# THE USE OF MOTHER TONGUE IN EFL CLASSROOMS

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*Abstract: The use of the mother tongue in teaching a foreign language is a controversial topic. While some researchers claim that the mother tongue should not be used in foreign language classrooms, others think that it makes a valuable contribution to the learning process. The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' and students' perceptions on using the mother tongue in EFL classrooms and when to use it in the classroom. The present study was conducted at the end of the fall semester of the 2011-2012 academic year at European University of Lefke. Twenty five English instructors and one hundred and five students participated in the study. The relationship between the perceptions on English language instructors and the students was measured through questionnaires given to teachers and students. The interview was carried out with five preparatory students and five English teachers. The data revealed that the mother tongue was a mediating part of language teaching and learning and there was no significant difference between teachers' and students' perceptions on using it in language classrooms. Both teachers and students did not oppose the use of mother tongue in language classrooms. They all thought that the mother tongue should be used in emergency situations. Moreover, they believed that it can be effective in the right situations at the right time.*

*Keywords: Use of the mother tongue (Turkish), target language (English), teachers' and students' perceptions, EFL classrooms.*

*Özet: Ana dilin kullanımı tartışmaya yol açan bir konudur. Bazı araştırmacılar ana dil yabancı dil sınıflarında kullanılmamalıdır diye iddia ederken, diğerleri ana dilin öğrenme sürecine değerli katkılarda bulunduğunu düşünürler. Bu çalışmanın amacı yabancı dilde eğitim veren sınıflarda ana dilin kullanımında öğretmen ve öğrenci bakış açısının algısını incelemektir. Çalışma 2011-2012 akademik yılının güz dönemi sonunda Lefke Avrupa Üniversitesinde uygulanılmıştır. Yirmi beş İngilizce öğretmeni ve hazırlık öğrencisi bu çalışmaya katılmıştır. İngilizce öğretmenleri ve öğrencilerin algıları arasındaki ilişki öğretmen*

*ve öğrencilere uygulanan anket ve röportaj ile ölçülmüştür. Röportaj beş hazırlık sınıfı öğrencisi ve beş İngilizce öğretmenine yapılmıştır.*

*Bulgular, ana dilin İngilizce öğretimi ve öğreniminde arabulucu bir rol oynadığını ortaya çıkarmıştır. Öğretmen ve öğrenciler görüşleri arasında önemli bir fark yoktur. Öğretmen ve öğrenciler yabancı dil sınıflarında ana dilin kullanımına karşı değillerdir. Onlar ana dilin acil durumlarda kullanılmasını düşünüyorlar. Dahası öğretmen ve öğrenciler ana dilin doğru zamanda ve doğru durumlarda etkili olabileceğine inanıyorlar.*

*Anahtar Kelimeler: Ana dil kullanımı (Türkçe), hedef dil (İngilizce), öğretmen ve öğrenci bakış açısı, İngilizce eğitim yapılan sınıflar.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Language learning is a continuous process. That's why a focus should be given to the learners' level, age and background and the teachers' perceptions to teach the language. If the teacher insists on using only the target language in EFL classrooms and ignoring learners' background, learners may feel to force to use the language and may resent learning. Moreover it slows down the pace of the learners who are willing to learn and use the language. It is, therefore, important to consider using the mother tongue in language classes.

How can the students use the foreign language? How can they communicate with the people speaking foreign languages? How can they write in English? How can they understand what they read in English? How the teacher can teach a foreign language using what methods in the classroom? Should the mother tongue be used in language classrooms? Is it useful to use the mother tongue in language classrooms? In foreign language education, such questions are often raised and debated.

Educators, for years, have questioned whether they should use mother tongue in foreign language classrooms. Though, the role the mother tongue plays is not ignored by the researchers, "the issue of whether language teachers should use the students' first language in their second/ foreign language classroom has always been a controversial one" (Sharma, 2006: 80). Sharma (2006: 80) shares Nunan's idea that "the practitioners who support the strong version of communicative language teaching emphasize 'learning to communicate through interaction in the target language'. Willis (1981), (cited in Sharma, 2006: 80), also defines "teaching English through English as speaking and using English in the classroom as often as you possibly can." Auerbach (1993: 5) supports the idea that "the more students are exposed to English, the more quickly they will learn; as they hear and use English, they will internalize it to begin to think in English; the only way they will learn it is if they are forced to use it".

Phillipson (1992: 185) explained that the reasons for using only English in language classrooms by giving the five principles as indicated below:

1. English is the best taught mono- lingual;

2. The ideal teacher of English is a native speaker;

3. The earlier English is taught, the better the result;

4. The more English is taught, the better the result.

5. If other languages are used too much, standards of English will drop.

Besides, Sipra (2007) makes recommendations to encourage L2 use. He states that the teachers should choose appropriate materials for learners according to their proficiency levels and they should prepare warm-up activities for learners. Moreover Sipra adds that teachers should motivate students to become better English speakers. He, further, recommends that the teachers use some activities to facilitate learning. He focuses on the importance of teachers' monitoring the students' use of L2. In addition, he highlights that teachers should use appropriate group work activities avoiding embarrassing situations. Therefore students feel relaxed. This shows that teachers play important roles on students' use of L2. They should create psychologically and physically appropriate environments.

