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Articles

# EFL Teachers' Opinions on the Use of L1 in L2 Classrooms: Role of Experience and Context

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**Abstract:** The use of native language (L1) in foreign language classrooms (L2) has been studied from various perspectives, and it is important to investigate teachers' opinions about the use of L1 to better understand their practice. This study investigates the role of experience on the attitudes of language teachers towards the use of L1 in L2 classes. The participants of this research were pre-service and in-service teachers, and research questions aimed to reveal the language teaching areas that they agreed and/or disagreed with the use of L1 in. The role of experience was clearly seen in the results of both quantitative and qualitative analyses in that the pre-service and in-service teachers differed significantly in their views about some areas where they use L1. While pre-service teachers showed a tendency to support English only, experienced teachers were more moderate towards the use of L1 in all their practices. Discussion of findings revealed that both experience and the L2 teaching and learning context were influential on teachers' practices and beliefs. The study will provide insights into pre-service and in-service teachers' attitudes in different educational settings and implications for pre- and in-service teacher education programs.

**Keywords:** L1 use, L2 classroom, EFL teacher attitudes, beliefs.

## Introduction

The use of native language (L1) in foreign language classrooms (L2) has been studied from various perspectives, and it has been concluded that L1 use is an unavoidable reality of L2 classrooms (Hall & Cook, 2013). While *judicious* use of L1 by language teachers is suggested to facilitate L2 learning (Shin et al., 2019), there is a need for more research to examine the teachers' beliefs and attitudes in different educational contexts about their L1 and L2 use.

The opinions and attitudes of English teachers towards the role of L1 use in L2 classrooms are observed to vary, and "these vary according to context and develop with experience" (Gallagher, 2020, p.3). For this reason, this study aims to address differences related to the context L2 teachers are working in, and the experience L2 teachers have. It reports on in-service and pre-service teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards the use of Turkish (L1) in English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. While

pre-service teachers recruited do not have any real teaching or practicum experience, in-service teachers participating in this study work in two different contexts: K-12 schools and tertiary (university) level.

The recent attitude studies conducted in the Turkish context mainly involve EFL learners (Kocaman & Aslan, 2018), pre-service teachers (Korkut & Şener, 2018), instructors (İnal & Turhanlı, 2019; İstifçi, 2019) or various stakeholders (Taşkın, 2011) working at preparatory schools of universities. Hence, this study may contribute to the existing literature by displaying and comparing the views of language teachers: pre-service teachers without teaching experience and in-service teachers working in K-12 schools and at tertiary levels (the participant groups are introduced in greater detail in the Methodology section).

## Literature Review

### *L1 use in L2 classrooms*

English language teaching has been experiencing an attitude change regarding L1 use in L2 classrooms in the 21st century (Hall & Cook, 2013). Although the *English only approach* has been advocated and approaches that avoid L1 have still been presented as the appropriate methods (e.g., Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Language Teaching), there have also been voices arguing against this understanding and welcoming L1 use.

The English-only tendency in language teaching was criticized by Auerbach (1993) who argued that the English-only movement had historical and ideological roots, and Phillipson (1992) named this tendency as "monolingual fallacy". In support of these claims, Cook (2001) argued that "(t)he first language can be a useful element in creating authentic L2 users rather than something to be shunned at all costs" (p. 402). The exclusion of native language from language classrooms is not reflecting the reality of language teaching practices; rather, it is an argument of the circles that advocate the superiority of native teachers through indirect methods (Şimşek, 2010, p.12).

Language learners are now seen as multi-competent language users (Cook, 2001) and learners' L1 or own language (Hall & Cook, 2013) is now seen as a resource they bring to the L2 classroom. The paradigm shift welcomes language learners as bilinguals and their L1s as a resource to exploit while teaching L2. After this paradigm shift, we see many code-switching studies (CS) in language classrooms as CS has been re-valued and considered as a common practice in language classrooms (Gallagher, 2020). In the Turkish EFL context, these studies focused mostly at the tertiary level (e.g., Ataş & Sağın-Şimşek, 2021; Üstünel & Seedhouse, 2005) to demonstrate the pedagogical value of the use of Turkish to achieve educational goals in language classrooms. As language learners are active bilinguals who engage in languaging practices to make meaning and thereby construct new identities, this issue has also been investigated under the framework of translanguaging (Goodman &

Tastanbek, 2021), in line with the latest celebration of multilingualism. The current question is how language teachers experience this paradigm shift in their own practices and how their attitudes are shaped in the context where L1 is seen as a realistic choice (Shin et al., 2019).

*Teachers' Beliefs & Attitudes on L1 use in L2 classes*

The experience and the context where teachers work definitely influence the opinions and attitudes of English teachers towards the role of L1 use in L2 classrooms (Gallagher, 2020). There are many studies examining the attitudes of teachers and students towards the language used in the classroom. Even though the studies conducted differ in design and methodology, results are more or less the same: native language cannot be ignored. One of the most cited and preliminary questionnaire studies was from Schweer (1999), who researched the beliefs of language learners and teachers towards the use of their native language in the classroom, and he reported a positive attitude (p. 6). This study had been a cornerstone; since then, most of the studies concerning the use of L1 in L2 context had been investigated through comparing student views to teachers' beliefs.

