 15-35 years old age. Nineteen participants of the sample are high school students, 21 of them were college students, 7 people were graduated from college and the 3 remaining participants finished high school. They were selected from different language proficiency levels so that a comprehensive view toward the issue at hand is obtained. Among them, twenty-four learners are at elementary level, 17 intermediate level and 9 learners at advanced level. Thirty-four learners were female and 16 were male. The participants' detailed and thick description is presented in the table 1.

Table 1. The Participants' Detailed and Thick Description

Category	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	16	32%
	Female	34	68%
Age	15-19	19	38%
	19-25	23	46%
	25-35	8	16%
Educational status	High school student	19	38%
	Graduated from high school	3	6%
	College student	21	42%
	Graduated from college	7	14%
Proficiency level	Elementary	24	48%
	Intermediate	17	34%
	Advanced	9	18%

As it is a qualitative research, thick and rich data are needed to collect from the participants. One instrument is used in the current study: a questionnaire which aims to find out learner's attitude toward using L1 in EFL classes. This instrument is described more in the following part.

Learner's Attitude toward Using L1 Questionnaire (LAULQ)

Learner's Attitude toward Using L1 Questionnaire (LAULQ) consists of two parts with 41 items. Part one consisting of 20 items measures learner's attitude toward his/her own using L1, and part two consisting of 21 items seek to examine teachers' use of L1 from students' point of view. The items were developed according to self-reports received from the participants, and concepts dealing with the term using L1 originated from theoretical foundations in the related literature. Students were asked to explain in detail their reasons of using L1, they were also asked to provide details about the circumstances that their teachers' use L1 in the EFL classroom. A Likert type questionnaire was developed using students' responses. The developed questionnaire has undergone many revisions in an effort to further improve its validity and reliability.

To establish the content validity of the questionnaire, the Persian version was given to five English teachers, holding M.A, to find out whether the obtained questionnaire showed learner's using and teacher's using L1 in EFL class properly. Based on feedback from the teachers, some items were either revised or removed. At the next stage, the questionnaire was piloted with similar students; the students were studying English at the same language institute. The results were used to examine the validity and reliability of the questionnaire.

The researcher also examined the item contents. Although one item looked to the interviewees defected in terms of its content, it was not removed until the final statistical analysis. Operationalization of the obtained questionnaire necessitates that reliability and validity be evaluated. The questionnaire enjoys a good rate of validity and reliability.

To test validity of the questionnaire, some investigation in several theoretical studies was conducted to find concepts concerned with the concept of using L1. After using factors obtained in theoretical considerations of the concept of using L1, the finally developed 46-item questionnaire was given to 60 language learners. The collected data were inserted to SPSS software to test validity of the questionnaire by Factor Analysis procedure. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was run and the output indicated that 12 factors were extracted from the 46 items of the questionnaire. At this step, the 5 false items were deleted and another Principal Components Analysis was run on the remaining 41 items, 3 factors were omitted and 9 factors were extracted:

Table 2. Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings

Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
5.238	17.460	17.460
2.773	9.243	26.703
2.564	8.545	35.248
2.257	7.523	42.771
1.670	5.567	48.338

1.608	5.359	53.696
1.424	4.745	58.442
1.185	3.949	62.391
1.116	3.718	66.109

The higher the absolute value of the loading, the more the factor is related to the item. While the square loading of a factor is lower than 1, then that factor is not significant. The squared loadings of the 7 factors which were first theoretically obtained are more than 1, it means that those 7 factors are all significant. These seven factors and the items which contribute to each are:

Understanding of the teacher (Saricoban, 2010), items: 14, 17, 18, 19, 31, 32, 39

Checking the comprehension (Saricoban, 2010), items: 1, 3, 6, 11, 26, 30

Explaining and checking meaning (Cook, 2001), items: 13, 24, 35

Explaining and teaching grammar (Cook, 2001), items: 10, 22, 36

Class management (2001), items: 20, 21, 27, 29, 37

Explaining class activities and tasks (2001), items: 9, 16, 28, 33, 41

Maintaining contact with the students (2001), items: 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 12, 15, 23, 25, 34, 38, 40

According to the Table 2, there is enough amount of correlation between the shared variance of the items which is related to one factor (from seven factors first obtained). It means that the 41 items of this questionnaire are related to 7 factors which were first theoretically obtained. Thus, the questionnaire has enough amount of validity.

To test the reliability of the questionnaire, the returned questionnaires at pilot study phase were given to SPSS software to run Cronbach's Alpha, which is a coefficient of internal consistency or reliability. The items which contribute to one factor and have Cronbach Alpha over 0.70 have good internal consistency or reliability. The following table shows the Cronbach's Alpha for each of the seven factors which formed the instrument:

Table 3. Reliability Index of the Questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items	Factor
0.811	12	Understanding of the teacher (Saricoban, 2010)
0.701	7	Checking the comprehension (Saricoban, 2010)
0.795	4	Explaining and checking meaning (Cook, 2001)
0.712	6	Explaining and teaching grammar (Cook, 2001)
0.709	3	Class management (2001)
0.793	3	Explaining class activities and tasks (2001)
0.713	6	Maintaining contact with the students (2001)

The results indicate that the factors have good Cronbach's Alpha score. The least Cronbach's Alpha score is 0.701 that is acceptable based on Cronbach's Alpha. At the end of the term, this questionnaire is given to participants to measure their attitude toward using L1. The Likert-type questionnaire has 41 items (see Appendix 1).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, a questionnaire (LAULQ) was given to the participants to measure their attitude toward their own using L1 and their teachers' using L1. This questionnaire has two parts. The first part reflects participants' views toward their own using L1 and the second part their views toward using L1 by teachers are presented.

