



## OPENING THE DOOR: AN EXAMINATION OF MOTHER TONGUE USE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper calls attention to the vital need to reexamine the role of the students' first language in foreign language teaching. It provides a brief snapshot of the views concerning L1 use in L2 classes put forward by different methodological schools of thought over the last century. Through the presentation of potential uses of the first language, the author argues for the conviction that L1, if used properly, is essential and can play a facilitating role in foreign language teaching and learning as an invaluable linguistic resource, and thus, should not be treated as a barrier to learning.

**Keywords:** mother tongue, first language, foreign language, second language, L1, L2, teaching of english.

**ÖZET:** Bu çalışma yabancı dil eğitiminde öğrencilerin ana dilinin rolünün tekrar gözden geçirilmesinin gerekliliğine dikkat çekmektedir. Son yüz yılda anadilin yabancı dil öğretiminde kullanımı ile ilgili olarak farklı kavramsal düşünce okulları tarafından ortaya atılmış olan görüşlerin kısa bir özeti sunulmakta ve İngilizce öğretiminde anadilin kullanılmasının ne zaman faydalı olup olmayacağına örnekleri verilmektedir. Yazar, planlı kullanılması şartı ile öğrencilerin anadilinin yabancı dil öğrenim ve öğretimini kolaylaştıracak faydalı bir kaynak olduğu ve yabancı dil öğrenimine engel teşkil edecek bir faktör olarak görülmemesi gerektiği fikrini desteklemektedir.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** anadil, birinci dil, yabancı dil, ikinci dil, ingilizce öğretimi.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The dilemma of whether or not to use the students' first language/mother tongue (L1) in foreign language classes has remained an unresolved issue in foreign language teaching, especially in culturally homogenous educational settings, where the majority of students are monolingual speakers. As in other EFL contexts, in Turkey, too, foreign language teachers have long thought that using the mother tongue in language classrooms is a dreadful and risky action, one that they should avoid taking. Numerous studies have been conducted in order to understand code-switching in Turkish classrooms and to shed light on the relationship between the first and second language (Eldridge, 1996; Sunel, 1994; Üstünel & Seedhouse, 2005). Yet, much research and discussion is needed to truly articulate this profound relationship.

The popular belief until the late 1980's has been that each and every classroom task has to be conducted in the target language to give the learners maximum exposure to the language being learned and to provide them with ample opportunity to practice the real and often random language to the fullest (i.e., Swan, 1985). To illustrate, I remember my high school English teacher, a brilliant teacher I should add, having made an English-only rule and charged a small fee after each Turkish word uttered in his classes to buy English books for the school library. There certainly was a philosophy he followed by coming up with such a tenet, namely that using the mother tongue in class, whatever the reason might have been, would inhibit students' learning English as a foreign language (EFL), and thus, had to be halted (i.e., Chambers, 1991; Krashen & Terrel, 1983;) or used sparingly at best (i.e., Halliwell & Jones, 1991). Was he right in his thinking? Can we simply answer with "yes" or "no," or do we even have an answer for this at all?

Although negative views regarding the use of L1 have originated in the world of multinational language classes, conducted especially in English-speaking environments blending a variety of linguistic backgrounds and cultures, some language teachers still have the tendency to mistakenly try to apply the beliefs and practices anchored in fairly different contexts to EFL situations unrealistically,

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without taking into consideration the conditional differences that exist between the milieus. It is time to recognize and acknowledge that methodologies developed in and for ESL or multilingual EFL settings will not instinctively fit into monolingual EFL classes, the majority of which are typically taught by a nonnative speaker teacher of English and consist, in most cases, of learners from a single linguistic background and culture that are also shared by the teacher (Murakami, 2001).

This paper will focus on and endorse the conviction that appropriate use of L1 has a necessary and facilitating role in foreign language teaching and learning (i.e., Atkinson, 1987, 1993; Cook, 2001; Macaro, 2001; Miles, 2004; Schweers, 1999). Much consideration will be given to the presentation of sample uses of the first language in foreign language classrooms, which are inspired by the author's own experiences, as well as research in the field. Although this study endeavors to support the use of L1 in L2 classrooms in certain cases, it will also discuss when teachers should avoid the mother tongue use, in an attempt to display the fine line between no, little, and too much L1. Finally, whether nonnative speaker teachers of English in monolingual EFL contexts have a significant advantage over their native speaker colleagues, since they share the same mother tongue with their students, will be explored.