Levine (2003) also asked learners and teachers in university-level foreign language classes how much time L2 is used by the instructor and found that in "40% to 60% of FL classes, the instructor used the L2 80% to 100% of the class time" (p. 350). "Topic/theme-based communication, less overall for communication about grammar, and less still for communication about tests, quizzes, and assignments" (p. 351) were reported areas of L2 use.

Şevik (2007) found out in the Turkish high school context that students and teachers think that L1 should be used "sometimes", especially "the teaching of complex grammar points". Teachers see Turkish as a must to teach grammar in both K-12 and tertiary levels (İnal & Turhanlı, 2019; Kayaoğlu, 2012; Şen, 2010; Şevik, 2007) or to enrich the understanding of grammar rules (İstifçi, 2019). This result echoed in different contexts as well (e.g. Al-Nofaie, 2010; Çelik, 2008). In addition to teaching grammar, checking and ensuring comprehension, classroom management, giving instructions are some potential occasions where L1 use is advocated (Çelik, 2008).

The teachers with varying experiences were also asked to report on their attitudes towards Turkish. In Kayaoğlu's (2012) study, teachers were found to report that in their first years at teaching, they were against the use of L1; however, as they gained experience, they saw "no need to insist on using L2" (p. 32). Although Taşkın (2011) found a similar positive impact of teaching experience on L1 use for teachers at tertiary levels; the teachers did not favor Turkish in their classrooms but still had to use it due to the "some concerns related to curriculum, testing and learner proficiency" (p.150). In another tertiary context, İstifçi (2019) noted that both novice and experienced teachers did not favour the use of Turkish in English classrooms and kept it to a minimum level. These studies show

that even within the same institution, the attitudes towards the use of L1 might vary.

Pre-service teachers' attitudes have also been examined in different contexts (Korkut & Şener, 2018; Wach & Monroy, 2020) and the opinions of pre-service and in-service teachers were also compared (Lee, 2016). While the educational culture of the program and past learning experiences affect pre-service teachers' attitudes, experience is found to be a vital factor in influencing teacher beliefs towards L1 use in different language teaching settings (Lee, 2016).

*The rationale for the study*

In Turkey, in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, English has been taught starting from the second grade in primary schools, and it is the most common foreign language in the country (Selvi, 2011). In such an educational setting where English is learnt by many Turkish speakers, displaying language teachers' (who are also native speakers of Turkish) practices and beliefs towards the use of Turkish (L1) in English classrooms (L2) will be a reasonable step to understand the real practices of teachers in classrooms.

While previous research dealt with teacher attitudes either in contrast with student opinions or by teachers themselves, this study aims to investigate the role of experience on the attitudes of teachers towards the use of native language in L2 classrooms. In this study, the views of two groups of teachers, namely pre-service teachers (PSTs) and in-service teachers (INSTs), are reflected. For this aim, this paper reports on a study in which 78 PSTs and 34 INSTs participated. Teachers responded to a questionnaire on their use of and attitudes on L1 use in the L2 EFL classroom. Then, 2 PSTs and 3 INSTs were interviewed. Through the questionnaire and interviews, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How much class time do the in-service and pre-service teachers report L1 is used in L2 classes?
2. What are the attitudes and beliefs of pre-service and in-service teachers towards the use of L1 in specific L2 classroom situations and areas?
3. Do teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards L1 change with experience?
4. Is there a significant difference between in-service and pre-service teachers' opinions?

## Methodology

This study utilizes a mixed-methods research design to answer the research questions above which call for different types of data to be gathered (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Dörnyei, 2007). For the quantitative aspect, pre-service and in-service participant groups were

administered a questionnaire; the open-ended items in the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews make up the qualitative dimension of the data collection.

*Participants*

Initially, two groups of participants were targeted in this confirmatory study: pre-service (PSTs) and in-service teachers (INSTs). The sampling for the PST group was purposive, with both opportunity and criterion-based dimensions. The in-service teachers were all accessed through a snowball-sampling method. The sample characteristics will be further discussed below. All participants were recruited on a voluntary basis after they provided their informed consent for data collection, analysis, and anonymous dissemination of findings. The data were then anonymized, and participants were assigned participant IDs.

PSTs were 78 third-year BA students enrolled in the English Language Teaching program of a top university in Ankara, Turkey where the medium of instruction is English. In previous terms, they had successfully completed courses that focus on language teaching methodology, such as Methodology I and II, and Approaches to ELT. At the time of data collection, PSTs had not taken any practicum courses in which they have school-based observation and teaching experience yet. Therefore, they were the target group to test the effect of experience on the attitudes towards the use of L1 in the L2 classroom. During data collection, some of PSTs were found to be experienced in language teaching since they had previously offered voluntary one-to-one tutoring to prep-year students at their university as part of another course they enrolled in. This gave us two groups of PSTs; the first group consisted of PSTs with no teaching experience (NPST0=23), and the second group included PSTs with 1-6 months of teaching experience at beginner and elementary levels (NPST1-6=55).

INSTs consisted of 34 EFL teachers with teaching experience at K-12 schools (NK12=16) or at tertiary level (university instructors, NUni=18) across six different cities. When the initial observations during the data collection revealed differences between the attitudes of L1 teachers teaching different age groups for different aims in different contexts, the analyses were conducted separately for these sub-groups as well whenever possible, creating four groups of participants in total.

