



## Use of L1 in Language Teaching: Does the Practicum Experience Change EFL Student Teachers' Views?\*

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### Abstract

The use of the mother tongue in language teaching is a long-standing debate that cannot be resolved. While some advocate for the use of the mother tongue (L1), others believe that the use of the mother tongue impedes and adversely impacts foreign language learning. The present study aims to determine whether practicum experience has an impact on ELT student teachers' opinions about the use of the mother tongue in language teaching. This study employed a mixed-methods approach with a questionnaire conducted with 52 student teachers and interviews conducted with 9 participants. The findings of the study indicated that while participants' favorable opinions about L1 use had more than doubled, their unfavorable opinions fell by a factor of three. This occurrence demonstrates unequivocally that ELT student teachers' opinions about the use of L1 changed positively during their practicum experience. This study also seeks to investigate the factors that influence student teachers' opinions about the use of L1 during their practicum experience. The real classroom environment and experience, students' short attention spans, classroom management issues in schools such as crowded classrooms, seating arrangement, and short lesson time, the pressure of the parents and administration as well as students' English proficiency level and interest, are the factors that influence student teachers' opinions about the use of L1. These findings highlighted that student teachers must be trained that using one's mother tongue is not a sin or an ineffective technique, but it conversely may be a valuable instructional instrument for language teaching if it is employed appropriately and efficiently.

## Dil Öğretiminde Anadil Kullanımı: Öğretmenlik Uygulaması Deneyimi Yabancı Dil olarak İngilizce Öğretecek Öğretmen Adaylarının Görüşlerini Değiştirir mi?

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### Öz

Yabancı dil öğretiminde anadil kullanımı uzun zamandır tartışılan ve kesin bir cevabı bulunamayan bir konudur. Bazı uzmanlar anadil kullanımını savunurken bazıları da anadil kullanımının yabancı dil öğrenimini engellediğini ve kötü etkilediğini savunmaktadırlar. Bu çalışma son sınıf İngilizce Öğretmenliği adaylarının yabancı dil öğretiminde anadil kullanımı hakkındaki düşüncelerinin öğretmenlik uygulaması boyunca değişikliğe uğrayıp uğramadığını bulmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışmada 52 öğretmen adayı ile yapılan anket ve 9 katılımcı ile yapılan mülakatlarla karma yöntem yaklaşımı kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın bulguları, katılımcıların Anadil kullanımına ilişkin olumlu tutumlarının iki kattan fazla artarken, olumsuz tutumlarının ise üç kat düştüğünü göstermiştir. Bu bulgular, öğretmen adaylarının anadil kullanımına ilişkin tutumlarının öğretmenlik uygulaması sırasında olumlu yönde değiştiğini açık bir şekilde göstermektedir. Ayrıca, bu çalışma öğretmen adaylarının Öğretmenlik Uygulama

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İlk Dil

**Araştırma Makalesi**

deneyimi boyunca anadil kullanımına yönelik inanç ve tutumlarının etkileyen faktörleri de araştırmayı amaçlamıştır. Kalabalık sınıflar, öğrencilerin oturma düzeni, kısa ders saatleri gibi sınıf yönetimine dair konular, okul idareleri ve velilerden gelen baskılar, gerçek sınıf ortamı ve deneyimi, öğrencilerin kısa dikkat sürelerinin yanı sıra öğrencilerin seviye ve ilgi düzeylerinin, öğretmen adaylarının anadile yönelik inanç ve tutumlarını değiştiren faktörler olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu bulgular, aday öğretmenlerin anadillerini kullanmanın bir suç ya da etkisiz bir teknik olmadığı konusunda eğitilmeleri gerektiğini, aksine uygun ve verimli bir şekilde kullanılması halinde dil öğretimi için önemli bir öğretim aracı olabileceğini vurgulamıştır.

## Introduction

The importance of learners' mother tongue has been a contentious issue throughout much of the history of research into English Language Teaching (ELT). In the early years of language teaching, it was teachers' primary objective to improve learners' comprehension abilities in the target language, with a particular emphasis on the written word. (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Language learners' primary aims and demands have evolved over time, as it is no longer adequate for them to read and write in the target language; they need to communicate with local people as a result of mobility and immigration. Consequently, learners' native language was omitted from the language teaching and learning process, and the monolingual approach became prevalent in language instruction. For example, Krashen (1985) suggests that "all classes, or as much as feasible, be conducted in the L2 (in our case, English) and that there is a clear association between intelligible input in the L2 and competency" (p. 14). However, as humanistic approaches and views gained popularity in language teaching, the monolingual approach lost its popularity over time. For instance, Auerbach (1993) maintains that students' language resources can benefit learners at all levels of ability asserting that allowing for the use of the L1 throughout the early phases of second language acquisition aids in the transfer to English. Numerous studies (Bateman, 2008; Cook, 2001; Grim, 2010; Mahmutoğlu & Kıcı, 2013; Tang, 2002) conducted on the topic of L1 use in the area of language teaching showed conflicting results. While some scholars (Mattioli, 2004; Pan & Pan, 2010, Schweers, 1999; Tang, 2002; Timor, 2012) support L1 use in language teaching, others (Cook, 2001; Korkut & Şener, 2017; Tunçay, 2014) argue that L1 use is detrimental to language teaching.