When the methods above applied in the classroom, undeniably, using only L2 in EFL classes is advantageous. If the students feel confident in using L2, they are willing to use the language more. Jones (2010: 8) supports that 'the learners' L2 proficiency will improve, as will the learners' confidence in using the L2. If the students find the task meaningful they will learn quickly.

On the other hand, at times, using only English in the classroom can cause some problems. Harbord (1992) underlines the fact that teachers who try to create an 'all- English classroom' are insufficient in meaningful communication causing student incomprehension and resentment. In addition, English only classrooms can be a harmful factor to student - teacher interaction. In this regard, the mother tongue can be used when it is necessary. Butzkamm (2003: 29) expressed that "the mother tongue is generally regarded as being an evasive maneuver which is to be used only in emergencies".

In contrast to the ideas on "English only classrooms", the researchers have investigated the advantages of mother tongue use and they look over in what situations the teachers and students use the mother tongue. Although some researchers describe L1 use as "enigmatic" (Lewis, 2009: 217), "a bone of contention" (Gabrielatos, 2001: 33), or as "skeleton in the cupboard" (Prodromou, 2001: 8). Atkinson (1987: 243,244) provided extensive knowledge on where to use mother tongue in language classrooms:

1. Eliciting language (all levels)

2. Checking comprehension (all levels)

3. Giving instructions (early levels)

4. Co-operation among learners.

5. Discussions of classroom methodology (early levels)

6. Presentations and reinforcement of language (mainly early levels)

7. Checking for sense

8. Testing

In her article, Auerbach (1993: 9), referring to Piasecka (1988), listed the reasons of using mother tongue as: 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. 7. Phonology, morphology and spelling. 8. Discussion of cross- cultural issues; instructions of prompts. 9. Explanation of errors. 10. Assessment of comprehension.

Samadi (2011), referring to Rolin- Ianziti & Brownlie (2002), also mentioned the role of L1 and the benefits on foreign language learning. Samadi (2011: 17) stressed that the teachers used the L1 mostly for establishing a non-threatening classroom environment, explaining grammar, translating vocabulary, managing the classroom, and giving instruction. Besides, Harbord (1992: 352) gave the following reasons for the teachers' use of the mother tongue:

1. Facilitating teacher-student communication.

2. Facilitating teacher-student rapport.

3. Facilitating learning.

In his article, Atkinson (1987: 242), referring to Bolitho (1983), states that "another important role of the mother tongue is to allow students to say what really want to say sometimes (surely a valuable 'humanistic' element in the classroom)". The purpose of such exercise is to provide the students with the occasion to express themselves more efficiently. Especially, the learners who have limited vocabulary of the target language need opportunities to express themselves. Forcing the students to speak English in the classroom may prevent them from participating in the conversation. It is essential in learning that the students volunteer to speak. Teachers should always encourage students to articulate their opinions in mother tongue when students show difficulty doing so in the target language.

Similarly, Harbord (1992: 351) maintains such 'humanistic' approach is the right thing to do. He argues "few teachers would refuse to help a student who asked, for example, 'How can I say "Ça m' es egal"' It can be seen harmless however this can make the students dependent on L1.

Forman (2005: 70) claims that "generally, although not always, in an EFL context, the students will have a common L1, and share this with their teacher". It is aimed to increase the use of L2 different from ESL context. Forman (2005: 69) explains "in the ESL context, the use of students' L1 is often difficult to achieve because of the multilingual nature of the majority of classes". Similarly, Cook (1999) also asserts that the students already have L1 in their minds:

> *"L2 users have L1 permanently present in their minds. Every activity the students carries out visibly in the L2 also involves the invisible L1 …. From a multi- competence perspective, all teaching activities are cross- lingual … the difference among activities is whether the L1 is visible or invisible, not whether it is present or altogether absent" (cited in Forman, 2005: 65).*

The mother tongue could be used as a mediating tool between students and teachers in language. Teachers are expected to play a leadership role in the classrooms. While monitoring the students who have problems with understanding the language, they can determine in what situations they need to resort to the use of the mother tongue. In this way, the role of mother tongue use is crucial. Atkinson (1987: 241) supports the use of mother tongue, notably in monolingual classes. He explains that 'the potential of the mother tongue as a classroom resource is so great that its role should merit considerable attention and discussion in any attempt to develop a 'post-communicative' approach to TEFL for adolescents and adults'.