*The questionnaire*

Quantitative data regarding the attitudes of pre-service and in-service teachers were collected through a questionnaire on the use of L1. The first scale of the questionnaire, on reported L1 use, included items adapted from Levine's (2003) study, asking teachers to mark the degree to which native language is used under specific situations in the classroom. While the first scale items asked for the amount of actual time L1/L2 is used, the

second scale focused on the beliefs and attitudes of teachers. The attitudes scale included 20 Likert-scale items on which the teachers marked the degree they agreed or disagreed with the remarks. There were items on the use of English only, items on the use of Turkish, and items on their beliefs about the amount of English used in specific classroom situations. Likert-scale items were followed by open-ended questions in the third part. This section asked the teachers when and why they use English only and when and why they also use Turkish in their classrooms. The final part was related to demographic information and past experiences of the teachers to enable descriptive statistics. Two comparable versions of the questionnaire were developed for in-service and pre-service teachers.

*Piloting*

The first piloting for the questionnaire was conducted with 7 PSTs. The feedback was generally positive, with some remarks for the improvement of face validity. Since the two questionnaires shared similar formats, the teacher questionnaire underwent the same changes before the second piloting. The second piloting continued with four more PSTs and eight research assistants with language teaching and ELT research backgrounds. The feedback was positive for wording and clarity of items, readability, and face validity.

At the end of the piloting, the questionnaires were sent out to in-service EFL teachers through convenience sampling methods, along with a request to suggest eligible participants. At the end of the snowball-sampling procedure, 41 teachers volunteered, 7 of whom dropped out later. Again, through convenience, adopting a purposive criterion-based sampling approach, the PSTs who met the criteria of having taken methodology courses but not practicum were given the questionnaire. 78 of the distributed 80 questionnaires returned filled in.

*Semi-structured interview*

Semi-structured interviews were designed in Turkish to enhance the qualitative component of the design. Five guiding interview questions were developed by three experienced researchers in accordance with the research questions under investigation. The interview guide was then further evaluated and re-worded by two other researchers to eliminate any possible bias.

The PST interviews were conducted with two pre-service teachers from the EFL teaching department. They were chosen from among voluntary participants purposefully to ensure maximum variation; one PST with no experience (S23) and one with previous experience (S42). INST interviews followed the same procedure, recruiting three INSTs who favored the use of L1 in L2 classes in different degrees, two K-12 teachers (T27 and T21), and one university instructor (T6).

*Data analysis*

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed on SPSS28®. For the overall reliability of scales, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to be α=.919, indicating high reliability of measures. Separate analyses on subscales also showed high reliability for the 23 items on English use (α=.877) and 9 items on the use of Turkish (α=.814).

The results chapter presents descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means and medians [1] for illustrating the tendencies and characteristics of the data. For further analyses, non-parametric statistics were utilized since the participant numbers in groups were not equal and the data distribution was not normal (Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests were significant at p<.001 level). Non-parametric Kruskal Wallis tests were conducted to compare four groups with Bonferroni correction, and Mann-Whitney U tests were used for two-group comparisons (Field, 2005; Larsen-Hall, 2010). Non-parametric correlations on experience and opinions were reported on Spearman's Rho.

The qualitative data from the responses to open-ended questions in the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews were subjected to qualitative coding (Dörnyei, 2007), in which two researchers analyzed the data for recurrent patterns and themes. An initial list of categories was developed by the first author after the data collection. The list was then developed into a coding scheme to include emerging themes and was re-organized throughout the first coding. For the second round, two researchers separately coded the data to verify credibility. Both researchers coded most of the data (96%) in the same categories. The audio recordings of the interviews were played several times to select any conflicting ideas or views that support the general tendency in the questionnaire findings. Typical comments that highlight the important discrepancies and similarities were then transcribed and translated.

## Results

This part of the paper presents the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses regarding the opinions of teachers on the amount of time English is being or would be exclusively used in L2 English classrooms, their attitudes towards the use of L1 in certain L2 classroom situations and teaching, and teaching experience in relation to these.

*Amount of actual L2 English use in classroom*

The first scale asked for opinions on the amount of time that would be spent using English in the classroom, through 12 items. These items may be categorized under three main categories:

a) Use of English by students (Items 2, 3, 10); b) Use of English by the teacher while teaching (Items 1, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12) and c) Use of English for

other purposes in class (Items 7, 8, 9). The major findings are summarized below in frequency tables.