## 2. L1: USE IT? LIMIT IT? BAN IT?

How often can I use my L1 (Turkish, in my case) in the classroom? Should I allow, restrict or forbid the use of it? Is it really true that the less L1, the better? These were the types of questions I often asked myself when I taught EFL classes in Turkey. It was really challenging to find an answer, if there really was one. Over time, my education and experience convinced me that my students' mother tongue would be a great linguistic resource, if used properly without being overly dependent on it (i.e., Atkinson, 1993; Macaro, 2001; Miles, 2004). Although language acquisition theories (i.e., *The Input Hypothesis*, Krashen, 1985) claim that acquisition is more integral than learning and it can only take place in a target language environment where the language under question is spoken, and therefore, use of the mother tongue cannot possibly play any part in this process, these theories have since been subject to much criticism. Atkinson (1987) implies that if the classroom focus were entirely on *acquisition*, absolute use of the target language would be appropriate, but since such a focus is neither possible, nor practical, there is no real theoretical case for such a view. In addition, Cole (1998) argues that the stringent exclusion of L1 in the classroom can lead to outlandish behaviors, such as "trying to explain the meaning of a language item where a simple translation would save time and anguish." However, language teachers should keep in mind that there might be certain times, when the best choice would indeed be to avoid the use of the mother tongue.

Since the development and growth of language teaching as a field in the last century, we have come to witness the emergence of numerous methodological schools of thought (especially with the *Age of Methods* from the 1940s to the 1980s), each of which has established a systematic set of language teaching practices based on a particular theory. Central to the theories introduced were the diverse views of the role of the first language in foreign/second language learning. It is, thus, essential to briefly review some of these schools of thought to gain insight into how these language teaching methodologies viewed the role of the students' native language in foreign language teaching (for a detailed discussion, see Richards & Rodgers, 1986, which the following section primarily draws from).

## 3. THE VIEW OF L1 IN THE L2 CLASSROOM: FROM *THE GRAMMAR TRANSLATION* TO CURRENT METHODS

In the Grammar Translation Method, the role of the first language is crucial, as the target language texts are translated into the students' native language. Native language equivalents are also provided for the students' vocabulary enhancement. The language that is used in class, by and large, is the students' native language. Succeeding approaches to methodology after the collapse of the Grammar Translation Method have either discarded the mother tongue use, or have diminished its use in the foreign language classroom as much as possible. The Direct Method, for instance, has pioneered

the idea that L1 use should be avoided when teaching grammatical components and vocabulary, and that meaning making should be ascertained through a clear depiction and understanding of the context. With the emergence of the Audio-Lingual Method, a combination of structural linguistics and behavioral psychology, in the American methodology tradition in the 1940s, the extensive use of repetition through chain drills has been introduced for good habit formation. It has been claimed that the goal of language teaching is to eliminate the students' bad habits, one of which is L1 interference. In the Silent Way, the students' native language is used to give instructions when necessary, to help students improve, for instance, their pronunciation. Feedback sessions are provided in the mother tongue, as well, to make the most of the knowledge students already possess of their native language. Beginning with humanistic approaches, we get a loosening up, not only of attitudes toward the role of L1 in the classroom, but in some cases, a systematic, integrated use of L1 to amplify acquisition within a cognitive-affective framework. In one of these approaches, the Suggestopedia, the mother tongue is utilized in the phase of the learning process where a text in the target language is accompanied by a parallel text in the mother tongue. In another humanistic approach, the Community Language Learning, the L1 is used to facilitate what the learner wishes to say from the very beginning of learning. Students' self efficacy is initially enhanced by using their native language. Literal native language equivalents are provided for the target language words, if and where possible. This makes their meaning clear and allows students to combine the target language words in different ways to create new sentences. In the Total Physical Response, the principles of the method are usually introduced in the students' native language. After the opening, rarely would the mother tongue be used, since meaning is then made clear through body language and movements. In the 1970's, the instigation of the Communicative Approach, did not favor the use of students' mother tongue in the classroom; however, a more compliant and accommodating approach toward L1 had been established. Lastly, in Krashen and Terrell's prominent Natural Approach, students' first language is not looked upon as an indispensable part of the language learning process. Anchored in the Direct Method's view of contextual language teaching and learning, the Natural Approach promotes making the input comprehensible through the representation and inclusion of the linguistic and situational context in the language classroom, and rejects the likelihood of L1 being a factor (Krashen & Terrell, 1983)

In today's world of foreign language teaching, none of these approaches is simply right or wrong, or better or worse than another. Language learners no longer desire English teachers who are presenters and sole supporters of one single approach. We, foreign language educators, are in a position to create our own eclectic or integrated approaches. Whatever we think will work best for our specific contexts is worth giving a shot. Thus, there is definitely a place for L1 in L2 classes, also (i.e., Atkinson, 1993; Cook, 2001; Phillipson, 1992). However, English should remain the primary medium of instruction, and the use of the mother tongue should serve a purpose and not be a random process and an excuse to make up for our deficiencies (i.e., Franklin, 1990). The following two sections will discuss when and why L1 use should be utilized, and when it should be avoided, in foreign language classrooms.