A number of studies have been undertaken to ascertain the perspectives of student teachers' mother tongue use in various contexts, including China, Saudi Arabia, and Germany, and to what extent L1 can be employed in EFL settings, demonstrating that this is a prevalent issue in the idea of language learning (Bateman, 2008; Flores & Balmeo, 2021; Macaro, 2001; Tonio & Ella, 2019). On the other hand, there are some studies conducted to investigate student teachers' views and opinions about the use of the mother tongue in the Turkish context such as Bilgin (2016), Çelik Korkmaz (2021), Korkut and Şener (2018), Yıldız and Yesilyurt (2017). Given the scarcity of research focusing on ELT student-teachers' perceptions of L1 use in language teaching and little to no studies examining the potential impact of the practicum process on the views of ELT student-teachers toward the use of L1 in language classrooms, this study aims to identify whether there is a relationship between the practicum experience and the views of ELT student-teachers towards the use of L1 in language teaching. Additionally, the study intends to ascertain the influencing elements in the practicum that result in changes (if any) in the perspectives of ELT student-teachers. The following research questions are addressed in this study:

1. Do ELT student teachers' views about using L1 in language teaching change after their participation in the practicum?

2. If yes, what factors in practicum are influential on the change?

## Literature Review

### Approaches to the Use of L1 in Language Classrooms

Numerous methodological philosophies have evolved throughout history, each of which owns distinct language teaching procedures based on a particular idea. Some of these methods advocated for the use of the mother tongue in EFL instruction, as other methods did not. To begin with, the method of grammar translation emphasizes the importance of grammatical rules and lexical knowledge. It works by students recognizing similarities and differences between two languages, which facilitates language acquisition by focusing on the second language's grammar rules. L2 was seldom utilized in schools due to the predominance of L1 communication during instruction and learning (Brown, 2007). In contrast, the Direct Method (DM) strictly prohibits the use of the mother tongue and translation as the method's fundamental tenet is to educate learners on how to speak and think in the target language and to convey the message directly without referring to the L1 of the students (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013). Likewise, the primary objective of the Audio-Lingual Method was to assist learners in developing oral proficiency in the target language. Richards and Rodgers (2001) specified that listening and speaking were elevated to the center of the stage in this method. Thus, the focus of this method is to restrain students from using L1 with a view to assisting them to improve the target language. On the other hand, the Silent Way attempts to encourage students to use their internal resources to decide how to best achieve the teacher's desired outcome (Stevick, 1980). The L1 ensures that feedback is provided to maximize the knowledge students already possess about their mother tongue. Suggestopedia aims to assist students in overcoming psychological impediments to learning (Rodríguez, 2011). Thus, this method encourages the use of mother tongue throughout the learning process. Çelik (2008) remarks that L1 is used to facilitate what the student intends to express in Community Language Learning from the very beginning of learning process. Initially, students' self-efficacy is boosted using their home language. Wherever possible, literal native language equivalents for target language words are provided. The primary purpose of using L1 was to reassure learners during their adventure of learning a new language. In contrast, Total Physical Response (TPR) alleviates anxiety by ordering skill acquisition and focusing on meaning via the integration of auditory comprehension and physical response rather than on language form and grammatical structures (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Mother tongue is used only during the initial instructions in TPR activities. No mother tongue is required during the activities because meaning is conveyed nonverbally through the teacher's body motions (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

As it is understood by examining the methods and approaches above, there have always been two contradicting views on L1 use throughout the history of language methods and approaches. Some approaches were strongly in favor of L1 use, while others were vehemently opposed to it. The first is an English-only movement or a monolingual approach which maintains that the mother tongue is detrimental and should be eliminated from language classes. The fundamental tenet of the monolingual approach was to parallel L2 acquisition to L1 acquisition; in other words, it was believed that L2 acquisition should occur in the same way that children acquire their native language, without reference to it (McMillan & Rivers, 2011). The alternative strategy to language education takes a contrary position and acknowledges that using L1 has pedagogical value. In response to the monolingual approach, proposals for integrating L1 into L2 courses began to circulate. Employing L1 did not obstruct learning a new language; rather, it could be employed to assist the learners' progress for a variety of reasons (Tang, 2002). Put differently, there is a growing concurrence regarding the benefits of using L1 in L2 settings and the benefits to learners. Rather than embracing the English-only movement's superiority on a superficial level, recent research has emphasized the possible benefits of adopting the use of a second language in the classroom setting. Removing L1 from the L2 classroom does not always imply removing it from learners' thoughts, which will result in learners being unable to contemplate and grasp what they are learning (Hitotuzi, 2006).