**Table 1**
Students' use and understanding of English in the classroom

| Students... | amount of time: | 0-20% | 20-40% | 40-60% | 60-80% | 80-100% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2. use English to communicate with the teacher* | PSTs with no experience | 4.3% | 8.7% | 39.1% | 39.1% | 8.7% |
| | PSTs with experience | 3.6% | 14.5% | 38.2% | 30.9% | 12.7% |
| | K-12 Teachers | 31.3% | 37.5% | 25.0% | 0.0% | 6.2% |
| | University Instructors | 11.1% | 50.0% | 5.6% | 27.8% | 5.6% |
| 3. use English to communicate with each other* | PSTs with no experience | 17.4% | 21.7% | 26.1% | 26.1% | 4.3% |
| | PSTs with experience | 25.5% | 27.3% | 14.5% | 27.3% | 5.5% |
| | K-12 Teachers | 62.5% | 25.0% | 6.2% | 0.0% | 6.3% |
| | University Instructors | 61.1% | 16.7% | 11.1% | 11.1% | 0.0% |
| 10. understand what teacher says in English | PSTs with no experience | 0.0% | 8.7% | 47.8% | 30.4% | 13.0% |
| | PSTs with experience | 0.0% | 9.1% | 41.8% | 27.3% | 21.8% |
| | K-12 Teachers | 0.0% | 18.8% | 37.5% | 37.5% | 6.2% |
| | University Instructors | 0.0% | 11.1% | 22.2% | 38.9% | 27.8% |

* indicates statistically significant differences across participant groups on Kruskal-Wallis H test.

As seen in Table 1, most K-12 teachers (68.8%) and university instructors (61.1%) observe that their students use English to communicate with them, not more than 40% of the total class time. However, as for both groups of PSTs, the students would use English to communicate with the teacher between 40% to 80% of the time. Another clear distinction is seen for the amount of English used between the students themselves, for which more than half of the INSTs answered the rank of 0-20% while PSTs had an equal distribution among all the ranks with 60-80% having the highest frequency for both pre-service groups. For both of these areas, the differences among groups are found to be statistically significant with .(3)=18.8, .=0.001 for Item 2 and .(3)=15.69, .=0.001 for Item 3. The area where the pre-service and in-service teachers agreed is the understanding of students. For Item 10 on students' use of English, distribution was not significantly different across four groups (.(3)=3.04, .=0.39).

The differing views on the use of target language by language learners were also noted in interviews. During the interview, a pre-service teacher reported that:

> (...) If you can find good activities, you can make students speak English in the classrooms. This is the only way they can have enough input. I think, for example, when I had some students last semester, they were willing to communicate. They asked me questions in English. They answered their own questions in English. It is possible that students speak English in the classroom, why not? The only thing is to motivate them, (...) communicating in English is not a problematic issue for a language teacher." (PST23)

While an in-service K-12 teacher shared her views on the importance of speaking and communicating in English, she listed some problems as well and noted the impossibility of exclusive L2 use in class:

> "(...) of course, I believe in its importance. I try to give [my students] some colorful, enjoyable activities. [...] But in the end, we end up playing games with the front rows while others have 'paper wars' at the back row –no matter how interesting the activity is. Some days, the only thing they utter in English is 'Good morning my teacher' in a chorus at the beginning. When I force them to speak English with me, or with their friends, they either remain silent or they totally ignore me [...] I had to leave this communicative teaching thing behind, to catch up with the curriculum." (T21)

This divergence on the use of English in the classroom also reflects itself in the responses to items on teacher's language use. In the table below (Table 2), the areas of teacher talk are listed, where all the questions asked for the amount of time in which English is used in the classroom (except in Item 11, which asks for the use of 'Turkish' and therefore has no significant comparisons).

The first difference is in the item on teacher's use of English for all the communication during class hours (Part I, Item 1, .(3)=12.85, at p<.05 level). Pairwise comparisons of groups indicated that K-12 teachers are seen to be using significantly less English in their language classes than both PST groups (Bonferroni-adjusted .=0.004 for PST1-6 and 0.01 for PST0) and university instructors (.=0.04), while differences were non-significant amongst other groups. This case was also true for the items on activity organization and conduct, with .(3)=10.588, .=.014 for Item 4 and .(3)=12.031, .=.007 for item 5. This is most probably due to their learners' proficiency levels and their goals in learning English (the influence of context on the use of L1 will be discussed further later). For Item 6 on the use of English, while teaching grammar, K-12 teachers' reported use was again significantly different from pre-service teachers (at .<.001 level) but not different from university instructors (.=.205).

In this category, the only item for which the overall tests did not show any statistical difference was 'giving clarifications in Turkish' (Item 11, .(3)=5.013, .=.171). The INSTs say they use Turkish because "it saves time" (T23) as "it takes a long time to explain everything in English. As [they] haven't got enough time, [they] may use Turkish as an option" (T33). T3 also confirms that "the aim here is to ensure that students understand what's expected of them, so if they have difficulty, Turkish can be used".

The last category of the first scale is related to classroom situations that are not directly related to the lesson or teaching but more about communicating with students in school. As in previous categories, the two pre-service teacher groups (PST0 and PST1-6) reported higher amounts of time for the use of English. This difference was found to be statistically significant when pairwise comparisons were run: in-service (INSTK12 and INSTUni; .=.43) and pre-service (PST0 and PST1-6; .=.741) groups did not differ within pairs, but the difference between PTSs' ranks (*Mdn*=4.00) and INSTs' ranks (*Mdn*=3.00) was significantly different .(.PST=78, .INST=34)=808.50, .=-3.397, .<.001. The same observations hold true for communication on administrative information where PSTs (*Mdn*=4.00) again differed from INSTs (*Mdn*=2.00) significantly (.=472, .=-5.56, .<.001).