RESULTS

After distributing questionnaires among the participants and collecting the data, the following results were obtained.

Results Related to Research Question 1: Students' Reasons for Using L1 in EFL Classrooms

Table 4 clearly indicates the descriptive statistics of items related to research question one. It includes the frequency, percentage and total score of the participants' responses to questionnaire items related to students' reasons for using L1.

Table 4. Frequency and Percentage of Items Related to Participants' Reasons for Using L1

	Reasons	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Total score
1	I speak L1 in EFL classroom because I am asking a classmate or the teacher a new pointing the lesson.	4 (8%)	6 (12%)	8 (16%)	32 (64%)	230
2	I speak L1 in EFL classroom because I want to talk to my classmates about topics that may not be related to class.	15 (30%)	8 (16%)	12 (24%)	15 (30%)	154
3	I speak L1 in EFL classroom because I should check the meaning of new words or concepts during the lesson.	10 (20%)	7 (14%)	13 (26%)	20 (40%)	186
4	I speak L1 in EFL classroom because I cannot find a correct word in English when talking to my classmates	3 (6%)	9 (18%)	13 (26%)	25 (50%)	220
5	I speak L1 in EFL classroom when I talk about personal things with my classmates.	26 (52%)	17 (34%)	2 (4%)	5 (10%)	87
6	I use L1 to ask about difficult English words.	18 (36%)	14 (28%)	4 (8%)	14 (28%)	128
7	I speak L1 with my classmates during English class because it makes me feel more connected to my culture.	28 (56%)	19 (38%)	3 (6%)	0 (0%)	50
8	Because I can't think of the words in English, I speak in my first language, even when others may get angry.	19 (38%)	17 (34%)	8 (16%)	6 (12%)	102
9	I speak L1 in EFL classroom to make fun	41 (82%)	5 (10%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)	28
10	I speak L1 in EFL classroom to explain grammar points to my classmates	1 (2%)	9 (18%)	24 (48%)	16 (32%)	210
11	I speak L1 in EFL classroom to confirm classmates' responses that were stated in L1	17 (34%)	21 (42%)	9 (18%)	3 (6%)	96

12	I speak L1 in EFL classroom because it helps me feel at ease, comfortable and less stressed.	13 (26%)	22 (44%)	9 (18%)	6 (12%)	116
13	Using L1 while studying helps me better recall the content of a lesson later.	41 (82%)	3 (6%)	5 (10%)	1 (2%)	32
14	I speak L1 with my teacher to give excuses	1 (2%)	30 (60%)	1 (2%)	18 (36%)	172
15	I speak L1 with classmates after they had finished doing a classroom activity	17 (34%)	9 (18%)	20 (40%)	4 (8%)	98
16	I speak L1 with classmates to give them answers	14 (28%)	1 (2%)	18 (36%)	17 (34%)	176
17	I speak L1 with classmates to re-explain teacher's explanations	12 (24%)	19 (38%)	3 (6%)	16 (32%)	146
18	I speak L1 with teacher to ask questions in the classroom	6 (12%)	12 (24%)	19 (38%)	13 (26%)	100
19	I speak L1 with my teacher to give me feedback on my homework	4 (8%)	16 (32%)	19 (28%)	11 (22%)	154
20	I speak L1 while explaining administrative information (syllabus, announcements, deadlines, etc.)	16 (32%)	11 (22%)	13 (26%)	10 (20%)	134

Total score shows how frequent a particular item has been selected by participants. The choice "always" has the coefficient of 3, "usually" 2, "sometimes" 1 and "never" 0. For each item, each choice of frequency is multiplied by its coefficient, then all choices of each item are added and ultimately it forms the total score for that choice.

According to the value of total scores, the first six items which indicated significantly higher total scores than the other items are discussed. Table 5 shows the first six items with their frequency, percentage and total score.

Table 5. The First Six Items Regarding the Total Score

Order	Item	Total score
1	I speak L1 in EFL classroom because I am asking a classmate or the teacher a new point in the lesson.	230
2	I speak L1 in EFL classroom because I cannot find a correct word in English when talking to my classmates.	220
3	I speak L1 in EFL classroom to explain grammar points to my classmates.	210
4	I speak L1 in EFL classroom because I should check the meaning of new words or concepts during the lesson.	186
5	I speak L1 with classmates to give them answers.	176
6	I speak L1 with my teacher to give excuses .	172

Table 5 clearly shows the most frequent reasons of Iranian EFL students for using L1 in EFL classrooms. They are as follows:

1. To ask new points
2. To find a correct English word
3. To explain grammar points for their classmates

4. To check the meaning of the new words
5. To answer their classmates' questions
6. To give excuses to the teacher

Another result obtained from analyzing the gathered data belongs to the distribution of different choices of the questionnaire (always, usually, sometimes and never) among the different levels of participants, i.e. elementary, intermediate and advanced. Figures 1 to 4 show these relationships.