### **Previous Research on Student-Teachers' Opinions about the Use of L1 at Global and Local Level**

There are some global and local studies conducted to investigate student teachers' views about the use of the mother tongue in language classrooms. Bateman (2008) conducted a study in which he examined a group of student teachers at a major private college in the western United States in terms of not only their attitudes and beliefs about using the target language but also how those attitudes changed and evolved during their student teaching experience. Student teachers frequently feel at ease carrying out everyday tasks and issuing simple directions in the target language. Their use of the target language is limited by a variety of factors, including student misunderstanding, discipline issues, a lack of time, and the need to develop a connection with students in the L1. Sulistiyo et al. (2016) investigated the fourth-year EFL student teachers' attitudes regarding teaching English in the classroom using Bahasa or English, learners' preferences for language use as the medium of instruction in the English classroom, and what subjects may be taught using Bahasa. The findings indicated that preservice teachers were thrilled to have English as their classroom's medium of instruction and believed that both L1 and L2 use should be balanced. Shabir (2017) conducted a study to determine the attitudes that English language student-teachers have on the use of L1 in EFL classrooms worldwide, and in light of the ongoing debate among scholars and practitioners regarding whether or not to utilize L1 to teach English in an ESL or EFL context in Australia. It was found that all teachers agreed that mother tongue use ought to be kept to a minimum and that restricted use of the mother tongue is not redundant and is beneficial in specific tasks.

Turnbull (2018) examined ESL student teachers' attitudes toward the use of L1 in L2 learning, the possible causes for these views, and what additional instruction, if any, is required in ESL teacher training courses about L1 use in the L2 classroom. The study findings showed that the participants expressed a range of viewpoints some of which may have been impacted by traditionally negative attitudes about L1 use in L2 learning, while others may have been driven by positive attitudes toward some L1 use in the L2 classroom. In a more recent study, Tonio and Ella (2019) investigated student teachers' opinions toward the use of the mother tongue as a medium of teaching in Grades 1-3 and the perceived difficulties connected with its use in the Philippines. The findings indicated that most respondents believe that using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction is a good idea in principle and that it would help teachers communicate more effectively and make lessons more entertaining for students. However, numerous drawbacks to its utilization have been noted, including difficulties in translation, instructor inexperience with the mother tongue, pupil inexperience with the mother tongue, deterioration of English skills, and teacher inexperience with the mother tongue instruction. Flores and Balmeo (2021) also conducted a study to ascertain student teachers' lived experiences with code-switching at Ramon Magsaysay Technological University in the Philippines. The findings showed that although code-switching was found to be beneficial in the classroom, the student teachers specified that excessive use of it might result in students speaking in their original tongue, reducing their chances of improving their English language abilities.

Concerning the research done on the topic in Türkiye, Bilgin (2016) for example, carried out a study with 5 student teachers to explore the interaction in EFL classrooms with a specific focus on code-switching, and its relationship to student teachers' pedagogical decisions and the factors influencing these decisions in terms of their thinking. The results of the study demonstrated that all student teachers are aware of and open about the fact that they code-switch mostly while teaching grammar. Similarly, Yildiz and Yesilyurt (2017) revealed in their study that some student teachers suggested that mother tongue use should be eliminated from language teaching because it acts as a barrier to language learning and prevents exposure to and practice of L2, whereas a large majority of them saw L1 use as a contributing factor to facilitating language learning and comprehension for learners. Moreover, Korkut and Şener (2018) investigated teacher trainees' perspectives, perceptions, and recommendations about using L1 in foreign language lessons to ascertain their level of understanding of the topic with 41 ELT senior teacher trainees. Their findings indicated that the majority of trainees felt that utilizing L1 in some instances could be useful. They were, nevertheless, convinced that a focus on the target language should be favored since

excessive use of the mother tongue reduces practice opportunities, depriving learners of opportunities to practice oral skills and improve communicative competence. Last but not least, Çelik Korkmaz (2021) carried out research with 128 ELT student teachers enrolled in a Turkish public institution using a questionnaire as a quantitative instrument and a semi-structured interview as a qualitative tool. The descriptive statistics indicated that student teachers preferred to use students' native languages whenever it was required rather than adhere to an English-only policy. As a result, they resolved to utilize L2 primarily to provide feedback, information, and instructions to students, in addition to welcoming them, and afterward to motivate learners, check their understanding, and provide them with supporting conversation.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

Qualitative and quantitative methods are the most common research methods in social sciences. "Quantitative research involves data collection procedures that result primarily in numerical data, which is then analyzed primarily by statistical methods" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 24). Qualitative methodology, on the other hand, is described by Dörnyei (2007, p.27) as "one that involves data collection procedures that result primarily in open-ended, non-numerical data which is then analyzed primarily by non-statistical methods." The current study employs a mixed-method research design to ascertain whether there is a relationship between practicum experience and views toward the use of L1 (Turkish) by ELT student-teachers. The main reason for employing mixed-method research is that it combines "elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches in data collection and data analysis techniques with the view to obtaining breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration" (Johnson et al. 2007, p. 123).

### **Context and Participants**

The study was conducted during the spring semester of 2019-2020 at English Language Teaching (ELT) department at Çukurova University. A total of 52 student teachers participated in the study. Each participant was a student teacher enrolled in a course called "Teaching Practicum." and their ages ranged mostly between 21 and 25 years old. Within the sample procedures, criterion sampling was utilized to choose participants who were last year ELT students and participated in the Practicum Experience course. Individuals, groups, or settings that meet the criteria are chosen for criterion sampling (Miles and Huberman,1994). Acting on this, nine volunteer EFL student teachers enrolled in the Teaching Practicum were interviewed in the second phase to acquire a better understanding of their experience regarding the use of L1 during the practicum.