### **3.1. When to Use the Mother Tongue in the Foreign Language Classroom**

There are numerous appropriate uses of L1 in L2 classrooms recommended by different researchers. Atkinson (1987), for instance, advocates the following potential occasions for using the mother tongue: 1) Eliciting language; 2) Checking comprehension; 3) Giving instructions; 4) Cooperation among learners; 5) Discussions of classroom methodology; 6) Presentation and reinforcement of language; 7) Checking for sense, and 8) Testing.

Piasecka (1988), on the other hand, mentions several other potential uses: 1) Negotiation of the syllabus and the lesson; 2) Record keeping; 3) Classroom management; 4) Scene setting; 5) Language analysis; 6) Presentation of rules governing grammar, phonology, morphology and spelling; 7) Discussion of cross-cultural issues; 8) Providing instructions or prompts; 9) Explanation of errors; and 10) Assessment of comprehension.

Although countless suggestions have been made in the literature for possible uses of the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom, only a limited number of rationales have been provided.

Thus, as an answer to *why* rather than *when* we should use the mother tongue in foreign language classrooms, two types of motives will be presented here as the *raison d'être* of L1 inclusion.

### 3.1.1. Physical/Mechanical Factors

My own teaching has proven that selective use of the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom, especially with language learners at lower proficiency levels, is, first of all, time-efficient in a number of cases (i.e., Cole, 1998; Harbord, 1992; Meiring & Norman, 2002). Teaching of certain complex and complicated concepts and ideas in a language (i.e., differences between tenses, conditionals) may cause confusion, and the students' mother tongue can be used for translation purposes to check understanding and to prevent any misconceptions. Further, L1 is extremely effective during teaching to provide a swift and clear-cut synonym or paraphrase of a complicated concept or an utterance, which otherwise would take a long time for the teacher to clarify. Even then, there would be no guarantee that the teacher's elucidation in the target language would have been understood adequately. Translation, in this sense, is an invaluable instrument and a precious skill for language learners (i.e., Atkinson, 1993; Duff, 1989). It not only helps to make sense of the new information, but also encourages learners not to let unknown words and expressions dishearten them. In any case, they will recognize it is likely that there will be some unfamiliar terminology, and that they should not perceive it as being a hindrance to their successful communication (Krajka, 2004).

Some argue that thinking in L1 and using it for brainstorming and devising ideas (i.e., Weschler, 1997), especially in reading (i.e., Kern, 1994) and writing (i.e., Antón & DiCamilla, 1998; Freidlander, 1990; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992) is promising for language learners. For them, one's mother tongue is their language of thought and cognition, and it is a much needed tool for stimulating memory and semantic processing. There are also other instances, as Willis (1998) points out, in which it is more desirable and resourceful to suspend the use of English and utilize the students' first language for a few seconds, such as when illustrating a lesson's objectives, checking comprehension and discussing the main themes after reading.

Another promising use of the mother tongue takes place when articulating the classroom rules and requirements at the beginning of each semester. I have come to believe, based on my experience, that the target language is likely to have little or no effect, even if understood, when it is used for classroom management purposes, particularly in cases of student disruption. For instance, warnings in English for students having a side conversation during my classes seemed to have a lesser impact on the students' behavior than when the students were warned in Turkish, their first language. Similar claims were made by researchers from various contexts (i.e., Lin, 1990; Macaro, 2001). Lin (1990), for instance, reported that Cantonese had a greater impact on discipline problems and also efficiently reduced the time devoted to giving instructions in Chinese EFL classrooms.

Finally, the mother tongue is a remarkable tool to show the students the linguistic differences between the two languages, and to underline the major distinctive syntactic features of the target language they should be familiar with (i.e., Butzkamm, 1998; Campbell, 1997; Cole, 1998). Additionally, comparing and contrasting native and foreign language forms and meanings gives the students an edge and puts them at an advantage, as it helps create an informed awareness of the language learning process, enables the students to reduce potential L1 interference (i.e., Butzkamm, 2003; Meiring & Norman, 2002; Weschler, 1997), and ultimately, takes away from the undesirable mechanical foreign language learning.

