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Title:
**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE IMPACT OF
LEARNERS' PROFICIENCY LEVELS ON THE
AMOUNTS AND PURPOSES FOR L1 USE BY
TEACHERS IN AN EFL CONTEXT**

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the linguistic behaviors of two Iranian EFL teachers each of them teaching learners of two similar proficiency levels, a beginner level and an intermediate level, to investigate the relationship between the learners' proficiency levels and the amounts and purposes for L1 use by the two teachers. The study was carried out to investigate whether there were differences in the amounts and purposes for L1 use at the two different levels and also to find out whether there were any changes in the teachers' L1 use as the learners' proficiency increased. Data consisted of audio recording one complete lesson of each of the two different levels the two participants taught. First, the word count method was adopted to quantify the amounts and percentages of L1 and TL use, and then the turns were identified and a modified version of the coding scheme developed by Rolin-Ianzitti and Brownlie (2002), which consisted of eight different functions, was used to classify the L1 turns by the teachers on the basis of their functions. Quantitative analysis of the data revealed that the teachers were different in the amounts of L1 and TL use at the two different levels, and these amounts did not reveal any consistencies between the two teachers and the two levels. Qualitative analysis of the data revealed that one of the teachers used L1 for five different functions and the other one used it for eight different functions. Despite some differences in the amounts of L1 use for these purposes by the two teachers, as the results showed, for both teachers with an increase in the learners' proficiency levels there was a decrease in the amounts of L1 use for reaction to student request purpose and on the hand, there was an increase in the amounts of L1 use for translation and contrast purposes as the learners' levels increased. The results of the study are discussed on the basis of Vygotskey's socio-cultural theory. According to this view it was expected to be a decrease in the amounts of L1 use by the two teachers. The results of the study suggest that whereas for one participant it was the case, for the other one the difference between the two levels was negligible, and there was not much difference between the two levels. The

study also showed that L1 can be used as a facilitative and mediating tool in the L2 classroom, and furthermore it showed that regardless of the learners' proficiency levels, an amount of L1 use by the teachers seems to be unavoidable.

Keywords:

L1 use, TL use, Word count method, Socio-cultural theory

Appendix

Transcription system

The transcription system used here was adopted from Walsh (2006).

T:	teacher
L:	unidentified learner
L1: L2: etc:	identified learner
LL:	several learners at once or the whole class
/ok/ok/ok/:	simultaneous utterances by more than one learner
[do you understand?]	overlap between teacher and learner
[I see]	
=	turn continues without any pause
...	pause of one second or less
(4)	silence; length given in seconds
?	rising intonation – question or other
CORrect	emphatic speech: falling intonation
((4))	unintelligible speech (the length is in seconds)
Paul, Peter, Mary	capitals are only used for proper nouns
T organizes groups	author's comments (in bold type)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

There have always been periodical changes in Second and foreign language teaching and learning methods. For many years Grammar Translation method (GTM) was the most common practiced method for teaching second and foreign languages. In GTM, the emphasis was on developing reading and writing skills through translation from and into the target language. The mother tongue was used as the medium of instruction for teaching lists of vocabulary, isolated sentences and especially deductive teaching of grammatical rules. This method which had no underlying theories and paid no attention to the development of listening and speaking skills was in fact unsuccessful in developing the kind of abilities that the learners needed in real life, so there was a change of focus in the scene of second and foreign language teaching; and the direct method (DM) which focused on teaching listening and speaking skills through direct use of the TL appeared. In the direct method the teachers used pictures, gestures, and real objects to make the meaning clear, there was no translation between the two languages, and grammar was taught inductively (Brown, 2000). It was with the emergence of DM in the 1880s that the idea of exclusive L2 use in second and foreign language classrooms became widespread (Liu et. al, 2004). From that time this theory became dominant and the teachers were encouraged to use as much L2 as possible in the L2 classroom. In this view which had its roots in 'naturalistic' approaches to language learning (Brown, 2000, P. 44), it was believed that second language learning can take place like first language learning; if the learners are exposed to the target language and do not recourse to their L1 they will develop the ability of thinking in the target language and they will acquire it, just like children acquiring their first language.

This belief, which Howatt (1984, as cited in Cummins, 2007) refers to as monolingual principle consists of three inter-related assumptions: the direct method assumption, the no translation assumption, and the two solitudes assumption. The idea is that the second and foreign languages should be taught through exclusive use of the target language, there should be no translation in the classroom, and the two languages should be kept completely separate from each other in order not to interfere. This view of exclusive L2 use is so dominant that is considered as an axiomatic fact by some researchers and teachers; and even 'teachers who resort to the L1 despite their best intentions feel guilty from straying the L2 path'(Cook, 2001, P.405).