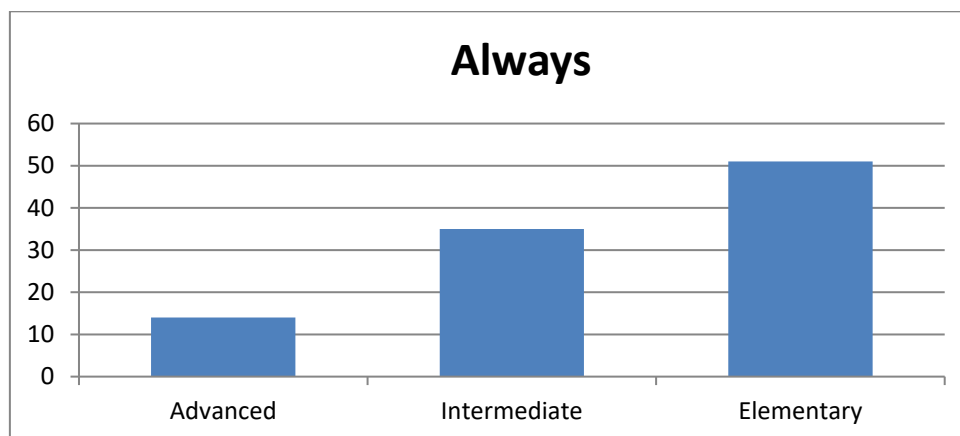


Figure 1. The Distribution of the Choice “always” among the Different Levels

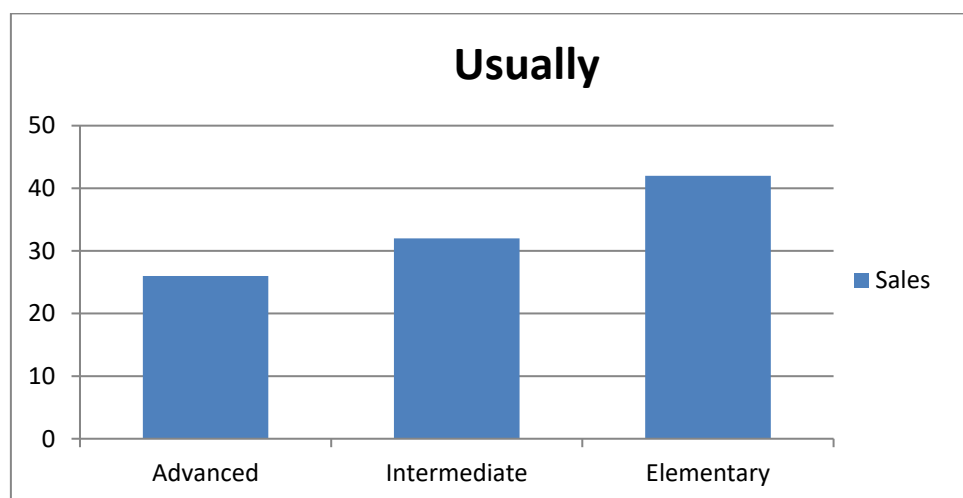


Figure 2. The Distribution of the Choice “usually” among the Different Levels

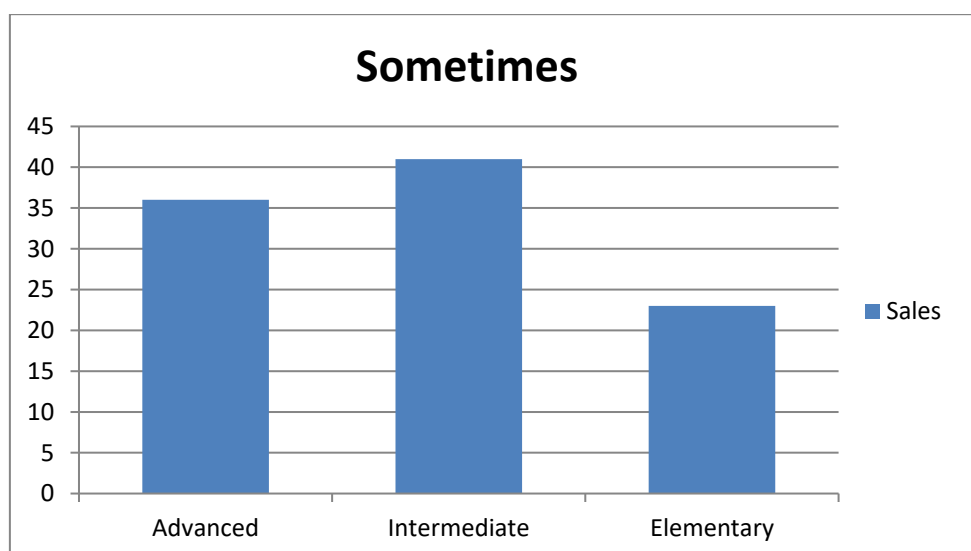


Figure 3. The Distribution of the Choice “sometimes” among the Different Levels

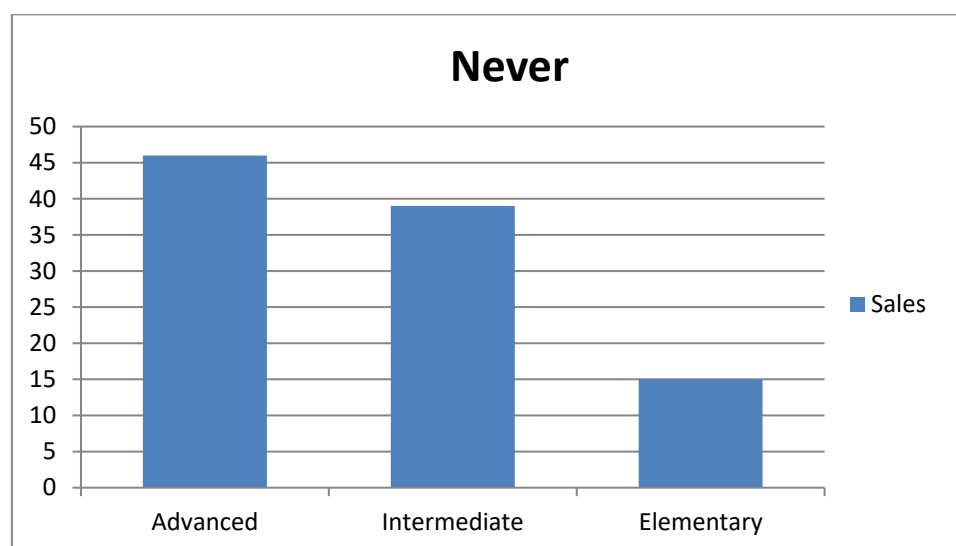


Figure 4. The Distribution of the Choice “never” among the Different Levels

As seen in figures 1 to 4, it is clearly understood that advanced level participants are less likely to tend to use L1 in EFL classes and intermediate participants are more likely to use L1 than advanced students and elementary students are more likely to use L1 than both intermediate and advanced students. It can be concluded that using L1 is more frequent in lower proficiency levels. In other words, there is a negative relationship between proficiency level and using L1 according to the attitudes of the participants' in the current study.

Results Related to Research Question 2: Students' Attitudes towards Teachers' Use of L1 in EFL Classrooms

As mentioned earlier, the second aim of the present study was to find out participants' attitudes toward their teachers' use of L1. Table 6 clearly indicates the results of the analysis. The frequency of students' responses to each item is presented and last column includes the agreement number of each item based on the participants' responses.

Table 6. The Participants' Views toward Their Teachers' Use of L1

Opinion	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Agreement number
1 My teacher never uses L1 because s/he follows "English Only Policy." (This means only English is allowed in the English classroom.)	30	10	1	5	4	-57
2 My teacher uses L1 to explain complex grammar points that most students do not understand in English.	6	4	1	14	25	48
3 My teacher uses L1 to make students feel at ease, comfortable and less stressed	6	10	5	16	13	20
4 My teacher uses L1 to translate difficult English vocabulary that most students do not understand in English.	5	0	7	21	17	45