### **Data Collection Tools**

A five-point Likert-scale questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data in the present study. The rationale for adopting a questionnaire as a research method is that it is the most prevalent instrument for quantitative data collection. On the other hand, conducting interviews establishes a link between participants and the researcher and enables the researcher to watch participants' answers and thoughts in greater detail and with greater vitality. Multiple data collection methods increase the validity and acceptability of the data, which is why this study utilized both surveys and interviews (Creswell, 2009).

In this study, the Teacher Questionnaire (Turhanli, 2018) was used to gather quantitative data from the participants. The questionnaire consisted of five sections and twenty-seven items related to student teachers' views and opinions on L1 use. The first section outlined the purpose of the study, and personal information about the participants such as age and gender was presented in the second section. The third section had five items that elicited participants' opinions about the use of L1, while the fourth section

contained twenty-one items that elicited participants' perspectives on the purposes for which the mother tongue should be utilized. The final section featured one item that assessed participants' general perceptions of how much mother tongue should be used in English lessons. The participants were requested to remark on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements in the questionnaire that used a Likert scale containing values from 1 =strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, and 5=strongly agree. The questionnaire was administered at the beginning and at the end of the ELT student teachers' participation in the practicum to reveal student teachers' views about the use of L1 in language teaching. A semi-structured interview was used since it enables the researcher to ask detailed questions while rearranging pre-set interview questions. The interview questions were designed in coherence with the items in the questionnaire so that the responses obtained could support those acquired from the questionnaires. The questionnaire was also administered at the beginning and at the end of the study to demonstrate participants' opinions about L1 use in language teaching. The following questions were asked to nine volunteer student teachers:

1. Do you think L1 should be used in language classrooms?
2. What factors do you think are influential in your views about the use of L1?

Through their responses to the interview questions, student teachers' views and thoughts about L1 use in English lessons were obtained. Additionally, participants' responses in the interview were employed to triangulate the questionnaire data and draw comparisons between the qualitative and quantitative data. It should be noted that all interviews were carried out in Turkish to enable participants to feel relieved during the interview.

### **Data Analysis**

The quantitative data from the Student Teachers' Questionnaire were analyzed by using the SPSS v23. Questionnaire items 3, 4, and 5 were distinctive from the others in that they provided a negative connotation associated with the use of the mother tongue. Thus, the participants' responses to these three questions had to be reversed to achieve a credible and prevailing result on the participants' overall opinions about the use of L1 in language lessons. Moreover, the categories of Strongly Disagree and Disagree were combined and regarded as a single response category, and the categories of Strongly Agree and Agree were also united and considered as a single response category to make the evaluation and analysis of the data collected from the questionnaire more comprehensible and precise. Then, using descriptive statistics, the results were examined to determine the mean scores, standard deviation, frequency, and percentages of the statements. Furthermore, the frequency and percentage of student teachers who agreed and strongly agreed with statements 3, 4, and 5 above were also shown in the findings, along with the frequency and percentage of teachers who disagreed and strongly disagreed. As a result, the outcomes of strongly agree and agree as well as strongly disagree and disagree were reversed and included in the table with the statements' original negative iterations. To obtain findings as to whether ELT student teachers' views about using L1 in language teaching change after their participation in practicum, the responses given to the questionnaires administered before and after their participation in practicum were compared with one another through a paired-sample t-test and presented with descriptive statistics in Table 1 below.

Content analysis was conducted to analyse the qualitative data collected through the interviews. The interviews of student teachers were transcribed verbatim by question and translated into English and then checked by a native speaker to ensure reliability and validity. In the analysis, first, the responses for each question were read and reread to create preliminary codes. The codes were tabulated based on their emergence in the data. Later, repeating codes and patterns were sought and were divided into categories "to organize and group similarly coded data" (Saldana, 2009, p. 8). Subsequent to the division of codes into interrelated categories, themes that are described as "broad units of information that consist of

several codes aggregated to form a common idea” by Creswell (2013, p. 202), were constructed. To ensure interrater reliability, data were coded by another researcher with expertise in qualitative analysis. The analyses by the two researchers were compared for consistency until a consensus was reached.

### Findings

As mentioned earlier, in line with the first research question of the study, the student-teachers were invited to respond to the questionnaire items and provided their opinions regarding the use of L1 in language classrooms twice, before and after they had gone through the practicum experience. With a 95% confidence interval for the Mean in Table 1 ( $\alpha= 0.05$ ), a paired sample T-test analysis was done to find out if there is any statistically significant difference between the scores of items representing the participants’ views on L1 use before and after they had the experience of practicum. Table 1 presents these findings:

**Table 1.**

*t-Test Results regarding Student Teachers’ Views about L1 Use before and after their Participation in Practicum*