Mother tongue can be used as a facilitator to make a task meaningful. Thus the students can focus on the task without difficulty. The use of L1 is beneficial for language learning because it both helps in the process and completion of the task and creates a social and cognitive space in which students will be able to provide each other with assistance throughout the duration of the task (Anton & Dicamilla, 1998: cited in Pan & Pan, 2010).

Research shows that most of the students are trying to understand their teachers by using the mother tongue. In his research, Sarıçoban (2010: 174,175) also highlighted L1 is used for classroom management such as "understanding the teacher (68,7%), making contact individually (60,4%), organizing tasks (60,4%), checking for comprehension (59,5%), drawing attention (57,3%), warning about off-task behaviors (55,2%), maintaining discipline (54,2%), summarizing the material already covered (53,2%), for motivation such as joking around (58,9%), explaining teachers' own emotions (57,3%), motivating to speak in FL (54,2), for testing such as planning activities (56,3%), for error correction (69,6%), for metalinguistic uses such as explaining the relationship between NL and FL (69,8), translation for explaining difficult concepts (77,1%), defining new vocabulary items (70,9%), explaining and instructing how to do an activity

(63,6%), answering students' questions and translating upon request (58,3%), introducing new material (56,3)". It is clearly seen that the students need to use their first language in the classroom. Thus they see their mother tongue as a helper. Moreover, teachers need to use their first language in the situations explained above.

If L1 is only used as an aiding tool in foreign language classrooms, L2 learning can be increased. Forman (2005), referring to Van Lier (1995: 67), pointed out that "how the use of L1 can serve to assist in accessing L2 input and thereby enhance learning". To facilitate learning process Samadi (2011: 55,56) suggested that L1 should be used to encourage anxious, nervous, frightened and reluctant students with low-esteem. He added that L1 provides confidence to students in foreign language classrooms.

Instead of forcing the students to speak, the teachers should encourage them to participate voluntarily in the classroom. He also pointed out that the teachers should be careful on group and pair work arrangement.

The research indicated that the use of L1 removes the barriers on language and it can be a useful tool to facilitate learning. Also it helps to motivate the students participate the group and pair work activities and discussions. Jones (2010: 5) endorsed that idea as "L2 learners experience higher levels of motivation for learning the L2, and develop a greater sense of comfort participating in pair, group, and whole-class discussions and activities" The students are doing pair and group works sometimes need to use their mother tongue to talk about the topic. Holliday also (1994) asserted that "students working in groups or pairs do not have to speak English all the time; they can speak in their mother tongue about a text and if though this process they are producing hypotheses about the language, then what they are doing is communicative" (cited in Carless 2008: 331).

The advantages of using the mother tongue cannot be disregarded. Al-Hinai (2011: 1) highlighted some advantages of using L1 by summarizing researchers' ideas as below:

1. It reduces learner anxiety and creates a more relaxing learning environment,

2. It is a means of bringing the learners' cultural background knowledge into the class,

3. It facilitates checking understanding and giving instructions,

4. It facilitates the task of explaining the meaning of abstract words and of introducing the main differences in grammar and pronunciation between L1 and L2.

Secondly, the other advantages summarized by Butzkamm (2003) were mentioned in the article of Jadallah & Hasan (2011: 6) as shown below:

1. L1 use gives a sense of security and helps learners to be stress-free.

2. A foreign language friendly asset people bring to the task of FL learning.

3. The use of the L1 saves learners from a feeling of frustration they might have within their FL learning.

4. L1 techniques allow teachers to use richer and more authenic texts, which means more comprehensible input and faster acquisition.

5. All-newly-acquired FL items have to sink roots in our minds which are eventually deep enough for the items to function independently of the L1".

L1 can also be beneficial to maintain communication in the classroom. The students express themselves in English when they fail to understand and when they want to clarify the meaning of a word in L2 and express themselves in English.

Salah, (2011), referring to Harbord (1992: 22) stated that "students use their L1 to speak to the teacher when they are quite incapable of expressing what they mean".

Wharton (2007: 12) described L1 as a "time saving device". He also shared the ideas of Atkinson (1987), Green (1979) and Tudor (1987) that "translation, or mother tongue use, is often encouraged as an efficient, time-saving technique; supported by ELT professionals." (cited in Wharton, 2007: 12)

Despite the advantages of using L1, it is nonetheless indicated that there are disadvantages of overusing mother tongue in foreign language classrooms. Overusing L1 causes using L2 less. The students feel dependent on their mother tongue. Rolin-Ianziti & Vrshney (2008) emphasized that "without continuous L2 input students tend to lose confident in using the L2 and as a result, lose interest in or are discouraged from participating in future L2 endeavors" (cited in Jones 2010).

Atkinson (1987: 246) stressed that the following problems of overusing:

1. "The teacher and / or the students begin to feel that they have not 'really' understood any item of language until it has been translated.

2. The teacher and / or the students fail to observe the distinctions between equivalence of form, semantic equivalence, and pragmatic features, and thus oversimplify to the point of using crude and inaccurate translation.