5 My teacher uses L1 just for humor or joking	28	8	1	7	6	-43
6 My teacher uses L1 when most students do not understand English.	1	5	3	22	19	53
7 My teacher uses L1 to talk about issues that are not directly related to their lesson for example, talking about exam date, exam questions, scoring procedure, assignments, and etc.	15	1	21	4	9	-9
8 My teacher uses L1 frequently to speed up the lessons	30	7	9	1	3	-60
9 My teachers uses L1 when some students are overactive and disturb class order, and using English seems ineffective	8	13	4	10	15	11
10 My teacher uses L1 in teaching when almost all students do not understand in English.	10	11	5	7	17	10
11 My teacher uses L1 when s/he is bored or tired, or is not in mood.	21	17	4	6	2	-49
12 My teacher uses L1 to explain cultural concepts/ideas.	10	2	13	13	12	15
13 My teacher uses L1 to give instructions.	6	5	12	20	7	17
14 My teacher uses L1 to give feedback to the students.	11	12	3	9	15	5
15 My teacher uses L1 to check students' comprehension on complex points.	18	14	4	13	1	-35

16	My teacher uses L1 to explain differences between L1 and L2	20	14	11	4	1	-48
17	My teacher uses L1 to explain administrative information (syllabus, announcements, deadlines, etc.)	3	9	3	13	22	42
18	My teacher uses L1 for greetings.	19	24	1	2	4	-52
19	My teacher uses L1 when she feels students do not understand in English	7	10	14	9	10	5
20	My teacher first starts with L1 when s/he comes to class to ice break then s/he switches to English.	19	13	14	2	2	-45
21	My teacher used L1 just to explain or remind students the rules and regulations of his or her class.	4	5	5	15	21	44

Agreement number in the last column in Table 6 shows how far the participants agreed with each item. It is obtained through adding each choice which has been multiplied by its own coefficient. "strongly disagree" has the coefficient of -2, "disagree" -1, "neutral" 0, "agree" 1, and "strongly agree" 2. If the given number is positive, it shows that participants agree with that item. If the number is negative, it shows that the participants disagreed with that item.