		N	Mean	Sd	t	df	Sig (2 tailed)
1. Teachers should use their students’ first language.	Before	52	2.30	.980	-1.72	51	.09
	After		2.63	.970			
2. Students’ first language should be allowed during English lessons.	Before	52	2.63	.863	-.90	51	.37
	After		2.78	.723			
3. Using Turkish prevents students from learning English.	Before	52	3.57	1.10	1.32	51	.19
	After		3.26	1.23			
4. Teachers should follow an English- only policy in the classroom.	Before	52	3.26	1.10	2.25	51	<b>.02</b>
	After		2.80	1.10			
5. I do not feel comfortable when my students use their first language.	Before	52	3.03	1.02	.89	51	.37
	After		2.84	1.17			
6. It is appropriate to use Turkish to explain difficult concepts.	Before	52	3.67	.856	.76	51	.44
	After		3.53	.959			
7. It is appropriate to use Turkish to introduce new grammar rules.	Before	52	2.59	.934	-52	51	.60
	After		2.69	1.12			
8. It is appropriate to use Turkish to raise students’ awareness of the differences between Turkish and English.	Before	52	3.17	.984	.09	51	.92
	After		3.15	1.03			
9. It is appropriate to use Turkish to raise students’ awareness of the similarities between Turkish and English.	Before	52	3.17	1.06	.19	51	.84
	After		3.13	1.02			
10. It is appropriate to use Turkish to explain new vocabulary especially abstract items.	Before	52	2.59	1.07	-1.12	51	.26
	After		2.82	1.04			
11. It is appropriate to use Turkish to help students feel comfortable.	Before	52	2.61	1.03	-.42	51	.67
	After		2.69	.897			
12. It is appropriate to use Turkish to help students feel more confident.	Before	52	2.51	1.01	-.69	51	.49
	After		2.65	.883			
13. It is appropriate to use Turkish to give instructions.	Before	52	2.07	1.00	.20	51	.83
	After		2.03	.989			
14. It is appropriate to use Turkish to build up a good rapport with students.	Before	52	2.26	.992	-.86	51	.39
	After		2.44	.998			

15. It is appropriate to use Turkish to express students' feelings when they fail to do that in English.	Before	52	2.75	1.02	-1.54	51	.12
	After		3.05	1.03			
16. It is appropriate to use Turkish to express students' ideas when they fail to do that in English.	Before	52	2.69	1.02	-1.48	51	.14
	After		2.98	.959			
17. It is appropriate to use Turkish to explain English idioms.	Before	52	2.96	.948	.28	51	.77
	After		2.90	1.19			
18. It is appropriate to use Turkish to complete pair work activities.	Before	52	1.88	.704	-1.51	51	.13
	After		2.11	.855			
19. It is appropriate to use Turkish to complete small-group work activities.	Before	52	2.03	.739	-.25	51	.79
	After		2.07	.859			
20. It is appropriate to use Turkish to check comprehension of the students in the class.	Before	52	2.25	.987	2.25	51	.91
	After		2.25	.987			
21. It is appropriate to use Turkish to elicit language (e.g. How do we say in English?)	Before	52	2.73	1.06	-1.46	51	.15
	After		2.23	1.00			
22. It is appropriate to use Turkish to solve disciplinary problems.	Before	52	2.98	.980	.29	51	.76
	After		2.92	1.02			
23. It is appropriate to use Turkish to explain the content of a reading text.	Before	52	2.01	.699	-2.21	51	<b>.03</b>
	After		2.38	1.06			
24. It is appropriate to use Turkish to explain what is said in a listening passage.	Before	52	2.03	.696	-.91	51	.36
	After		2.21	1.03			
25. It is appropriate to use Turkish for speaking course.	Before	52	1.42	.750	-2.66	51	<b>.01</b>
	After		1.78	.893			
26. It is appropriate to use Turkish for writing course.	Before	52	1.78	.976	-1.13	51	.26
	After		2.00	.928			
27. I think Turkish should be used in the English classroom.	Before	52	2.50	.874	.40	51	.69
	After		2.44	.574			

\*\*p< 0.05

As presented in Table 1, the results indicate that only three items have a statistically significant difference between student teachers' views about L1 use before and after their practicum experience. When Item 4 is reviewed, Sig 2-tailed value is less than 0.05 ( $p=0.02 < 0.05$ ), and the mean score concerning this item was 3.26 before the student teachers' experience of practicum whereas it was 2.80 at the end of their experience. (.46) In other words, it appears that participants' views about an English-only policy changed negatively during the practicum experience. As Item 23 indicates, the value of Sig (2-tailed) (.03) is less than 0.05 and the mean score concerning student teachers' views about this item was 2.01 at the beginning whereas it was 2.38 at the end of the study. (-.36). According to Item 25, the value of Sig 2-Tailed=, 01 which is less than 0.05, and the mean score related to this item was 1.42 at the beginning whereas it was 1.78 at the end of the study. (-.36).

The opinions of the participant ELT student-teachers acquired from the interviews about L1 use before and after their participation in practicum are revealed with the codes and frequencies in Table 2:

**Table 2.**  
*Comparison of Student Teachers' Overall Views of L1 Use before and after the Practicum Experience*

Theme	Code	f (Before Practicum)	f (After Practicum)
The overall views of the participants toward the use of L1	Positive	3	7
	Negative	6	2

Even though only three items in the questionnaire demonstrate a statistically significant difference between student teachers' perspectives on the use of L1 in language teaching during the practicum. The findings acquired from the analysis of the responses that the student-teachers gave to the interview questions reveal a significant difference in student-teachers' perspectives on the use of L1. As summarised in Table 2 above, while six out of nine student teachers had negative *opinions about* the use of L1 before they participated in practicum, seven out of nine student teachers had positive *opinions about* L1 use at the end of their participation.