### 3.1.2. Social/Emotional (Affective) Factors

The second group of benefits to using the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom is what can be referred to as social/emotional (affective) factors. First, since the mother tongue is an important part of a learner's psychological and cultural make-up, it should be neither neglected, nor subordinated to any other language (i.e., Burden, 2000; Canagarajah, 1999; Garrett, Griffiths, James, & Schofield, 1994; Van der Walt, 1997). Because L1 plays a crucial role in establishing the students' identity, the learners' mother tongue and their cultural background should be respected and valued to foster a humanistic approach to EFL teaching. Otherwise, the students are likely to form resistance and

negative feelings toward the target language and its community, and this would function as a barrier to their learning (i.e., Canagarajah, 1999; Nation, 1990). Schweers (1999) adds that “recognizing and welcoming the students’ own language into the classroom, as an expression of their own culture, could be one way of dispelling negative attitudes toward English and increasing receptivity to learning the language” (p. 9).

Correspondingly, the students may better identify with a teacher who shares the same language with them, and in so doing, helps them to recognize that their native language is important and their unique identities are appreciated (i.e., Çelik, 2006; Harbord, 1992; Schweers, 1999). Garrett et al. (1994) conclude that “using the mother tongue is a signal to the children that their language and culture have value, and this will have a beneficial effect on self-perceptions, attitudes, motivation and, consequently, on achievement” (p. 372). This is especially important in English as a foreign language classes because of the political and socio-cultural connotations of teaching an allegedly powerful world language that is basically imposed on them in an EFL setting. Thus, accommodation of L1 in English classrooms is fundamental to battle the fear of what some refer to as “linguistic imperialism” (i.e., Canagarajah, 1999; Phillipson, 1992). In a country like Turkey, students typically study and learn English for involuntary reasons, such that English is mandated as a required course in public school curricula starting in the fourth grade. Nonetheless, English has no official status in their day-to-day lives, and therefore, is perceived as being beyond their reach. As Murakami (2001) asserts, in such circumstances where students characteristically lack motivation and develop an “inferiority complex,” forcing upon them an exclusive use of English is neither practical, nor beneficial for productive and rewarding foreign language learning to emerge. As Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) emphasize, teachers’ attitudes toward learners can affect the quality and quantity of learning a foreign language. In this regard, foreign language teachers should create harmony, not a battle, between the mother tongue and the target language in the classroom as they can co-exist peacefully with their mutually defined roles in monolingual contexts (i.e., Atkinson, 1993; Canagarajah, 1999; Macaro, 2001; Schweers, 1999).

Another important point that needs to be underlined is that some learners, though they may expect the teacher to use the target language exclusively in communication, still demand the use of their mother tongue, as they prefer linking certain vocabulary, structures, and/or notions in English to their equivalents in their L1 as an effective way of learning a language (i.e., Burden, 2000). This may also reflect their view of the mother tongue as a safety net, something they can keep a hold of without the danger of being embarrassed, as they constantly struggle in English to attain meaning and to reach understanding. Like countless other teachers, I had students in my classes in the past who would persistently ask me the Turkish equivalents of English words or sentences. Such behavior should remind us all, as teachers, of the fact that the so-called needs’ analysis at the beginning of our classes is accommodating to identify and incorporate into teaching our students’ views of the first language use. Although some of our students’ viewpoints might just be futile and not to the point, others’ may be germane to their success. After all, as Auerbach (1993) states, “starting with the L1 provides a sense of security and validates the learners’ lived experiences, allowing them to express themselves” (p. 19), and only then will the learner be “willing to experiment and take risks with English” (p. 19).

### **3.2. When Not to Use L1 in the L2 Classroom**

There are certain situations and types of activities when use of the mother tongue is not effective. During speaking activities, for example, “there is very little justification for using L1” (Cole, 1998), given that “pupils’ speaking abilities will not develop from simply demanding that they interact in the FL, but it is more likely to happen if the predominant language in the classroom is the foreign language” (Chambers, 1991). As such, communication related tasks such as debates, role-plays and presentations should be carried out in the target language to give the students maximum exposure to practice their L2. As experiential findings reported by Macaro (2001) indicate, “only through the learner using L2 can s/he achieve strategic communicative competence” (p. 183) required to thrive in a foreign language.

Similarly, since the classroom is the most preeminent, if not the only, environment where the students can absorb authentic language, use of L1 during listening opportunities may be unproductive, unless absolute help and clarification is needed for complex instructions or culturally unfamiliar content (Cole, 1998). Given the importance of listening in foreign language learning, it is critical that the teachers, through modeling listening strategies and providing listening practice in L2, make authentic input in the target language available for their students (Nunan, 1997). This will bring about language learners who actively involve themselves in the meaning making process by deliberately employing a variety of strategies and putting off overreliance on translation.