**Table 2**
Teachers' use of English while teaching

| Items | Amount of total class time: | 0-20% | 20-40% | 40-60% | 60-80% | 80-100% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. For all the communication in the class* | PSTs with no experience | 0.0% | 4.3% | 13.0% | 39.1% | 43.5% |
| | PSTs with experience | 1.8% | 3.6% | 14.5% | 36.4% | 43.6% |
| | K-12 Teachers | 0.0% | 25.0% | 43.8% | 18.8% | 12.5% |
| | University Instructors | 0.0% | 11.1% | 11.1% | 33.3% | 44.4% |
| 4. For topic based/thematic activities* | PSTs with no experience | 0.0% | 0.0% | 4.3% | 56.5% | 34.8% |
| | PSTs with experience | 0.0% | 1.8% | 12.7% | 38.2% | 47.3% |
| | K-12 Teachers | 12.5% | 18.8% | 6.2% | 43.8% | 18.8% |
| | University Instructors | 0.0% | 0.0% | 6.7% | 40.0% | 53.3% |
| 5. To give directions for activities* | PSTs with no experience | 0.0% | 0.0% | 13.0% | 52.2% | 34.8% |
| | PSTs with experience | 0.0% | 1.8% | 12.7% | 47.3% | 38.2% |
| | K-12 Teachers | 0.0% | 31.2% | 25.0% | 31.2% | 12.5% |
| | University Instructors | 0.0% | 5.6% | 16.7% | 33.3% | 44.4% |
| 6. Teaching grammar and usage* | PSTs with no experience | 0.0% | 4.3% | 26.1% | 34.8% | 34.8% |
| | PSTs with experience | 0.0% | 7.3% | 18.2% | 45.5% | 29.1% |
| | K-12 Teachers | 31.2% | 25.0% | 12.5% | 25.0% | 6.2% |
| | University Instructors | 5.6% | 33.3% | 5.6% | 22.2% | 33.3% |
| 11. Using Turkish, to clarify problematic areas | PSTs with no experience | 21.7% | 39.1% | 17.4% | 8.7% | 13.0% |
| | PSTs with experience | 14.5% | 27.3% | 25.5% | 20.0% | 12.7% |
| | K-12 Teachers | 6.2% | 25.0% | 25.0% | 25.0% | 18.8% |
| | University Instructors | 27.8% | 27.8% | 22.2% | 16.7% | 5.6% |
| 12. Using English, to clarify problematic areas* | PSTs with no experience | 0.0% | 4.3% | 13.0% | 52.2% | 30.4% |
| | PSTs with experience | 1.8% | 3.6% | 25.5% | 52.7% | 16.4% |
| | K-12 Teachers | 12.5% | 37.5% | 18.8% | 12.5% | 18.8% |
| | University Instructors | 0.0% | 5.6% | 33.3% | 27.8% | 33.3% |

* indicates statistically significant differences across participant groups on Kruskal-Wallis H test.

Non-parametric Spearman correlations were calculated to investigate the relationship between experience and the amount of language use reported by participants in order to verify the overall findings. Although not very strong, negative correlations (all *rs*< -,424) were observed for all items on the first scale except two items. These were namely students' understanding of English (Item 10) and use of Turkish for clarification (Item 11). The negative correlation of experience was significant at .<.05 level in Items 1, 7, and 12; and at .<.001 in Items 2, 3, 6, and 8. In other words, as the experience of participants increased, the amount of English use in various classroom situations decreased.

*Beliefs and Attitudes towards the Use of L1 in L2 Classroom*

Teachers' attitudes and beliefs were elicited through 20 items on a 5-point Likert scale that constituted the second part of the questionnaire. Regarding seven specific classroom situations summarized in Table 3, teachers reported on their attitudes towards using L1 Turkish (Items 1, 3, 9, 10, 12, 17, 20) and use of English (Items 5, 7, 11, 13, 14, 16, 19). The remaining six items asked for English-only all the time (Items 2, 4, 6, 15, 18) and using L1 for attention (Item 8).

The means and medians for L1 and L2 use in certain classroom situations are presented below in Table 3. The highest agreement reported for the use of Turkish can be observed in the K-12 teacher group, followed by university instructors. The highest agreement with English-only in the same areas was higher for PSTs, especially for PSTs with no teaching experience. Despite noticeable patterns, statistically significant differences were observed only for a few variables, which will be supported further with reference to qualitative findings.