According to the obtained agreement numbers, five items are significantly higher than the other items. It means that the participants are agreed with these five items much more than the other items. Therefore, it can be said that these five items are the main reasons why their teachers use L1 according to the participants' attitudes and perspectives. The five items are clearly shown in the following table.

Table 7. The Five Most Frequent Items of the Questionnaire which Have Been Agreed upon by the Participants Significantly more than Other Items

Order	Item	Agreement number
1	My teacher uses L1 when most students do not understand English.	53
2	My teacher uses L1 to explain complex grammar points that most students do not understand in English.	48
3	My teacher uses L1 to translate difficult English vocabulary that most students do not understand in English.	45
4	My teacher used L1 just to explain or remind students the rules and regulations of his or her class.	44
5	My teacher uses L1 to explain administrative information (syllabus, announcements, deadlines, etc.)	42

From the above table, it can be concluded Iranian EFL students at elementary, intermediate and advanced levels believe that their teachers use L1:

1. To explain something that the majority of the students do not understand.

2. To explain complex grammar points that most students do not understand
3. To translate difficult English vocabulary that most students do not understand
4. To explain or remind students the rules and regulations of class.
5. To explain administrative information (syllabus, announcements, deadlines, etc.)

Figures 5 to 9 show the frequency of choices of the second part of the questionnaire (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree) among the participants from different proficiency levels of elementary, intermediate and advanced.

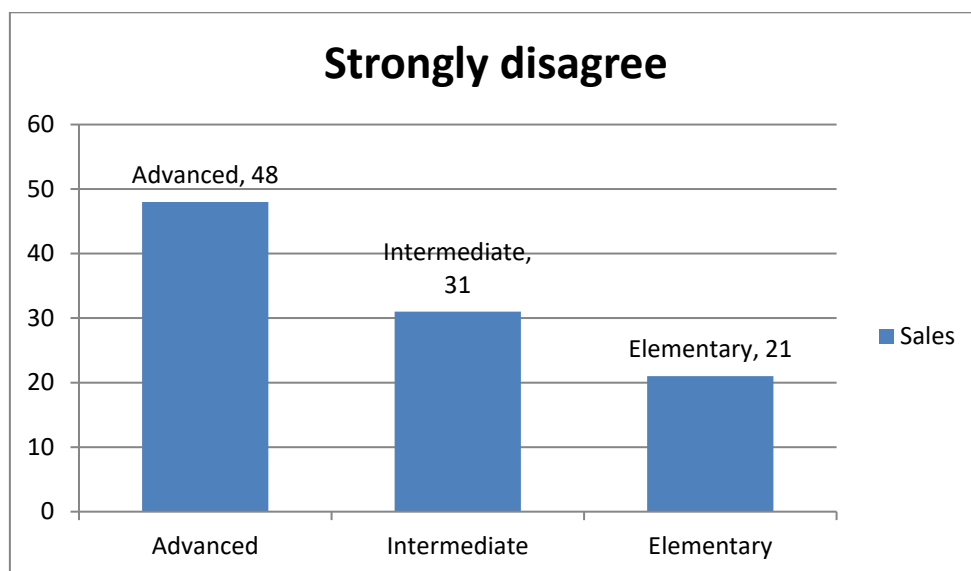


Figure 5. The Distribution of Choice “strongly disagree” among the Participants of Different Proficiency Levels

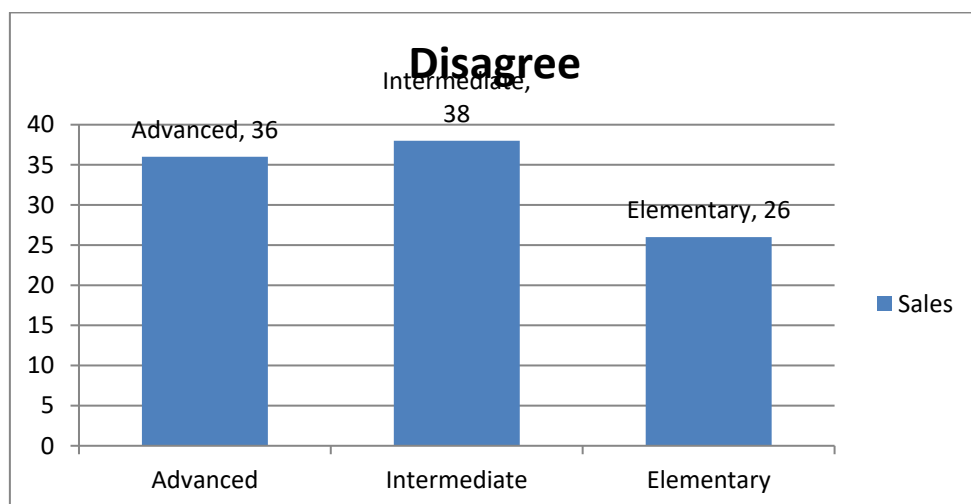


Figure 6. The Distribution of Choice “disagree” among the Participants of Different Proficiency Levels