Another skill L1 use is not generally associated with as being relevant to is pronunciation (Cole, 1998). My individual experiences of learning and teaching English as a foreign language substantiate the claim that persistent use of the target language during pronunciation tasks helps the students to better identify and overcome their weaknesses in suprasegmental aspects of L2 (i.e., intonation). However, though the use of the mother tongue does not play an active role in this process, sharing the same L1 with the students is helpful in early detection of their difficulties, understanding the sources of the troubles, and providing customized solutions to the students (Celce-Murcia & Goodwin, 1991).

It is also common sense that foreign language teachers should use L2 to define simple words and concepts in the target language (Cole, 1998). As Chambers (1991) illustrates, students in foreign language classrooms can be enticed to use L2, even if minimally and in its simplest forms, for requests, asking for help, apologies and self-evaluation. Otherwise, teachers and students run the risk of engaging in much and unorchestrated L1 use, and this may jeopardize the students' optimal learning.

Lastly, though a feasible way of using the mother tongue that was mentioned earlier, for instance, is during times of uncertainty and distress in learning the target language (i.e., Harbord, 1992; Lin, 1990), where L1 can be helpful to make things easier and to alleviate anxiety by lowering the students' *affective filters* (Krashen, 1985), it is critical to know the boundaries of L1 use. Since English may be viewed, by some, as a social barrier between the teacher and the students, preventing a casual relationship, and thereby, creating a dehumanizing language learning atmosphere, a special effort on teachers' part to exploit their students' first language for a pleasant environment and community building through humor and casual talk can be useful (i.e., Lin 1990; Harbord 1992; Polio and Duff 1994).

Individual teachers, taking into account their unique contexts, can decide for themselves when the mother tongue use is not constructive, and they can also think of and generate situations where it would be effective. However, it should be kept in mind that overuse of L1 in any circumstance "challenges the very purpose of the class and of integrity of those involved" (Cole, 1998), who habitually invest time and effort in the foreign language practice. Thus, the mother tongue use should be monitored, but kept at a level where it is accommodating, and not an impediment or obstruction, and it needs to be reduced as the students become more proficient in the language and proceed to a more advanced level (i.e., Atkinson, 1993). In the end, accepting the significance of the role of the mother tongue in foreign language teaching should not be regarded as "an open invitation to indiscriminate use of L1" (Meiring & Norman, 2002, p. 29).

### **3.3. Native and Non-native Speaker Teachers with Respect to L1 Use in the L2 Classroom**

It is the case that the majority of English as a Foreign Language teaching is carried out by non-native speaker teachers of the target language, who share the same L1 with their students. We should consider this not as a drawback, but as an advantage for nonnative speaker teachers (i.e., Atkinson, 1993; Cook, 1999; Çelik, 2006; Garrett et al., 1994; Tarnopolsky, 2000). Teachers who share the same L1 with students can use it as a resource to conduct classroom teaching. Rather than abandoning L1, due to the perception of it as being a barrier which interferes with students' language learning, we should try to find ways to make use of it to boost our teaching and our students' learning.

Although some may assume that non-native speaker teachers are inadequate or less favorable to teach the foreign language, and sharing the same L1 with their students often undermines the language

learning process, merits of such claims have been debated and dismissed in numerous studies (i.e., Cook, 1999; Çelik, 2006; Kramsch, 1993; Tarnopolsky, 2000). Tarnopolsky (2000), for instance, asserts that only teachers who share their monolingual students' mother tongue and culture can facilitate their "interlingual/intercultural awareness" (p. 39). On a similar note, Kramsch (1993) argues that the potential risks of cultural misunderstandings in foreign language classrooms may be reduced if the teacher is a nonnative speaker sharing the same mother tongue with the students, considering the fact that they all share not only the same first language, but also the nonnative speaking community's memory, knowledge, and values.