**Table 3**

Attitudes towards language use in certain classroom situations

| | **Statistics for:** | **Turkish may be used** | | **only English should be used** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Situation** | **Group** | Mean | Median | Mean | Median |
| teaching grammar* | PSTs with no experience | 3.26 | 3.00 | 2.96 | 3.00 |
| | PSTs with experience | 3.24 | 3.00 | 2.84 | 3.00 |
| | K-12 Teachers | 3.88 | 4.00 | 2.56 | 2.00 |
| | University Instructors | 3.61 | 4.00 | 2.67 | 2.00 |
| teaching vocabulary* | PSTs with no experience | 3.30 | 2.00 | 3.83 | 4.00 |
| | PSTs with experience | 3.38 | 2.00 | 3.73 | 4.00 |
| | K-12 Teachers | 3.00 | 3.50 | 3.06 | 3.00 |
| | University Instructors | 3.50 | 4.00 | 3.35 | 3.00 |
| giving instructions for activities | PSTs with no experience | 2.96 | 3.00 | 3.18 | 3.00 |
| | PSTs with experience | 2.93 | 3.00 | 3.25 | 3.00 |
| | K-12 Teachers | 3.13 | 4.00 | 3.06 | 3.00 |
| | University Instructors | 2.61 | 2.00 | 3.50 | 4.00 |
| feedback for activities | PSTs with no experience | 3.22 | 3.00 | 3.17 | 3.00 |
| | PSTs with experience | 3.07 | 3.00 | 3.09 | 3.00 |
| | K-12 Teachers | 3.19 | 4.00 | 2.73 | 2.00 |
| | University Instructors | 3.44 | 4.00 | 2.94 | 3.00 |
| instructions for exam | PSTs with no experience | 3.39 | 4.00 | 3.22 | 3.00 |
| | PSTs with experience | 3.51 | 4.00 | 2.69 | 3.00 |
| | K-12 Teachers | 3.38 | 4.00 | 2.44 | 2.00 |
| | University Instructors | 3.56 | 4.00 | 3.11 | 3.00 |
| feedback for exam* | PSTs with no experience | 3.17 | 3.00 | 2.87 | 3.00 |
| | PSTs with experience | 3.36 | 4.00 | 2.95 | 3.00 |
| | K-12 Teachers | 3.60 | 4.00 | 2.44 | 2.00 |
| | University Instructors | 4.00 | 4.00 | 2.61 | 2.00 |
| administrative/ school information* | PSTs with no experience | 3.13 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 3.00 |
| | PSTs with experience | 3.13 | 3.00 | 3.02 | 3.00 |
| | K-12 Teachers | 3.69 | 4.00 | 3.69 | 2.00 |
| | University Instructors | 4.11 | 4.00 | 2.39 | 2.00 |

* indicates that there are statistically significant differences across groups.

The first area where PSTs' attitudes were significantly different from the INSTs is teaching grammar: .(.pre-service=78, .in-service=34)=1684.50, .=2.382, .=.017; demonstrating that INSTs favored using L1 while teaching L2 more than PSTs did. The majority of the INSTs (75% of K-12 teachers and 73.3% of university instructors) reported that they agreed with the remark *"Turkish may be used while teaching grammar",* while only around 45% of PSTs supported the use of L1 while teaching grammar. The differences were not statistically different for the equivalent exclusive L2 use item. Still, 62.5% of K-12 teachers and 53.3% of university instructors disagreed with the remark that '*Only English should be used while teaching grammar'*; while the disagreement rate was 34.8% and 41.8% for inexperienced and experienced pre-service teachers, respectively.

Teaching vocabulary is another field where the attitudes of teachers differ. Only 17,4% and 14,5% of the inexperienced and experienced pre-service teachers agreed with the remark "*Turkish may be used while teaching vocabulary",* respectively. The agreement rate was 50% for K-12 teachers and 66.7% for university instructors. Further statistics showed that in-service (INSTK12 and INSTUni; .=.83) and pre-service (PST0 and PST1-6; .=.21) groups did not differ within pairs, but the difference between PSTs' ranks (*Mdn*=2.00) and ISTs' ranks (*Mdn*=4.00) was significantly different .=1923.50, .=3.93., .<.001. For the matching item on the use of English-only for vocabulary teaching, only 8.7% of inexperienced and 16.4% of experienced PSTs disagreed, while disagreement was 37.5% for K-12 teachers and for 42.9% of university instructors. Therefore, vocabulary teaching may be listed as another area where PSTs and INSTs significantly differ (p=.03).

Participant groups were similar in their attitudes towards using L1 and/or L2-only in areas of instruction and feedback for activities, and for instructions during exams. However, all groups significantly differed from each other in terms of using L1 while providing feedback on exams (.(3)=10.468, .=.015); the INSTs supported English-only for exam feedback significantly less (p=0.04) than the PSTs. Finally, administrative information was an area in which INSTs were more positive towards using Turkish when compared to PSTs (.=1913, .=4.033., .<.001).

The remaining items on the second scale were on using English-only strictly at all times in the classroom, including for student-teacher communication, English as L2 input and between students. The first item, *'...the instructors should use English at all times in the classroom',* was the one on which the PSTs and INSTs differed most in their attitudes. Specifically speaking, the difference was statistically significant between K-12 teachers and the other 3 groups. While K-12 teachers had a disagreement rate of 50%, the disagreement rates of PSTs were below 20%, and the university instructors also disagreed with a rate of 20%. Moreover, 81,2% of K-12 teachers and 93,3% of instructors disagreed with the statement *'there are no situations in which the first language should be used'*, unlike the PSTs who had lower disagreement rates for the same item.

The relationship between years of experience teachers had and their overall attitudes towards the use of L1 was also supported by the correlations observed between these two constructs. Most items on the use of Turkish (Items 3, 8, 9, 10, 12, 17, 20) correlated positively, and all items on use of English-only (Items 2, 4, 6, 15, 18) correlated negatively with experience. Even though these correlations were not strong, they indicate that as experience increases, positive attitudes towards L1 use increase.