The exclusive use of L2 has been the dominant theoretical position for many years and its proponents have tried to justify their position on the basis of Krashen's (1981) comprehensible input, in which the emphasis is on the role that comprehensible input and exposure to the target language play in language acquisition. They believe that in a second language classroom the only input the learners receive is what they are exposed to in the language classroom and L1 use destroys the type of input they receive and deprives them of valuable input that is necessary but insufficient for language learning. So they emphasize on using exclusive or maximum L2 use by the teachers which provides the learners with comprehensible input. They also draw an analogy between first language acquisition by children and second language learning by adults and argue that the learners should be exposed to as much L2 as possible to acquire it unconsciously just like children acquiring their first language and avoid using L1 in the classroom because it decreases the amount of input they receive and hence their learning. More specifically they argue that L1 use by both teachers and learners should be completely excluded from the foreign language classroom as they see it as a drawback which interferes with the development of the second language.

Recently, however, some researchers (for example, Cummins (2007), Auerbach, 1993, Cook, 2001, and...) have argued that there is a need to rethink the monolingual instructional strategies. They believe that L1, as an already acquired tool available to both teachers and learners can have a facilitative and helpful role in the L2 classroom and exclusive L2 use destroys the type of services and opportunities that L1 can provide in the L2 classroom. Auerbach (1993) argues that the emphasis on exclusive L2 use is just a political matter and not a pedagogical one and suggests that 'L1 and/or bilingual options are not only effective but necessary for adult ESL students with limited L1 literacy or schooling and that use of students' linguistic resources can be beneficial at all levels of ESL' (P. 9).

Cook (2001) also rejects some of the popular arguments underlying the exclusive L2 use. She argues that drawing an analogy between first language acquisition by children and second language learning by adults is not right because these two are completely different from each other, and also dealing with this view that L2 learners usually are not successful, she asserts that L2 users should be compared to other L2 users and not to L1 native speakers. Cook (2001) also suggests that L1 can be used for some special functions for example, for explaining

grammatical points, organizing tasks, disciplining students, and performing tests in second/foreign language classroom. She encourages teachers to use L1 'when the cost of TL is too great'; teachers can use L1 whenever it is time-consuming or difficult for learners to understand L2. Turnbull (2001, as cited in Turnbull and Arnett, 2002) agrees Cook's ideas as well, that using L1 for ensuring students' understanding of difficult grammatical and vocabulary items can be beneficial, on the other hand he insists that teachers should be cautious about using so much L1 especially in contexts where learners have limited exposure to the TL outside of the language classroom. Anton and Dicamilla (1999) argue that L1 can be used as a meditational tool that makes learners capable of completing tasks that individually they are unable to perform.

Although these researchers have some suggestions for including L1 in the L2 classroom, they do not encourage the use of L1 instead of L2 in the foreign language classroom and consider its cautious use more beneficial than harmful.

As through the evidences provided it becomes clear that the use of learners' L1 in second/foreign language classroom is a controversial issue and researchers have different views about it. There is an ongoing debate over it and it is still an important question whether teachers and learners can or should use first language in the foreign language classrooms or not. Unfortunately there's not enough evidence to provide answers to this question and the similar ones yet.

Studies conducted in this area have tried to quantify the amounts of L1 use in FL classrooms. Some studies (e.g. Anton and Dicamilla, 1999; Storch and Wigglesworth, 2003; Swain & Lapkin, 2000); have focused on L1 use by learners through their pair activities and the functions it can have; still others (e.g. De la Campa and Nassaji, 2009; Macaro, 2001; Duff and Polio, 1990,...) have focused on teachers' L1 use in FL classrooms and have tried to quantify the amounts of L1 use and the functions for which it is used. The earlier studies such as Duff and Polio (1990), Polio and Duff (1994), and Kraemer (2006) were carried out with the idea of calculating the amounts of L1 and L2 use by the teachers in FL classes and encouraging exclusive L2 use in these contexts, while other studies such as Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) were conducted to find out the amounts of L1 use by students and its functions.

Given the above issues, it becomes clear that the use of L1 in second/foreign language classrooms is a controversial issue and researchers have different views about it. There is an ongoing debate over it and it is an important question whether teachers and learners can or should use first language in the foreign language classrooms or not. Unfortunately there's not enough evidence to provide answers to this question and the similar ones yet.

Of course there have been some studies carried out in this area of research considering L1 use by the teachers and a few which have also considered the functions

for L1 use, none of them, however, have considered the effect of learners' proficiency levels on teachers' use of L1.

The current study, therefore, attempts to examine the amounts and purposes for which the teachers use L1 in English-as foreign language classes in a setting where the teachers and the learners share the same first language. More specifically the purpose of the study is to find out whether and to what extent the difference in the learners' proficiency levels influences the teachers' L1 use and the functions for which they use L1. In other words, whether L1 use diminish with the learners' increasing mastery of the target language and finally gets extinguished or it continues to exist as a meditational tool side by side with the target language to enhance learning?

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The studies carried out on teachers' use of L1 have no special underlying theoretical framework, but this study was conducted within the framework of socio cultural theory. This theory can well describe the social and interactive nature of language teaching and learning, and the use of L1 as a mediator that facilitates the L2 development process can as well be best made clear.

Socio-cultural theory is a theory of mind, of the relationship between language and thought; and of the role of social relationships and culturally constructed tools in human mental development. As Lantolf (2004, cited in Lantolf & Thorne, 2006) puts it 'despite the label 'socio-cultural' the theory is not a theory of the social or the cultural aspects of human existence...It is, rather, a theory of mind,... that recognizes the central role that social relationships and culturally constructed artifacts play in organizing uniquely human forms of thinking'(P.1).