3. Students speak to the teacher in the mother tongue as a matter of course, even when they quite capable of expressing what they mean.

4. Students fail to realize that during many activities in the classroom it is essential that they use only English".

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

### 2.1. Participants

The study was conducted at European University of Lefke, English Preparatory School. Total number 105 EFL students and 25 English instructors completed the questionnaires. 19 teachers were female, 6 teachers were male. 78 students were male and 27 students were female. Students were from A and B level. Meanwhile, A level means intermediate level and B level means upper-intermediate level.

### 2.2. Instruments

For this study, the data were collected by questionnaires and the questions of interview are adapted from by Oflaz (2010). The students and the teachers were provided with two different set of questionnaires to evaluate their perceptions on using Turkish in EFL classrooms.

#### 2.2.1. Teachers' Questionnaire

Teachers' questionnaire includes two parts:

In the first part, it was aimed to know teachers' gender and how long have they been working as a teacher.

1. Gender (male, female)

2. Years as a teacher (1-5, 5-10, 10-15, more than 15 years)

In the second part of the questionnaire, it was aimed to investigate the perceptions of the teachers on using Turkish in EFL classrooms. The questionnaire included 23 questions. The first question asked whether Turkish be used in the classroom. It was hoped the teachers answer one of the five following choices: *always, usually, sometimes, seldom, never*. Until the ninth question it was aimed to understand the teachers' perceptions of using Turkish on teaching reading, writing, speaking, listening and vocabulary. The ninth question asked whether Turkish should be *always, usually, sometimes seldom* or *never* used if the students have difficulty in understanding instructions. In the 10th question, the purpose was "should the native language be *always, usually, sometimes seldom* or *never* used to check the students understanding?" The 11th question was aimed to analyze that Turkish should be *always, usually, sometimes seldom* or *never* used to give feedback to the students. In the 12th question, the purpose was that the teachers should *always, usually, sometimes seldom* or *never* use Turkish to give instructions. In the question 13th, Turkish should *always, usually, sometimes seldom* or *never* used to clarify why the students are doing something. In the 14th question it was aimed to analyze that Turkish should be *always, usually, sometimes seldom* or *never* used to explain class rules. The 15th and 16th questions were about the perceptions on using Turkish to test the students and to talk about the test. The 17th question was about Turkish should *always, usually, sometimes seldom* or *never* used to explain differences, in terms of grammar, between

Turkish and English. In the 18th question, it was aimed to see the teachers' perceptions on Turkish should be *always, usually, sometimes seldom* or *never* used because it gives opportunities to students understand better. In the 19th question, it was aimed to analyze that Turkish should be *always, usually, sometimes seldom* or *never* used because of being effective method. The 20th question was aimed to understand the perceptions on Turkish should *always, usually, sometimes seldom* or *never* used because it is time- saving. The last three questions were about to analyze what percentages of Turkish should be used in EFL classrooms for beginner students, for intermediate and advanced students. The choices were "100-80, 80-60, 60-40, and 40-20".

### 2.2.2. Students' Questionnaire

Students' questionnaire includes two parts:

In the first part, it was aimed to know students' gender and how long have they been learning English.

1. Gender (male, female)

2. How long have they been learning English (1-5, 5-10, 10-15, more than 15 years)

In the second part of the questionnaire, the students answered 19 questions. The first question was the same as the teachers'. It was aimed to analyze the perceptions of the students on mother tongue and whether the mother tongue should *always, usually, sometimes seldom* or *never be* used in the classroom. The students ticked one of the five choices according to

their own mind-set. The second and the third questions were about to the perceptions on Turkish should *always, usually, sometimes seldom* or *never be* used to understand grammar concepts as well as to understand differences, in terms of grammar, among the students' native language. With the exception of the ninth question, all the questions until the 11th question, were raised to understand the students' perceptions of using Turkish on studying, reading, writing, speaking, listening and knowledge of vocabulary in the classroom. The ninth question was formulated to understand perceptions on translation. The purpose of the 12th and the 13th questions were to understand whether Turkish should *always, usually, sometimes, seldom or never be* used to discuss student activity in pairs or in a group-work in the classroom. The 14th and the 15th questions, were aimed to analyze student perceptions on using Turkish in learning detailed subjects and to ask questions when the students has difficulty in comprehension. The 16th investigated whether the students should use Turkish if the students have difficulty in understanding teacher instructions. In the question 17th, the purpose was to analyze the students' perceptions on the students and whether they should use their native language when they have difficulty understanding the instructions given in exams. The last two questions were about analyzing the perceptions of the

percentages on the teachers and students' use of native language in EFL classroom. The percentages are: 0-20, 20-40, 40-60, 60-80, and 80-100.

### 2.2.3. Interview Questions

In this study, an interview was used to gather the data. There were five questions for teachers and also five questions for students in the interview. Oflaz's (2010) interview questions were redesigned. Five teachers from English Preparatory School were chosen and they all answered the five questions. Five students from EPS were randomly chosen and they answered those five questions.