Some also maintain that L1 is a prime tool in foreign language teaching, and teachers who speak the same language as their students are better equipped to deal with the problems during the L2 learning process, especially those pertaining to discrepancies between the two languages (i.e., Cook, 1999; Medgyes, 1983). Similarly, Tarnopolsky (2000) believes that the advantages of a nonnative speaker teacher in an EFL context "lie in the ability to make recourse to the students' mother tongue where it can facilitate, accelerate and improve the learning process and also in the ability to better understand students' problems in English—those that originate from L1-L2 differences" (p. 33). Along the same line, Cook (1999) argues that common knowledge of L1 will make it possible for the teacher to use L1 to explain difficult concepts in L2 and clarify the meaning. Additionally, having common training in L1, as Cole (1998) affirms, is as much helpful. According to him, "a teacher can exploit their students' previous L1 learning experience to increase their understanding of L2" and "a teacher without that knowledge (of their students' learning experience) is more likely to teach the students what they already know about language." Accordingly, L1 knowledge and application can help create an awareness of the similarities and differences between L1 and L2, and facilitate language learning through contrastive analyses (i.e., Weschler, 1997). It is advantageous for teachers to be one step ahead in estimating the difficulties that may lie ahead to pay extra time and attention to them, and at the same time, the areas that need little attention to save energy. In this respect, contrastive analysis of L1 and L2 would form a useful technique for the teacher by employing the previous knowledge of the students, informing them about the differences between their native language and the foreign language they are studying, and finally, warning them against false analogies and L1 interferences (i.e., Spada & Lightbown, 1999; Weschler, 1997).

As a final point, sharing the same L1 with the students and using it in the classroom in a purposeful manner brings with it psychological advantages. As mentioned earlier, it is often believed that foreign language learners identify better with a teacher who speaks the same L1 and who places value on it by utilizing and not excluding it from the learning environment (i.e., Çelik, 2006; Schweers, 1999). Correspondingly, bearing in mind the perceived superiority of English and its native speakers, students may feel discouraged by having a native speaker teacher who may be identified as a model of perfection, far from the students' reach (Cook, 1999), and thus, may desire "the fallible nonnative-speaker teacher who presents a more achievable model" (p. 200).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The use of the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom has been traditionally discouraged; however, many teachers and researchers have recognized that, in practice, using one's own language to learn a foreign language is reasonably natural, necessary and efficient (i.e., Atkinson, 1987, 1993; Cook, 2001; Macaro, 2001). As Eldridge (1996) argues, "there is no empirical evidence to support the notion that restricting mother tongue use would necessarily improve learning efficiency, and that the majority of code-switching in the classroom is highly purposeful, and related to pedagogical goals" (p. 303). What is more, strictly eliminating or excluding the students' mother tongue from the classroom does not cultivate a humanistic approach that is essential for their self-worth and confidence (i.e., Harbord, 1992). Thus, use of the first language should not be perceived as a *sin* that must be avoided at all times. Instead, it should be seen as an invaluable resource that language teachers can, and should, utilize for successful language instruction.

Numerous promising instances of integrating L1 in L2 teaching has been presented by researchers, some of which have been discussed in this paper. They include, but are not limited to, discussing classroom rules and content, giving instructions, brainstorming ideas, explaining or translating complex words or notions, checking comprehension and clarifying meanings, and classroom management. (i.e., Antón & DiCamilla, 1998; Atkinson, 1987; Piasecka, 1988; Weschler, 1997; Willis, 1998). In addition to the potential linguistic functions of L1 for students' linguistic development, the significance of L1 inclusion for students' psychological status and readiness in foreign language learning is hard to overlook (i.e., Burden, 2000; Canagarajah, 1999). These potential roles and implications of the mother tongue in language teaching works intrinsically for the advantage of nonnative speaker teachers in EFL contexts who share the same L1 with their students and use it appropriately (i.e., Cook, 1999; Çelik, 2006; Kramersch, 1993; Tarnopolsky, 2000).

That being said, one should remember that L1 use should remain selective and purposive, and should not be deemed to be just an easy way out of potential communication problems in the classroom. Marked use of the mother tongue during activities such as speaking, listening, and pronunciation should be avoided, as L1 use in such contexts is not only impractical, but may also be detrimental to the communicative focus of foreign language classrooms. As Prodromou (2002) suggests, the decision regarding whether or not to use L1 in L2 classrooms is multifaceted, and proper use of the mother tongue can be fruitful and facilitating, while L1 use without a clear rationale may be disruptive and useless. Following Prodromou's metaphors, mother-tongue in the classroom can be:

1- *a drug* (though with therapeutic potential, it can damage your health and may become addictive); 2- *a reservoir* (a resource from which we draw); 3- *a wall* (an obstacle to teaching); 4- *a window* (which opens out into the world outside the classroom; if we look through it we see the students' previous learning experience, their interests, their knowledge of the world, their culture); 5- *a crutch* (it can help us get by in a lesson, but it is recognition of weakness); 6- *a lubricant* (it keeps the wheels of a lesson moving smoothly; it thus saves time) (p. 8).