In the next part, the open-ended items asked teachers to describe a situation in which L1 might be used and a situation where only L2 should be used. Therefore, they wrote about the first learning area that they associated with L1 or L2 use, along with their justification. Below is a list of categories and the percentages of occurrence for each case.

Table 4 below presents the percentages of the responses given to open-ended questions. The tendency of INSTs towards the use of L1 for teaching grammar can easily be noticed. The percentage of occurrence of 'teaching grammar' in the use of Turkish part is 58.3% for INSTs, while it is only found in 16.7% of the PST comments. It is also seen that 'vocabulary teaching' is stated in 25.5% of the PST comments while only 8.3% of the INSTs stated 'vocabulary teaching' under the *English-only* section. This difference about the vocabulary teaching is also reflected in the *Turkish may be used* part; where 19.4% of the INSTs noted vocabulary teaching as an area where L1 was used, the rate for the same item is only 1.3% in PSTs. These findings support the results of the analyses on the quantitative scales.

**Table 4**
Coded responses to openended questions

| **Only English for:** | % of all **PSTs** | % of all **INSTs** |
|---|---|---|
| All the time in Class | 38,5 | 8,3 |
| Most of the time in class | | 11,1 |
| Teaching Grammar | 9,0 | 0,0 |
| Teaching Vocabulary | 25,5 | 8,3 |
| Teaching Speaking | 17,9 | 19,4 |
| At higher levels | 3,8 | 5,6 |
| Instructions for activities | 15,4 | 19,4 |
| For communicative activities | 38,5 | 19,4 |
| All kinds of interactions in the classroom | 12,8 | 5,6 |
| All kinds of activities in class | 20,5 | 5,6 |
| When there's no time constraint | | 13,9 |
| Reading | 5,1 | 22,2 |
| Writing | | 8,3 |
| Listening | 1,3 | 11,1 |
| **Turkish may be used** | | |
| At lower levels | 2,6 | |
| Teaching Grammar | 16,7 | 58,3 |
| To explain points that are not understood | 38,5 | 38,9 |
| Talking about something not related to the lesson | 7,7 | 8,3 |
| To give instructions for exams | 21,8 | 5,6 |
| For giving feedback | 19,2 | 16,7 |
| Repeating important points | 2,6 | 5,6 |
| Outside the classroom | 6,4 | 2,7 |
| To give instructions in the classroom | 11,5 | 5,6 |
| To teach vocabulary | 1,3 | 19,4 |
| Writing | | 11,1 |
| Reading | | 5,6 |

It is seen that 38,9% of INSTs and 38,5% of the PSTs are in favor of using L1 '*to explain points that are not understood*'. Agreement on this item indicates that teachers prioritize students' comprehension over the use of L2. It is important to note here, however, that the PSTs included a condition for supporting the use of L1. A typical comment was:

> "Only English should be used, when doing speaking, vocabulary and communicative activities in classroom, Because the students should use language to learn it.
>
> Turkish may also be used, when there is a problem that students cannot understand a point, teacher can explain in Turkish. But it should be the last resort, teacher should have really hard time in explaining the thing in English. Because use of Turkish in the classroom may have negative (e)ffects on the learners." (S28)

So, use of Turkish, according to the majority of PSTs, had to be *the last resort.* However, the INSTs viewed L1 as a tool for efficiency in terms of time, student motivation and understanding. When students "have difficulty in understanding what you are trying to teach as a grammar subject, [use of English-only makes it] more complicated for them to get the point" (T27). In such cases, "insisting on using only English (...) may demotivate students. When they don't understand an instruction or any feedback, they cannot focus on language, achieve intended goals, or go one step further" (T21, K-12). T34, a university instructor, commented on L1 use in vocabulary and grammar teaching, noting that:

> (...) grammar and vocabulary are language "areas", not skills. These should be considered only as tools, not aims. Students need grammar and vocabulary to be able to read, write, listen and speak. I find teaching grammar in English a waste of time. The grammar is of course introduced within a context inductively, but then the form, the functions and rules can be explained in Turkish, so that it can be better understood and it takes less time to teach. (...) Vocabulary is more or less the same. Especially with abstract vocabulary, and (...) zero-beginners, you don't have any choice but to use Turkish (...) I am really positive towards using Turkish in the classroom in an "EFL" (capital letters!) [2] setting.

All in all, the context in which teaching and learning take place emerged as an important factor that shapes both the use and attitudes of teachers regarding the use of L1 in their EFL classrooms.

## Discussion

The study shows that there are significant differences between the attitudes of in-service (INSTs) and pre-service teachers (PSTs) regarding L1 (Turkish) use in different classroom situations. Compared to INSTs, PSTs think they would use more L2 (English) and their future students would use English more among themselves. The findings show that the more experienced teachers are, the more tolerant they towards using L1 in their classrooms. INSTs (especially K-12 teachers) report they use L1 frequently in most situations, while PSTs see L1 as a last resort, especially when students do not comprehend.