### 2.2.4. Teachers' Interview Questions

The teacher interview questions included five questions to understand the teachers' own ideas on using Turkish in the classrooms. These questions were formulated to understand whether the teachers thought the use of Turkish was necessary and in what situations. Moreover, the questionnaire intended to analyze the use of Turkish in as a skill set. These questions were:

1.   Do you use Turkish in your classroom while teaching? Why?

2.   Do you think Turkish can be useful in teaching the language in the classroom? Why? If so, in what situations it is useful, please explain.

3.   Do you think it is necessary to use Turkish? If so, in what situation it is necessary, please explain.

4.   For which skills do you make use of Turkish most? Why?

5.   Do you think teachers and students should avoid the use of Turkish completely in the classroom? Why?

### 2.2.5. Students' Interview Questions

The student interview questions also included five questions to get the students' own ideas on using mother tongue in their classrooms. The first question, analyzed the number of years the students have been learning English. Other questions were about whether they thought that the mother tongue plays an important role in EFL classrooms and whether it should be used by teachers whenever necessary or whether they thought that the teachers and the students should avoid the use of mother tongue completely in the classroom.

1.   How long have you been learning English?

2.   How often do you feel yourself obliged to make use of your mother tongue?

3.   For which skills do you make use of your native language most? Why?

4. Do you think mother tongue plays an important role in EFL classrooms and should they be used by teachers whenever necessary? Why?

5. Do you think teachers and students should avoid the use of mother tongue completely in the classroom? Why?

## 2.3. Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are two important aspects to make the study trustworthy. In Table 1, Croncbach's alpha for the reliability of the teachers' questionnaire was calculated as 0,962. The Table 1, also shows that the reliability of the students' questionnaire which was calculated as ,904. These show that the results of the finding are reliable and valid (Hair at al., 2007).

**Table 1: Reliability Statistics for Teachers**

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|---|---|
| ,962 | 25 |

**Table 2: Reliability Statistics for Students**

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|---|---|
| ,904 | 22 |

The validity of this survey depends on the alpha values. The attached analysis estimates the Cronbach Alfa to be at 0,9 value. Therefore, it is safe to conclude the questions raised in the survey are valid.

## 3. FINDINGS

In order to analyze the findings of the EFL students and teachers' perceptions of using the mother tongue in the EFL classrooms, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used.

The variations for the probability of misinterpretation are the following: '0,05". For the "0,05" level of understanding is five percent, for the "0,01" level of understanding it is one percent. To analyze the statistics, test value was given 3.0. It means that results are >P.005 also it is equal to 3 value.

## 3.1. Selected Questionnaire Findings

According to the questionnaire results and the interview analysis, the author determined that there were differences and the similarities between the perceptions of teachers and the students who have participated in the study.

**Table 3: Should mother tongue be used in the classroom (teacher questionnaire)**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Always | 2 | 8,0 | 8,0 | 8,0 |
| | Usually | 1 | 4,0 | 4,0 | 12,0 |
| | Sometimes | 11 | 44,0 | 44,0 | 56,0 |
| | Seldom | 10 | 40,0 | 40,0 | 96,0 |
| | Never | 1 | 4,0 | 4,0 | 100,0 |
| | Total | 25 | 100,0 | 100,0 | |

**Table 4: Should mother tongue be used in the classroom (student questionnaire)**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Always | 21 | 20,0 | 20,0 | 20,0 |
| | Usually | 24 | 22,9 | 22,9 | 42,9 |
| | Sometimes | 40 | 38,1 | 38,1 | 81,0 |
| | Seldom | 15 | 14,3 | 14,3 | 95,2 |
| | Never | 5 | 4,8 | 4,8 | 100,0 |
| | Total | 105 | 100,0 | 100,0 | |

The first analysis of teachers' and students' questionnaire revealed that the student participants believed mother tongue should be usually used in language classrooms. On the contrary, the teacher participants believed the mother tongue should be sometimes used in language classrooms.

Although there were differences between the perceptions of the students and the teachers, it was clear that they did not oppose to use of mother tongue in language classrooms.