Although knowing when to use the mother tongue and when not to in a foreign language classroom is, without a doubt, a hard decision to make, it is time we "finally free ourselves of a fundamental misconception and re-establish the more than 2000-year-old productive alliance between the mother tongue and foreign languages" (Butzkamm, 2003, p. 38) by inviting the mother tongue to our classrooms. However, it should be clear that L1 remains a natural and vital resource for today's student-fronted classrooms, and its use is not taken for granted as being just a means of convenience and an excuse for not using much target language in the classroom (i.e., Franklin, 1990). At all times, language teachers need to consider carefully the reasons for opening their doors to L1 use, and must examine its necessity and benefits for their individual situations. They should constantly be reminded that deliberate use of students' L1 as a constructive aid will promote language learning in the EFL context, and as Cook (2001) puts it, will "open a door that has been firmly shut in language teaching for over 100 years" (p. 402).

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### GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

İkinci ve yabancı dil sınıflarında ana dilin kullanımı uzun zamandan bu yana pek çok çalışmaya konu olmuştur (i.e., Atkinson, 1987; Auerbach, 1993; Cook, 2001; Prodromou, 2002; Schweers, 1999). Buna rağmen, bu güne kadar ana dilin yabancı dil öğretimindeki yeri ile ilgili somut ve genel kabul gören bir kanıya varılamamıştır. İlginç bir şekilde, 1950'li yılların başlarında, İngilizce'nin ikinci dil olarak öğretildiği ortamlardan esinlenen yaygın görüş, öğrencilerin ana dilini sınıf içinde ilgi dağıtıcı bir unsur, öğrencilerin gelişimine zarar veren bir zehir ve yetersiz öğretmenler için bir sığınak ve kaçış noktası olarak görmüştür. Ancak, bu görüş zamanla, özellikle İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğretiminin yaygınlaşması ile birlikte, yerini ana dile daha esnek yaklaşan bir anlayışa bırakmıştır.

Benzer bir ihtilaf değişik fikir okulları ve yöntembilimsel akımlar tarafından ana dile karşı olan çeşitli bakış açıları ve verilen farklı değerle sabittir. Ana dilin çeviri ve kelime geliştirme amaçlı periyodik kullanımını destekleyen Gramer-Çeviri Metodu'ndan, bağlamsal ilişkilendirme ve anlamlandırma için kullanımını öngören Direkt Metod'a, ana dili kötü bir alışkanlık ve dil gelişimine karşı bir tehdit olarak gören İşitsel-Dilsel Metod'dan ana dili önemli talimatlar vermede ve öğrencilerin seviyelerini yükseltmek için fikir ve öneri alışverişinde kullanan Sessiz Yöntem'e kadar, ana dilin yabancı dil sınıflarındaki rolü hiç bir zaman tam anlamıyla anlayamamış ve suretli bir anlaşmazlık konusu olmuştur. 1960 ve 1970'li yıllar sonrasındaki dil öğretimine karşı radikal ve insancıl yaklaşımlarla (i.e., Toplum Dil Öğrenim Metodu, İletişimsel Metod) bile ana dil ile ilgili bu belirsizlik çözümlenememiştir.

Günümüz yabancı dil öğretiminde, özellikle dil öğretmen ve öğrencilerinin büyük bir çoğunluğunun aynı ana dili paylaştığı Türkiye gibi bir ülkede, sınıfta düzenek kaydırmanın (dil geçişinin) muhakkak zararlı sonuçlar doğurmayacağı ve aksine ana dil kullanımının öğrencilerin gelişiminde önemli bir rol oynayabileceği düşünülürse, ana dil kullanımında ya hep/ya hiç tarzı bir yaklaşım pek gerçekçi olmayabilir. Tartışmaların ana konusu, bu çalışmanın belirttiği gibi, ana dilin hangi amaçla ve ne kadar kullanılması gerektiği ve dolayısıyla zararlı bir etken olmakla sınıfta değeri yeterince anlayamamış yardımcı bir unsur olmak arasındaki ince çizgiyi ayırt etme olmalıdır. Bu yüzden, ilgili çalışmaları ve kendi şartlarımızı dikkate alarak, ana dilin yabancı dil sınıflarındaki uygun kullanım alanlarını ve aynı zamanda ana dilden ciddi manada uzak durulması gereken zamanları belirlemek büyük önem taşımaktadır.