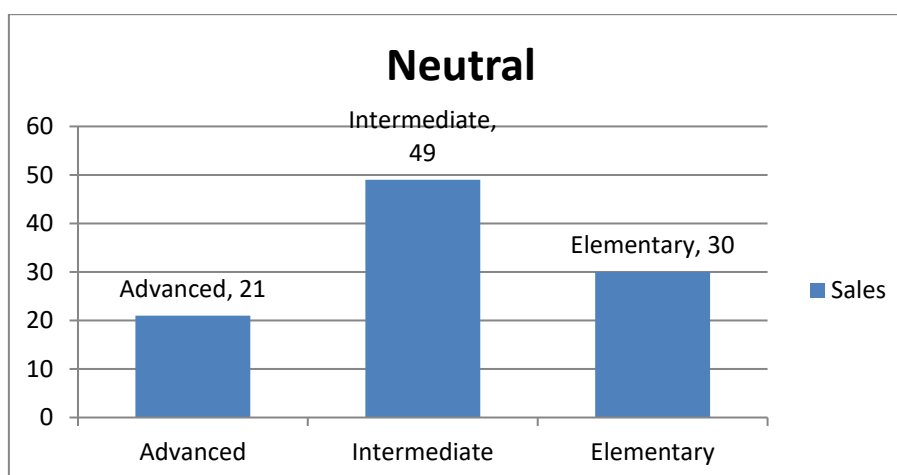


Figure 7. The Distribution of Choice “neutral” among the Participants of Different Proficiency Levels

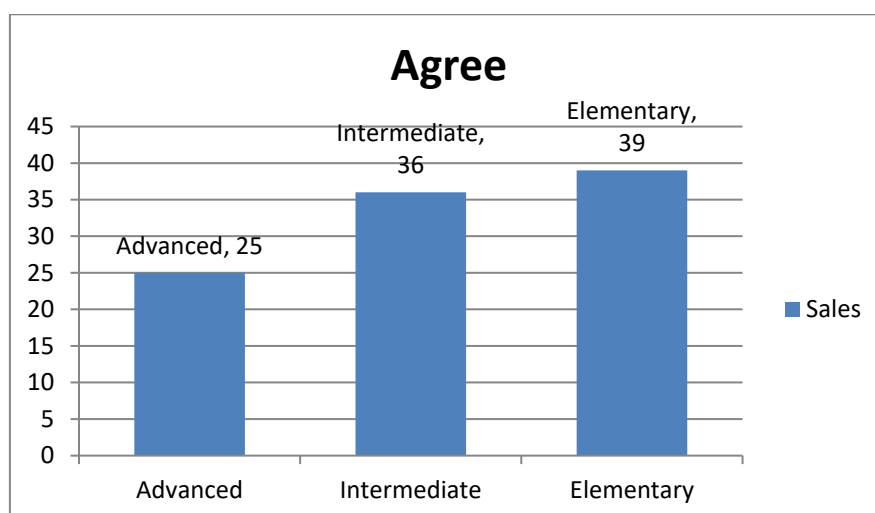


Figure 8. The Distribution of Choice “agree” among the Participants of Different Proficiency Levels

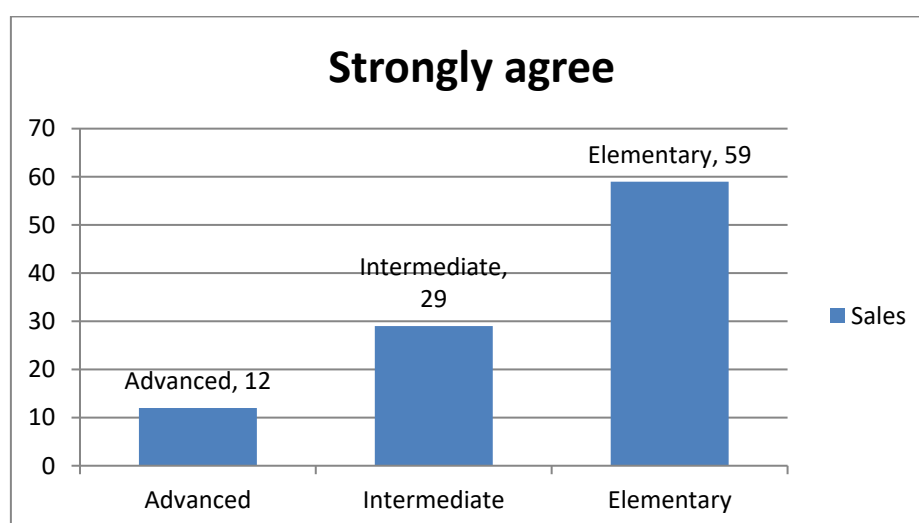


Figure 9. The Distribution of Choice “strongly agree” among the Participants of Different Proficiency Levels

According to the figures 5 to 9, it is observed that the participants' attitude toward their teachers' use of L1 is more positive among the lower level proficiency learners. As the proficiency level of participants rises, their attitudes toward using their teachers' using L1 get more negative. It can be concluded that there is a negative relationship between learners' proficiency level and their positive attitude toward using L1 by their teachers.