In brief, while the positive *opinions of the participants about* L1 use more than doubled when compared to the beginning of the research, their negative sentiments were reduced by a factor of three when compared to the beginning of the study. This case unequivocally demonstrates that students have more positive opinions regarding the use of L1 after their practicum experience. The following excerpts illustrate student teachers' views and perspectives on the use of L1 in language teaching at the beginning and the end of the study which are also shown in Table 2. To support the confidentiality of participant identities, codes were given to the participants in the interview as PT1 (Participant1), PT2, PT3, PT4, PT5, PT6, PT7, PT8, and PT9.

PT3: "English should be used even in Primary school and the mother tongue shouldn't be used in the teaching process." (Before Practicum)

PT3: "I realized it's hard to use the Target Language all the time. There can be moments that students cannot understand therefore we unavoidably employ the mother tongue in the classroom." (After Practicum)

Similarly, the following remarks from Participant 4 promote the view and attitude change of the frequency of occurrence regarding L1 employment.

PT4: "I think Turkish should not be generally used in the classrooms, but it can still be used in some rare situations." (Before Practicum)

PT4: "I think Turkish can be used in some cases. What cases do I mean? For instance, if children or adults have difficulties in comprehending a topic or if they say that they don't understand the subject or you realize that they don't understand enough, I think the teacher can use the mother tongue. I see no harm." (After Practicum)

Likewise, the following remarks of the Participant 5 indicate the view and attitude change toward L1 use in language teaching.

PT5: "If it is not required, Turkish should not be used in the classroom. Unless there is an extreme situation or unclear situation, the use of Turkish is unnecessary. Turkish can be used to make everything clear and apart from that, English should be totally used because we are there to teach English." (Before Practicum)

PT5: "If it's required, yes. What I mean by saying required is; when students don't understand or the topic isn't clear, the mother tongue should be used. If it's really needed, teachers may start to use the mother tongue because using the mother tongue is required from time to time." (After Practicum)

As can be comprehended from the statement of Participant 9, she established her first opinions about the use of L1 during her university education, which criticized the use of L1 in language teaching, but her *opinions about* the use of L1 shifted throughout her practicum experience. She articulated that using English exclusively does not work, and as a result, if you cannot teach in the target language, you will inevitably use the mother tongue. As your students' language proficiency improves, you can gradually incorporate English into your lesson, so her *opinions about* the use of L1 shifted positively.

PT9: "First of all, the education that I got at university influenced my thoughts and beliefs, and according to the education I got at university, there was a common belief that we should use English all the time in the classroom. However, my thoughts have changed since I started to attend lessons in practicum schools. When I used English in the classroom, students started to laugh and made fun of me, and eventually, they wanted me to use Turkish because they said they did not understand anything. I have experienced that using English all the time in the classroom does not work, and I think I can use it gradually. *I have gained my first thoughts at the university, and they have changed in the practicum.*"

Additionally, as the excerpts above demonstrate, student teachers' perceptions and *opinions about* the use of L1 in language teaching altered during the practicum experience. While participants' *opinions about* the use of L1 were adamant and rigid before the practicum, their *opinions* became significantly more malleable and softer following the practicum. As some participants argued that L1 should not be used in the language teaching process before practicum, they acknowledged that the use of L1 in the classroom may be inevitable at times. In brief, as seen by Table 2 and the excerpts above, participants' *opinions* altered positively and immensely during their practicum experience.

#### **Factors Perceived by the Participants Influential on their Views about the Use of L1**

The preceding sections demonstrated unambiguously that participants' perspectives on L1 shifted during the practicum experience, as seen by the comparison of participants' perspectives before and after their practicum experience. The second research question of the study aimed to identify the factors that caused changes in the participants' opinions about the use of L1 in language teaching before and after the practicum. When the findings acquired from the interviews are considered, it becomes clear that numerous factors alter student teachers' views regarding the use of L1 in language teaching.

As demonstrated in the excerpts of Participant 3 below, the participants recognized that speaking English constantly, as their instructors directed, is not always possible. According to the participant, the real environment, which includes a real classroom atmosphere, shifted the participant's viewpoints about L1 use in language education. Mother tongue enables teachers to communicate with their pupils more simply and effectively, as participants stated, and participants' perceptions were affected by their actual teaching experiences and classroom environment.

PT3: "As I said, this real classroom environment considerably changed me. When we listened to our lecturers at university, we thought that we should hardly ever use our mother tongue, yet I realized it was difficult when I experienced the real environment. I am unwilling to use my mother tongue but using it sometimes makes a comfortable atmosphere in some circumstances such as when students have difficulty comprehending. Therefore, I think the mother tongue needs to be used some more."

According to Participant 5, witnessing her mentor teacher and gaining teaching experience caused her to reconsider the viability of the university courses she has taken, and she concluded that neither the courses nor the lesson plan she produced for an ideal class could be used. The duration of the classes and the students' restricted attention span influence participants' opinions and views about the use of L1 in language education. Students, particularly young learners, are easily distracted, making it impossible to use English continuously as university courses require. In brief, the participant's disappointment with the

impracticality of the methods and approaches she learned in college, the length of the classes, and the learners' short attention span caused her to re-evaluate the use of L1 in language education.