Ana dilin farklı araştırmacılar tarafından ortaya koyulan çeşitli kullanımları mevcuttur. Örneğin, Atkinson (1987) aşağıdaki olası kullanım alanlarını sıralamaktadır: 1) Dili kullanmaya yöneltme; 2) Anlamayı ölçme; 3) Talimat verme; 4) Öğrenciler arasında yardımlaşma; 5) Sınıfta kullanılacak metodların tartışılması; 6) Dilin sunumu ve pekiştirilmesi; 7) Mantık süzgecinden geçirme, ve 8) Değerlendirme. Aynı şekilde, Piasecka (1988) uygun olan farklı bir kaç kullanımından bahsetmektedir: 1) Dersin ve ders içeriğinin görüşülmesi; 2) Kayıt tutma; 3) Sınıf yönetimi; 4) Ön hazırlık; 5) Dilin analizi; 6) Dil bilgisi, ses bilgisi, biçim bilgisi ve imla ile ilgili kuralların aktarımı; 7)

Kültürler arası meselelerin tartışılması; 8) Talimat ve iletiler; 9) Hataların açıklanması, ve 10) Anlamanın değerlendirilmesi.

Bunlara ek olarak, bu çalışmada yazar, kişisel tecrübelerine ve aynı zamanda alandaki araştırmalara dayanarak ana dil kullanımının neden faydalı olacağına dair iki farklı kategorinin altını çizmektedir: Fiziksel/mekanik ve sosyal/duygusal. Fiziksel/mekanik faktörler için öncelikle ana dilin, özellikle, yeterlilik seviyeleri düşük öğrencilere karmaşık yapıların ve kavramların öğretimi sırasında, anlamayı test etme ve karışıklığı önlemedeki zaman kazandırıcı boyutunu tartışmaktadır. Daha sonra, bir kavram ya da anlatımın, normalde hedef dilde anlamlandırmayı yavaşlatacakken, ana dilde hızlı ve pratik çevirisinin faydalarına dikkat çekmektedir. Araştırmacı, ek olarak, ana dilin konuşma ve yazma gibi becerilerde beyin fırtınası için ne kadar yararlı olduğundan bahsetmektedir. Yazar ilaveten kendi tecrübelerinin, öğrencilerin birinci dilinin sınıf yönetimi açısından ikinci dillerinden daha etkili olduğu fikrini desteklediğini vurgulamaktadır. Son olarak, birinci dilin öğrencilerin ana dilleri ile hedef dilleri arasındaki farklılıkları göstermede ve dolayısıyla etkili bir dil öğrenme tecrübesi için dil-ötesi bir bilinç oluşturmada çok faydalı bir kaynak olduğunu tartışmaktadır.

Daha sonra, araştırmacı tarafından birinci dil kullanımının sosyal/duygusal kökenleri irdelenmektedir. Öncelikle, ana dilin o dili konuşanların kimlik profillerinin bir parçası olarak kullanımının önemi vurgulanmaktadır. Dahası, öğrencilerin aynı dile sahip ve belli aralıklarla o dili konuşan, ve böylelikle teorik olarak daha düşük prestije sahip bir dilin konuşanları olarak kendilerine değer verildiğini gösteren bir öğretmeni daha kolaylıkla benimseyebilecekleri fikrinin altı çizilmektedir. Aynı şekilde, araştırmacı, ana dili yasaklamanın ve sadece-İngilizce kuralını zorlamanın, ve dolayısıyla öğrencilerin güven kaynaklarından birini ortadan kaldırarak dil öğrenme sürecinde bundan böyle risk almaktan kaçınmalarına neden olmanın zararlı etkilerine dikkat çekmektedir. Bu çalışma, konuya farklı açılardan bakabilmek adına birinci dil kullanımının faydasız olarak değerlendirilebileceği bir kaç durumdan da bahsetmektedir. Araştırmacı, örnek olarak, ana dili, konuşma, dinleme ve telaffuz aktivitelerinde kullanma hususunda ısrar etmenin ve ikinci dili basit rica, soru ve benzer kolay dil uygulamaları için hali hazırda kullanabilecekken birinci dile geçmenin anlamsız olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Sonuç olarak, yazar, İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğretildiği tek dilli ortamlarda öğretmenlerin öğrencileriyle aynı dili paylaştığı ve ana dillerini öğrencilerin yabancı dil becerilerini geliştirmede bir araç olarak kullanabileceklerinden dolayı İngilizceyi ana dil olarak konuşan meslektaşlarına kıyasla önemli bir avantajları olduğu fikrini desteklemektedir. Ana dili ne zaman kullanmanın uygun olacağını bilmek her zaman kolay olmasa da, yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin içinde buldukları şartları ve öğrencilerinin ihtiyaç ve beklentilerini dikkatli bir şekilde incelemeleri ve ana dili sınıflarında kullanmaya karar verdikleri her an için iyi bir sebeplerinin olduğuna emin olmaları önerilmektedir. Ancak o zaman, herkes ana dilin gerçek değerini ve yabancı dil öğretimindeki rolünün önemini anlayacaktır.