**Table 5: When teaching English, native language should be used to explain grammar concepts (teacher questionnaire)**

|  |  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Always | 3 | 12,0 | 12,0 | 12,0 |
|  | Usually | 1 | 4,0 | 4,0 | 16,0 |
|  | Sometimes | 8 | 32,0 | 32,0 | 48,0 |
|  | Seldom | 10 | 40,0 | 40,0 | 88,0 |
|  | Never | 3 | 12,0 | 12,0 | 100,0 |
|  | Total | 25 | 100,0 | 100,0 |  |

**Table 6: When learning English, native language should be used to understand grammar concepts (student quesionnaire)**

|  |  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Always | 24 | 22,9 | 22,9 | 22,9 |
|  | Usually | 35 | 33,3 | 33,3 | 56,2 |
|  | Sometimes | 26 | 24,8 | 24,8 | 81,0 |
|  | Seldom | 16 | 15,2 | 15,2 | 96,2 |
|  | Never | 4 | 3,8 | 3,8 | 100,0 |
|  | Total | 105 | 100,0 | 100,0 |  |

Secondly, while the teacher participants believed native language should be sometimes used to explain grammar concepts; the student participants believed that native language should be usually used to understand the grammar concepts. Moreover, parallel to this, the students participants supported that native language should be usually used to understand differences, in terms of grammar, between their native language and English. As it is known that the students may have problems when learning grammar in English. They may need their native language to understand the grammar concepts also differences between their mother tongue and English.

**Table 7: When teaching reading, native language should be used to explain the content of reading text (teacher questionnaire)**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Always | 3 | 12,0 | 12,0 | 12,0 |
| | Usually | 1 | 4,0 | 4,0 | 16,0 |
| | Sometimes | 3 | 12,0 | 12,0 | 28,0 |
| | Seldom | 11 | 44,0 | 44,0 | 72,0 |
| | Never | 7 | 28,0 | 28,0 | 100,0 |
| | Total | 25 | 100,0 | 100,0 | |

**Table 8: When studying reading, native language should be used to translate the text in order to understand it better (student questionnaire)**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Always | 40 | 38,1 | 38,5 | 38,5 |
| | Usually | 25 | 23,8 | 24,0 | 62,5 |
| | Sometimes | 24 | 22,9 | 23,1 | 85,6 |
| | Seldom | 3 | 2,9 | 2,9 | 88,5 |
| | Never | 12 | 11,4 | 11,5 | 100,0 |
| | Total | 104 | 99,0 | 100,0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1,0 | | |
| Total | | 105 | 100,0 | | |

The third analysis was related to reading skill. Reading is one of the most important skills. The students can face difficulties to understand the text. The student participants believed that native language should be usually used to translate the text in order to understand it better. Additionally, the analysis showed that the students preferred native language should be usually used to understand the content of reading text. It was shown that the students supported that the mother tongue takes an important place in reading skill. Otherwise, the teachers participants had perceptions on the native language should be sometimes used to explain the content of reading text.

**Table 9: When doing listening in the class, native language should be used to explain what is said in order to help them catch  what they listen to (teacher questionnaire)**

|  |  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Always | 2 | 8,0 | 8,0 | 8,0 |
|  | Usually | 2 | 8,0 | 8,0 | 16,0 |
|  | Sometimes | 3 | 12,0 | 12,0 | 28,0 |
|  | Seldom | 9 | 36,0 | 36,0 | 64,0 |
|  | Never | 9 | 36,0 | 36,0 | 100,0 |
|  | Total | 25 | 100,0 | 100,0 |  |

**Table: 10 When doing listening in the class, native language should be used to translate what is said in order to help students understand what they listens to. (student questionnaire)**

|  |  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Always | 26 | 24,8 | 24,8 | 24,8 |
|  | Usually | 29 | 27,6 | 27,6 | 52,4 |
|  | Sometimes | 22 | 21,0 | 21,0 | 73,3 |
|  | Seldom | 12 | 11,4 | 11,4 | 84,8 |
|  | Never | 16 | 15,2 | 15,2 | 100,0 |
|  | Total | 105 | 100,0 | 100,0 |  |

The fourth analysis revealed the views on listening skill. It was analyzed that the teachers' participants believed that native language should be seldom used to explain what said in order to help the students catch what they listen to. However, the student participants said that native language should be sometimes used to translate what is said in order to help them understand what they listen to. Here it was clearly seen that teachers have aspects that they may seldom explain what is said.

**Table: 11 When teaching vocabulary, native language should be used to explain the meaning of new words (teacher questionnaire)**

|       |          | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Always   | 2         | 8,0     | 8,0           | 8,0                |
|       | Usually  | 1         | 4,0     | 4,0           | 12,0               |
|       | Sometimes| 6         | 24,0    | 24,0          | 36,0               |
|       | Seldom   | 11        | 44,0    | 44,0          | 80,0               |
|       | Never    | 5         | 20,0    | 20,0          | 100,0              |
|       | Total    | 25        | 100,0   | 100,0         |                    |

**Table: 12 When studying vocabulary, native language should be used to understand the meaning of new words (student questionnaire)**

|         |           | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid   | Always    | 51        | 48,6    | 49,0          | 49,0               |
|         | Usually   | 27        | 25,7    | 26,0          | 75,0               |
|         | Sometimes | 13        | 12,4    | 12,5          | 87,5               |
|         | Seldom    | 9         | 8,6     | 8,7           | 96,2               |
|         | Never     | 4         | 3,8     | 3,8           | 100,0              |
|         | Total     | 104       | 99,0    | 100,0         |                    |
| Missing | System    | 1         | 1,0     |               |                    |
| Total   |           | 105       | 100,0   |               |                    |

The fifth analysis displayed that the student participants believed native language should be usually used to understand the meaning of new words. However, the teacher participants said that native language should be sometimes used to explain the meaning of new words.