PT5: "Practicum also affects my thoughts in terms of language teaching. I have observed my mentor teachers and experienced the classroom atmosphere, so this helps me to form my opinion about the atmosphere in the classroom. On the other hand, I have considered the courses that I took at university and asked if they could be applied in the classroom, and I have realized that they cannot be applied 100 % in the classroom. The duration of the lesson is limited, and it changes between 40-45 minutes. In secondary school, students have difficulty in focusing on the class in the first 10 minutes, and they always tend to speak with each other rather than concentrate on the lesson. For instance, can I apply activities in lesson plans that we organized in college? They cannot be applied the same way, and the time of the lesson is not enough to fulfil all the teaching."

As Participant 8 indicated below, there are other factors that make the use of mother tongue necessary. These are such factors as the crowded classrooms, learners' low proficiency levels, difficulty in applying teaching methods that favor the use of L2 in the classroom, and the pressure posed by the school administration and parents for the use of L1.

PT8: "Suggestopedia, for example, seemed to be a wonderful approach until I entered a classroom including 40 or 45 students. We have learned teaching methods and techniques and we can state that the seating arrangement in the classroom was what limited the students' participation most. Even though I do not want to use Turkish, I have to use it with English because the number of students is excessive, and their English proficiency level is too low. Now it appears that use of most methods is not possible in these classrooms. Teachers cannot make a lesson without using Turkish in Primary, Secondary, and High School because of classroom size and students' previous teachers who do not use even a single English word in the classroom. Furthermore, principals may warn teachers who use only English in the lesson and ask them to use Turkish because students do not understand the lesson without Turkish explanations. In other words, teachers may be warned about using English in English lessons because some students cannot comprehend what is taught."

The proficiency level and enthusiasm of learners all play a crucial role in language education. P2 stated that:

PT2: "Our mentor in the practicum was so enthusiastic and tried to organize activities a lot, but he couldn't get what he wanted from the students because communication wasn't mutual, he had to use the mother tongue. Furthermore, while the geographical location of the school may encourage us to use English in the classroom, another location may place us in a worse situation."

From the remark above, it can be interpreted that the employment of L1 in teaching may be determined by the geographical location of the school where student teachers would teach as some schools accommodate students from low socio-economic backgrounds or these students might not have the required language proficiency to comprehend the input given in the target language. Even if teachers are committed to using English throughout the course and have planned interactive and communicative activities, the lesson cannot be taught effectively if students are unwilling to participate. Without interaction between students and teachers, it is impossible to speak with students and teach the subject in English, even if you have prepared an ideal lesson for them. Additionally, if the pupils' level of English comprehension is insufficient, you cannot utilize English to instruct. As participants discovered, when students' interests and English proficiency levels are insufficient, teachers may be forced to utilize their mother tongue to communicate with them, which causes participants to reassess their ideas and views about L1 use in language teaching.

Likewise, the importance of students' age and English proficiency level are touched upon as Participant 4 remarked:

PT4: "There were times when I taught during the practicum. I even taught grammar and it was the Future Tense. Of course, the use of the mother tongue depends on the proficiency level and age of the group we teach. At the practicum school, the English proficiency level of the students was very good and they understood 90% to 95% of everything I said. If they do not understand the subject, I was able to simplify it a bit by paraphrasing for them to understand. In this way, we did not have any problems, but I recognized that if I teach the same subject in another group, this does not mean that I will not have any problems. Therefore, using the mother tongue depends on the English proficiency level and the average age of the group."

In brief, when the excerpts from the interviews are analyzed collectively it appears that various factors in their practicum experience seem to change the ELT student-teachers' views as to L1 use in the classroom. First of all, the real classroom atmosphere has a significant impact on student teachers' perspectives, as practicum experience is their first real experience after obtaining a college education, and they can recognize the disconnect between what they studied at university and what they experience in the classroom. This situation was reflected in the excerpts of numerous participants who underlined the inapplicability of the methods and approaches they studied at university and they reconsidered their knowledge and changed their beliefs and *opinions about* the use of L1 due to crowded classrooms, seating arrangement, students' restricted attention span, and short lesson time. Moreover, as participants stated, participants' perceptions were affected by their actual teaching experiences and classroom environment, and according to them, the mother tongue enables teachers to communicate with their pupils simply and effectively, and because of that L1 use can be necessary during the language lessons.

Furthermore, there may be some pressure from the parents and administration in schools; some administrators may obstruct lesson flow, and due to the hierarchical nature of schools, teachers may be forced to obey those administrators, which may affect participants' perceptions of the school and classroom atmosphere. Even if teachers attempt to use English in the lesson, they may be forced to use Turkish due to the pressure from administrators who have received complaints about the language of the lesson especially from students and parents. Last but not least, students' enthusiasm and English proficiency level are decisive components in changing participants' perspectives and beliefs, since they acknowledged that if students' English proficiency level and enthusiasm are insufficient for the lesson, nothing improves as planned.