Regarding the language areas, grammar and vocabulary teaching are found to be the ones where the attitudes of groups differ significantly. These findings echoed the existing literature, especially the ones in which vocabulary and grammar were "criticized as too reliant on L1 use" (Shin et al., 2019, p. 10). In other words, other studies also show that L2 teachers use L1 to teach grammar and vocabulary to support learning. However, it is striking to find out that PSTs' attitudes are positioned as maximal position on the continuum Macaro (2014) described. They seem to favor *maximal position*, which sees L1 as a deficiency to be *allowed* or *tolerated*(Korkut & Şener, 2018). On the other hand, INSTs see L1 as a *must*to cover the curriculum and teach grammar. We believe that these two groups' attitudes are positioned on two extreme ends of a continuum. Their attitudes do not seem to reflect the judicious use of L1 to support L2 *use* which is currently suggested by many scholars (Hall & Cook, 2013; Shin et al., 2019).

The results might imply that K-12 INSTs teach *knowledge about language* rather than *language use* since most K-12 teachers (65%) use English for less than 60% of the class time *(see Table 2).* Macaro's (2014) argues that in the classrooms where L1 is used 50% of the class time, the educational outcome is not communicative competence. Hlas (2016) suggests that "L2 should be taught in L2 90% of the time, and in L1 10% of the time" (as cited in Shin et al., 2019, p. 9).

While the official English language curriculum (MEB, 2018) aims to teach English as a means of communication, the reported English use by

language teachers in this study shows that it is not an attainable goal. Conversely, INSTs views corroborate the findings of the British Council and TEPAV's (2013) comprehensive report, which highlighted the fact that the language was taught merely as a lesson but not as a vehicle for communication in K-12 classrooms in Turkey. Thus, it is not surprising to see that Turkey was listed in the *low proficiency band* (ranking 70$^{th}$ among 100 countries) in the recent EF English Proficiency Index (2021).

The exam-oriented culture and the washback effect of the exams in K-12 schools on the language skills might be the reason for extensive use of Turkish in EFL classrooms since our INSTs at the tertiary level report less L1 and higher L2 use in their classrooms. Another factor that leads teachers to use L1 more may be their language proficiency (Lee, 2016). In a recent study (Taner, 2017), K-12 EFL teachers in Turkey report their proficiency level below CEFR B2 in interaction and speaking. Similarly, in the South Korean context, Lee (2016) investigates the attitude towards L1 use and finds that teachers do not see themselves competent in speaking. As a remedy, Lee (2016) suggests EFL teachers should receive in-service training to improve oral proficiency and self-confidence to speak halfway through their career.

Departing from our interpretation of findings and literature, providing guidance and support for INSTs through their career is an absolute need. Recent literature highlights the need for professional platforms where K-12 teachers come together and share their experiences regarding L1-L2 use in classrooms and read recent SLA literature on L1 and L2 use to construct their "principled and purposeful *own*language use" (Hall & Cook, 2013) rather than *ad hoc* approaches; namely, extensively overusing L1, or banning it altogether.

PSTs in this study are observed to be positioned at another end of the continuum. The results imply that they see L1 as a last resort, not a resource they may exploit judiciously. Hall and Cook (2013) think that there is a discrepancy between actual practice and mainstream ELT literature. This might be why PSTs in this study advocated *L2 only policy*. Another reason for this attitude might be the pre-service teacher education they receive. Since they were studying in one of the top universities where the medium of instruction is English, they are used to *'ideal'* L2 learning environments and might be a little far from the realities of low proficiency classrooms. Similarly, Wach and Monroy (2020) found that Spanish trainees who were trained in CLIL classrooms or observed CLIL classrooms advocate L2-only approach compared to those trainees who never experienced such education. Observing good practices of L2-only approach at the tertiary level may influence their attitudes towards L1 use.

However, the literature shows that the most influential factor shaping attitudes towards L1 use is the actual experience of teachers (Lee, 2016). Pre-service teachers are also aware of the fact that language teacher education programs need to involve more teaching practice (e.g., Seferoğlu, 2006). For instance, pre-service teachers in their first years may experience challenges such as low-proficient learners in the classroom

(Sali & Keçik, 2018) and may not know how to balance L1 and L2 use to teach effectively. Hence, the need for a more up-to-date, realistic, principled, purposeful, and evidence-based approach towards L1 use in EFL classrooms should be introduced to the EFL teacher education curriculum.

## Conclusion

This mixed-methods study attempted to explore EFL teachers' use, beliefs and attitudes regarding the use of L1 in L2 classrooms with respect to teaching experience. The initial aim was to compare two groups, namely in-service and pre-service. During the study, we noticed that four groups with varying teaching experiences emerged. This limited the number and distribution of participants in groups. However, this limitation also enriched our insight and helped us observe the effect of teaching context (K-12 vs tertiary) on teacher beliefs. Therefore, a further dimension to research might be the influence of the teaching context on the place of L1 in EFL teaching. Also, qualitative studies may be designed for in-depth analysis of the factors that determine L1 use. For policy and practice, several implications were provided; one prominent suggestion is to incorporate a current, realistic, principled, purposeful, and evidence-based approach towards L1 use in EFL teacher education curriculum.

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## Notes

**1** We preferred medians in reporting our descriptive findings for two reasons. First, medians (unlike means) are not influenced by the extremes. Second, they are useful in analysing ordinal data while modes are more frequently used for nominal/categorical variables.

**2** The participant's own emphasis and punctuation.

## Declaración de intereses

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## Información adicional

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