DISCUSSION

To discuss about the findings obtained in this section, another approach is taken. First, studies concerned with teachers' using L1 in the class are presented, then attempts are made to show whether they are in line with the current research results.

To mention some local research in Iran, Afzal (2013) did a research on use of L1 in EFL as a procedure of assisting for both learners and teachers to acquire and teach English. According to the results of this research most of teachers implemented L1 in L2 classes. The main causes for the use of L1 were the translation of some words, complex ideas or even whole passage. In addition, the research showed that in the EFL classes Persian plays a significant role.

According to Afzal (2013), the main reasons why teachers use L1 are translation of some words, complex ideas or even whole passage. The current research showed that the first three causes of using L1 by teachers are:

- Using L1 when most students do not understand English.
- Using L1 to explain complex grammar points that most students do not understand in English.
- Using L1 to translate difficult English vocabulary that most students do not understand in English.

As it is clear, the current study considers the first causes of using L1 by teachers as centering around explaining complex words and grammar while learners have difficulty with. Therefore, Afzal (2013) supports the findings obtained from the current study.

Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney (2008) also expressed several functions such as explaining knowledge concerning the L2 medium, classroom management, anxiety, and motivation (positive and negative) for using L1 by teachers in the class. The current research is in line with Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney (2008) regarding the fact that both are in common in considering explaining the instructions and class management as the first and main causes of using L1 by teachers. Since the fourth and fifth most agreed upon items according to the current research are:

- My teacher used L1 just to explain or remind students the rules and regulations of his or her class.
- My teacher uses L1 to explain administrative information (syllabus, announcements, deadlines, etc.)

As seen, reminding students the rules and regulations of his or her class and explaining administrative information are considered as attempts to control and manage the class, therefore class management is one of the issues for which teachers resort to use L1. This

function of using L1 has been mentioned in Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney (2008). As a result, the current research is in line with Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney (2008).

Alshammari (2011) explored on using Arabic in Saudi EFL classes at two Saudi universities to test the attitudes of teachers and their aims for implementing Arabic in EFL classrooms. According to Alshmmari (2011) using L1 by teachers helps learners improve their understanding. As mentioned earlier above, the first three items of the current study questionnaire which have been agreed by the participants more than others are related to understanding. So, it means that the main reasons of using L1 by teachers based on the participants' attitudes of the present study are dealing with understanding difficult words and grammar. As Alshmmari (2011) proves the same result, therefore, these two studies support each other.

Dujimoric (2014) conducted a similar investigation in the Croatian setting. The data were gathered through questionnaires. The results indicated the learners emphasized that the translation of some vocabularies, complex ideas, or even the whole text is a proper way to acquire a foreign language. The instructors maintained that Croatian may be used to make the comprehension check and to make sure learners have comprehended the passage. He proved that in the EFL classes Croatian plays a supportive and facilitating role. Likewise, the current study proves that the main cause of using L1 by the teacher is helping students learn difficult words better. Therefore, the current research proves the results obtained by Dujimoric (2014).

Another similar research was carried out on teachers' code switching to the L1 in EFL classes in three Chinese universities by Jingxia (2010). The data gathering was based on qualitative and quantitative research method containing two questionnaires and classroom recordings. The findings indicated that code switching to Chinese does exist in the EFL classes of Chinese universities. Moreover, most teachers (80%) hold a positive view on teachers' code switching to the L1.

CONCLUSION

According to the findings of the current study, it has been concluded that higher level participants' attitude toward using L1 is negative. On the contrary lower level proficiency participants had positive attitude toward using L1. This finding is discussed about in this part.

At lower levels proficiency of language achievement, identifying the linguistic structures and using the appropriate vocabulary is really difficult. In most cases learners use their L1 to conquer the task. However, it is always deemed that at lower levels of proficiency learners like to use L1 during L2 language achievement more than intermediate or advanced levels of proficiency students. Scott (1996) investigates the issue of lower levels of proficiency students and he offers allowing them to produce ideas in L1 and then assist them to realize the linguistic structures that will change their ideas into the L2. Scott (1996) suggests that by doing this, lower levels of proficiency learners may be able to reach more ideas as otherwise they are confused by the dilemma between linguistic information and opinions on the issue. As the current research shows that lower level

learners tend to use L1 more than higher level students, Scott (1996) is in line with the current research.