### Discussion & Conclusion

This research seeks to specify whether there is a relationship between practicum experience and ELT student teachers' views on the use of L1 in language teaching. Although the quantitative findings indicated statistically significant differences in a few items on the questionnaire about student teachers' perspectives on the use of L1 in language teaching before and after their participation in practicum, the qualitative findings obtained from the analysis of the interviews revealed more obvious changes in their opinions. While six out of nine student teachers initially had negative views regarding the use of L1 at the beginning of the study, seven out of nine student teachers expressed positive views and opinions about the use of L1 at the end of the study. Numerous research (Bateman, 2008; Bilgin, 2016; Flores & Balmeo, 2021; Korkut & Şener, 2018) demonstrate that practicum influences participants' views and opinions about language instruction. Orland-Barak and Yinon (2005) found out that student teachers gained fresh insights into the many goals for which L1 may be employed in a communicative lesson and gained a more placed and realistic perspective on the many applications of mother language in communicative teaching.

As seen by the results of this study, the majority of student teachers had more favorable views and attitudes regarding the use of L1 in language teaching at the end of the practicum process. This finding is

consistent with the findings of the relevant studies in which participants generally had a favorable view and attitude toward the use of L1 (Elmetwally, 2012; Mahmutoğlu & Kıcı, 2013; Schweers, 1999; Tang, 2002; Timor, 2012; Tonio & Ella, 2019). Moreover, most of the student teachers believed that English should be the dominant language in the classroom; however, L1 use in all circumstances that impede or complicate the language learning process ought to be allowed. Numerous local and international studies in the related literature corroborate this conclusion (De la Campa & Nassaji, 2009; Kilavuz, 2014; Mahmutoğlu & Kıcı, 2013; Timor, 2012). Furthermore, Yıldırım and Mersinligil (2000) indicated that L1, in this case, Turkish plays a part in teaching and learning in some manner; therefore, there is always a place for its use in class. Likewise, Pan and Pan (2010), reveal that the mother tongue is a tremendously strong instrument that should not be rejected or abandoned in language classrooms. Teachers need to recognize the effectiveness of students' native language and make positive use of it.

This study also aimed to identify the factors that influence student teachers' views and opinions about the use of L1 throughout their practicum experience. First of all, there can be some pressure from the parents and administration in schools. Even if teachers strive to use English in the lesson, they might be forced to use Turkish due to pressure from administrators who have received complaints from the parents about the medium of teaching. Furthermore, participants emphasize that the real classroom atmosphere they experience during practicum, the inapplicability of the methods and approaches they studied at university, and classroom management issues such as crowded classrooms, seating arrangement, students' limited attention spans, and short lesson time are the factors altered their opinions about the use of L1 in language teaching which is also supported with the studies conducted by Çelik Korkmaz (2021), Macaro (2001), Timor (2012). Last but not least, participants stated that if students' English proficiency levels and interests are insufficient, the lesson would not run as planned. The fact that students' English proficiency levels and enthusiasm influence the medium of of instruction used in the lesson was also indicated by Lo and Lin (2019), Pan and Pan (2010), Tan (2015), Taşçı and Aksu Ataç (2020).

This study is not without limitations. The study was conducted with 52 student teachers studying at the ELT department of Çukurova University. Thus, the conclusions acquired from the findings do not represent the viewpoints of ELT student-teachers across all the provinces or the country, which might be considered one of the study's limitations. If a larger sample had been taken from more than one province, the study could have included more participants to have a better knowledge of the problem under investigation. Moreover, student teachers gained practicum experience in a variety of schools, and because students in certain schools were proficient in English while students in others were not, this may have influenced student teachers to think differently. This can be considered as a drawback of the study because their perspectives on L1 use were influenced by the schools to which they were assigned for the practicum experience. Although the students' statements show that the changes in their views related to the use of L1 were largely attributed to their practicum experience, we should acknowledge that the reasons for the change would also be due the other factors existing in the whole school environment. Additionally, observation can be utilized to support data collection to provide real L1 use of the student teachers in a real classroom setting and a more complete view of the topic being tackled.

Despite the limitations, the study provided important implications for the design of language teacher education programs, teacher educators, and curriculum developers. Teacher educators may provide precise recommendations to student teachers regarding when it may be useful to employ L1 and when it should be avoided. This is especially substantial when the purpose of EFL teaching is to foster students' communicative ability, as emphasized by the curriculum for teaching English in Turkey (MEB, 2013). Teacher candidates need to be knowledgeable and confident in the crucial moments associated with the use of L1 as a teaching tool. On the other hand, student teachers should be trained that using one's mother tongue is not a sin or an ineffective technique, but it conversely may be a valuable instructional instrument for language teaching if it is employed appropriately and efficiently. (Afzal, 2013; Grim, 2010; Raman &

Yigitoglu, 2015; Schweers, 2003). Thus, student teachers should be shown real-world instances of when and why L1 could be employed in the classroom. Curriculum designers can give explicit guidance for teachers' probable use of L1 in English classrooms based on the findings from this study. Since the Turkish foreign language curriculum places a premium on students' communicative ability, curriculum designers can regulate the quantity of Turkish that is permissible in language classes and provide teachers with precise guidance on when to avoid utilizing it.

#### **Author Contribution Rates**

The authors contributed equally to the study.

#### **Ethical Declaration**

All rules included in the “Directive for Scientific Research and Publication Ethics in Higher Education Institutions” have been adhered to, and none of the “Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics” included in the second section of the Directive have been implemented. Ethics committee permission for the research was received from Çukurova University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee in the Field of Social Sciences and Humanities (Date: 27.04.2022, Decision No: 4).

#### **Conflict Statement**

The author declares no competing interests.

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