**Table: 13 What percentage native language should be used in EFL classrooms? (For beginners) (teacher questionnaire)**

|       |        | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | 100-80 | 3         | 12,0    | 12,0          | 12,0               |
|       | 79-60  | 4         | 16,0    | 16,0          | 28,0               |
|       | 59-40  | 1         | 4,0     | 4,0           | 32,0               |
|       | 39-20  | 8         | 32,0    | 32,0          | 64,0               |
|       | 19-0   | 9         | 36,0    | 36,0          | 100,0              |
|       | Total  | 25        | 100,0   | 100,0         |                    |

**Table 14: What percentage native language should be used in EFL classrooms? (For intermediate students) (teacher questionnaire)**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 100-80 | 2 | 8,0 | 8,0 | 8,0 |
| | 79-60 | 4 | 16,0 | 16,0 | 24,0 |
| | 59-40 | 2 | 8,0 | 8,0 | 32,0 |
| | 39-20 | 4 | 16,0 | 16,0 | 48,0 |
| | 19-0 | 13 | 52,0 | 52,0 | 100,0 |
| | Total | 25 | 100,0 | 100,0 | |

**Table 15: What percentage native language should be used in EFL classrooms? (For advanced level) (teacher questionnaire)**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 100-80 | 6 | 24,0 | 24,0 | 24,0 |
| | 59-40 | 1 | 4,0 | 4,0 | 28,0 |
| | 39-20 | 1 | 4,0 | 4,0 | 32,0 |
| | 19-0 | 17 | 68,0 | 68,0 | 100,0 |
| | Total | 25 | 100,0 | 100,0 | |

The other three analyses of the questionnaire focused on what percentages native language should be used in EFL classrooms. The findings showed that the teachers had perceptions on native language should be used between 60-40% for beginner students. Although the teachers had perceptions on native language should be used between 40-20% for intermediate students, interesting finding revealed that they believed that the native language should be used between 60-40% for advanced learners.

**Table 16: What percentage the student should use her/his native in EFL classroom? (student questionnaire)**

|  |  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | "0-19" | 22 | 21,0 | 21,0 | 21,0 |
|  | "20-39" | 29 | 27,6 | 27,6 | 48,6 |
|  | "40-59" | 33 | 31,4 | 31,4 | 80,0 |
|  | "60-79" | 15 | 14,3 | 14,3 | 94,3 |
|  | 80-100 | 6 | 5,7 | 5,7 | 100,0 |
|  | Total | 105 | 100,0 | 100,0 |  |

**Table 17: What percentage the teacher should use her/his native in EFL classroom? (student questionnaire)**

|  |  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 0-19 | 25 | 23,8 | 23,8 | 23,8 |
|  | 20-39 | 29 | 27,6 | 27,6 | 51,4 |
|  | 40-59 | 23 | 21,9 | 21,9 | 73,3 |
|  | 60-79 | 18 | 17,1 | 17,1 | 90,5 |
|  | 80-100 | 10 | 9,5 | 9,5 | 100,0 |
|  | Total | 105 | 100,0 | 100,0 |  |

Another analysis of the questionnaires focused on the student participants' perceptions on what percentage the students and teachers should use their native in EFL classrooms. The student participants believed that students should use their native language between 20-40% and the results showed that the student participants indicated that the teachers should use native language between 20-40% in EFL classrooms.

### 3.2. Selected Interview Findings

The first analysis of interview questions revealed that most of the teachers prefer to use Turkish in their classroom in some situations. However, some of them do not prefer to use Turkish because of some reasons such as having international students in their classes and beliefs on using mother tongue cause student speak Turkish and decrease using L2 in the classroom.

The second analysis showed that most of the teachers find that the mother tongue can be useful in some situations. These situations were to help students understand the meaning of the word, to explain grammar concepts. On the contrary, some teachers said that using mother tongue is not useful because of having international students. Besides, they indicated

 that teachers must force the students use the language to prevent them dependent on L1. Although the most teachers found that the use of mother tongue is useful in some situations, they underlined that L1 is not necessary. They added that it should be last option to use and it should be used when is necessary.

The third analysis revealed that the teachers prefer to use native language generally in grammar lesson, in reading lessons to explain the meaning of the words mostly.

According to the fourth analysis, although most of the teachers thought that teachers and students should avoid the use of L1, some of them added that it can be useful for emergency situations.

The students' interview analysis revealed that the students prefer to use their mother tongue in some situations such as asking questions to teacher, asking the meaning of the word. Besides, the students prefer to use Turkish while studying speaking, grammar and reading skills.