The study will help both teachers and students understand why their students like to use their L1 instead of English in EFL classrooms. The results may also help teachers understand in which circumstances their students have a tendency to use their mother tongue. By understanding it, teachers will find which materials and methods may help their students to use English efficiently in their classrooms. This may lead to the ultimate progress of the students' English language skills by using English only in the classrooms. Teachers should be aware of the fact that in some areas of teaching they can switch into L1 such as teaching grammar, teaching new lessons or teaching difficult words. They are also suggested not to put a lot of pressure when their students do not understand what they say in English. Learners need help in their mother tongue in some parts of the class.

Some English institutes set some policies against using L1 in the classes. This policy is made based on shaky scientific evidence. As mentioned earlier, there is no consensus on using or not using L1 in the related literature. Therefore, putting a strong force on teachers not to use L1 in the classes seems far away from any logical pedagogical decision. Although majority of language schools have modified their policy toward using L1 and could update their pedagogical inclinations with the new findings in the field of research and allowed using L1 in some particular situations, there are a few ones which remained resistant against any new movement in TEFL including L1. One of these language schools is Iran Language Institute (ILI) which is considered as the largest institute in Iran for teaching English in terms of the number of learners and teachers. Against the findings of the current research and other researchers proving using L1 in some situations, this school force their teachers not to use any L1 even in the most urgent situations.

REFERENCES

- Afzal, S. (2013). Using of the First Language in English classroom as a way of scaffolding for both the students and teachers to learn and teach English. *International Research Journal of Applied and Basic Science*, 4(7), 1846-1854.
- Alshammari, M. M. (2011). The use of the mother tongue in Saudi EFL classrooms. *Journal of International Education Research (JIER)*, 7(4), 95-102.
- Artemeva, N. (1995). The adult learner as incipient bilingual: The role of L1 in the adult ESL classrooms. *Carleton Papers in Applied Language Studies*, 12, 113-136.
- Auerbach, E. R. (1993). Reexamining English only in the ESL classroom. *Tesol Quarterly*, 9-32.
- Bouangeune, S. (2009). Using L1 in teaching vocabulary to low English proficiency level students: A case study at the University of Laos. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 2(3), 186-193.
- Butzkamm, W. (1998). Code-switching in a bilingual history lesson: The mother tongue as a conversational lubricant. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 1(2), 81-99.
- Chambers, G. (1992). Teaching in the target language. *Language Learning Journal*, 6(1), 66-67.

- Duff, P. A., & Polio, C. G. (1990). How much foreign language is there in the foreign language classroom?. *The Modern Language Journal*, 74(2), 154-166.
- Dujmović, M. (2014). The Ways of Using Mother Tongue in English Language Teaching. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 2(1), 38-43.
- Ellis, R. (1984). *Classroom Second Language Development: A Study of Classroom Interaction and Language Acquisition*. Pergamon.
- Harbord, J. (1992). The use of the mother tongue in the classroom. *ELT journal*, 46(4), 350-355.
- Jingxia, L. (2010). Teachers' Code-Switching to the L1 in EFL Classroom. *The Open Applied Linguistics Journal*, 3, 10-23.
- Kaneko, T. (1992). The role of the first language in foreign language classrooms. , Temple University, Philadelphia.
- Kovačić, A. (2011). To Use or Not to Use: First Language in Tertiary Instruction of English as a Foreign Language.
- Krashen, S. D., & Terrell, T. D. (1983). The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom.
- Levine, G. S. (2003). Student and instructor beliefs and attitudes about target language use, first language use, and anxiety: Report of a questionnaire study. *Modern Language Journal*, 343-364.
- Liebscher, G., & Dailey-O'Cain, J. (2004). Learner code-switching in the content-based foreign language classroom. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 60(4), 501-525.
- Macaro, E. (2001). Analysing student teachers' codeswitching in foreign language classrooms: Theories and decision making. *The Modern Language Journal*, 85(4), 531-548.
- Mitchell, R. (1988). *Communicative Language Teaching in Practice*.
- Mukattash, L. (2003), " Towards a new methodology for teaching English to Arab learners", in IJAES, vol.4, 211-234
- Polio, C. G., & Duff, P. A. (1994). Teachers' language use in university foreign language classrooms: A qualitative analysis of English and target language alternation. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78(3), 313-326.
- Rolin-Ianziti, J., & Varshney, R. (2008). Students' views regarding the use of the first language: an exploratory study in a tertiary context maximizing target language use. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 65(2), 249-273.
- Sarıçoban, A. (2010). Should native language be allowed in foreign language classes. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 38, 164-178.
- Schweers, W. C. Jr. (1999). Using L1 in the L2 classroom. *ETF*, 37(2), 6- 9.
- Scott, V. M. (1996). *Rethinking foreign language writing*. Boston: Heinle&Heinle.
- Tang, J. (2002). Using L1 in the English Classroom. *English Teaching Forum*, 40: 36- 43.
- Thoms, J., Liao, J., & Szustak, A. (2005). The use of L1 in an L2 on-line chat activity. *Canadian modern language review*, 62(1), 161-182.