Furthermore, the student participants thought that the mother tongue does not play an important role in EFL classrooms. Although some students thought that using Turkish in the classroom makes students dependent on it, some of them thought that it should be used when it is needed. The answers showed differentiations.

Similar to teacher participants' results, the student participants indicated that the teachers and students should avoid L1.

### 3.3. Summary of the Findings

To sum up, the results of the questionnaires and interviews based on teachers' and students' answers showed similarities in some situations. The first similarity was that both teachers and students do not oppose the use of mother tongue in EFL classrooms. Secondly, they both supported that the mother tongue should use in some situations when it is necessary.

However, they believed that L2 use should be increased. The difference was seen as the students and teachers perceptions on the degree of how often the mother tongue should be used in language classrooms. While the teachers support that the mother tongue should be sometimes used in language classrooms, the students indicated that the mother tongue should be usually used. As it was mentioned before, the participants of the study did not oppose to use of mother tongue in their classrooms.

### 4. DISCUSSION

This study interpreted the data both quantitatively and qualitatively. The main reason was to find out the perceptions of the teachers and students on using mother tongue in EFL classrooms. As a result, it was believed that mother tongue can be effective in right situations in right time. They have

to be careful on monitoring students. The students may be discouraged to use L2 and they may be bored when they do not understand what is happening in the class. The teachers have to encourage the students use the L2 and they need to monitor the students all the time. So the mother tongue can be used in emergency situations not too much. Also the results of the study revealed that teachers and students have both similar and different perceptions on using mother tongue in EFL classrooms. For example, teachers think that the mother tongue should be sometimes used. However, the students think that the mother tongue should be usually used. So the students support the mother tongue use more than the teachers do.

## 5. CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATION

This study investigated teachers' and students' perceptions on using Turkish in EFL classrooms. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect the data. Questionnaires were given by the researcher to the students and teachers at EUL. 105 student participants took part in this study and five student participants were interviewed. There were 19 questions in the questionnaire to collect the data. Furthermore, 25 teacher participants took part in this study and 5 teacher participants were interviewed. There were 23 questions in the questionnaire to collect the data. In this study, the researcher aimed to find out students' and teachers' perceptions of using Turkish in EFL classrooms. In addition to that, the researcher aimed to analyze the research questions below:

1. How often do EFL teachers use Turkish in the EFL classrooms?

2. To what degree does the use of Turkish help students improve language learning?

3. What do EFL students think about the use of the Turkish in EFL classrooms?

4. In what situations can use of L1 be useful?

The findings of the first research question indicated that most of the EFL teachers thought that Turkish should sometimes be used in language classrooms. Although they support the use of English, they do not deny the possible advantages of the use of Turkish.

The second research question investigated to what degree the use of Turkish helped students improve language learning. According to the results, the use of Turkish can help students improve language learning. When the students have difficulty understanding what the teacher is saying, Turkish plays a mediating role. Thus the students feel comfortable. Turkish also prevents the students from losing their motivation. However, it has to be stressed that the excessive use of the mother tongue. Also the results of the study showed that both teachers and students had similar perceptions on the excessive use of the mother tongue makes the students

dependent on Turkish. So Turkish should be seen as a benefit to use when it is necessary.

The third research question explored the perceptions of EFL students on the use of Turkish in EFL classrooms. Most students supported the use of Turkish in language classrooms. They pointed out that if students do not understand, the teachers should explain the subject in Turkish. It is seen that they want explanations in Turkish in order to comprehend what the teacher is saying.

The fourth research question revealed that the students and teachers agreed that the mother tongue should be used when it is necessary. The teachers indicated that Turkish can be useful to help students understand the meaning of a word and to explain difficult grammar concepts. Also the students had similar perceptions on the use of Turkish. Similarly, they preferred to use of Turkish to ask the meaning of the words.

The complete avoidance of using Turkish was not supported by the majority of the students and the teachers. Moreover, the findings of students' questionnaire and interviews revealed that using Turkish in EFL classrooms plays a mediating role in language classrooms. While the students support that Turkish should be usually used, the teachers support that it should sometimes be used in language classrooms. They do not advocate avoiding the use of Turkish completely. At the same time, they do not support the use of Turkish more than English. In other words, they are all aware of the advantages and disadvantages of overusing Turkish in language classrooms.

Valuable contributions of L1 cannot be regarded. According to the studies, L1 can be used as a mediating tool when it is used appropriately. However, L2 has to be encouraged by the teachers. As mentioned before, teachers have to be careful on encouraging students to use L2. They have to motivate the students to use L2 in the classroom. Besides, teachers should support students' learning of L2 by using effective teaching methods and techniques.

On the other hand, it is recommended that English language teachers use L1 in order to help students understand the meaning of unknown vocabulary and to explain difficult grammar concepts. In classes where there are no international students, use of L1 in the situations mentioned above can save instruction time, thus, teachers can spend more time on communicative activities in which students can use the language they intend to learn.

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