Socio-cultural theory comes from Vygotskian socio-historical psychology. Vygotsky's work is referred to as socio-historical as he believes that human development can be studied paying attention to both its social and historical (cultural) aspects. Unlike Piaget who emphasized the role of biological factors over social factors in cognitive development, Vygotsky considered biological factors as necessary but insufficient for cognitive development.

Vygotsky's emphasis is on the role of social interaction and culturally constructed tools (such as language) in human development. He believes that human beings are born with some natural biological endowments and these lower order mental functions also exist in higher primates and make humans only capable of

simple functions like reflexes. But what is responsible for the development of higher order mental functioning (for example, voluntary attention, intentional memory, logical thinking, planning, and problem solving) is social interaction and the use of culturally constructed tools, the most important of all language. 'In Vygotskian theory, then, language is viewed as both a means of accomplishing social interaction and of managing mental activity' (Ellis, 2003. P. 176). It is through the interaction and the influence of tools that the person becomes capable of higher order mental functioning. As Lantolf and Thorne (2007) State 'While biological factors form the basis of human thinking, in and of themselves, they are insufficient to account for our ability to voluntarily and intentionally regulate our mental activity. We achieve this ability as a result of the internalization of culturally Constructed mediating artifacts including, above all, language (P. 202).'

Unlike other theories of SLA which are based on the idea of 'human mind as a black box' (Ellis, 2003), to which some input is entered and then through some processes the output is provided, in SCT learning takes place through participation and social interaction. At the heart of this theory lies the concept of 'Mediation'. Mediation 'refers to the use of cultural tools or signs to bring about qualitative changes in thinking' (Smidt, 2009, P. 22). Just as human beings do not act directly on the natural world around them and use some tools to mediate their physical activity; for psychological functioning they also use some tools (signs and symbols) to mediate their mental functioning. The symbols and signs they use, the most important of all language, are constructed by human beings over time and are transmitted to other generations. Human beings use these artifacts to express their thoughts and at the same time these ways of communication can change thoughts. As an example, Smidt (2009) states that when you watch a film it is a culturally constructed tool consisting of signs and symbols; it is used as a way of communicating some idea and thought; it can influence the way you think.

According to Vygotsky (1978, as cited in Ellis, 2003) 'mediation can occur in three ways: through the use of some material tool such as tying a knot in ones' handkerchief in order to remember something , through interaction with another person, or through the use of symbols'. So peoples and tools can have the role of mediator. One form of mediation is regulation. According to SCT the learner at first is incapable of independent functioning and his/her activity is mediated through objects; this process is called object-regulation (it is evident in Vygotsky's experiment when he gives children some colored card (Vygotsky, 1978, in Lantolf, 2000).

Sometimes another person (usually an expert) helps the learner to complete the task; this is called other-regulation. The ultimate purpose for the learner is to become

capable of self-regulation and independent functioning. When the learner internalizes the task through the help of a mediator, s/he becomes capable of self-regulation.

Zone of proximal development:

ZPD is defined by Vygotsky (1978, p. 86, as cited in Lantolf and Thorne, 2007) as 'The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers'.

So according to ZPD the person becomes capable of independent functioning through the assistance of more capable others, (a peer, teacher, coach, or others). The help provided by the more competent other is called scaffolding. According to Wood et al., (1976, in Anton and Dicamilla, 1999) scaffolding occurs when 'The expert takes control of those portions of a task that is beyond the learner's current level of competence, thus allowing the learner to focus on the elements within his or her range of ability (p. 235).

The scaffolded help can have six functions:

1. Recruitment: Getting the learner interested in the task.
2. Reduction in degrees of freedom: Simplifying the task by reducing the number of constituent acts required to reach solution.
3. Direction maintenance: Keeping the learner in pursuit of a particular objective.
4. Making critical features: Marking certain features of the task and providing information about the discrepancy between what the Child has produced and the ideal solution.
5. Frustration control: Decreasing the learner's frustration and stress.
6. Demonstration: Modeling an idealized form of the act to be completed (Wood et al., 1976. p. 98).

According to Mercer (1995, as cited in Wells, 1999) ultimate purpose in scaffolding is to remove the scaffold when it is not required anymore and to give the responsibility to the learner. So the teacher or the other experts provide the learner with scaffolded help and in this way the learner becomes capable of completing an activity on the interpsychological level (with the help of an expert), later the learner

can accomplish the activity at the intrapsychological level and there is no need for assistance and scaffolded help.

To sum it up according to socio cultural theory learning is a social activity, it is through social interaction that the learner develops the ability of independent functioning. In second/foreign language classroom it is through the interaction between the teacher and the learners that an interactive context which is potential for learning is created. In this context the teacher is considered as the more knowledgeable other who provides the learners with help in order to reach their potential developmental level. As the learners in the earlier stages of FLL are not capable of independent functioning (functioning at the intrapsychological level), the teacher provides them with some help. It seems that if the teacher uses only the TL in the FL classroom, in classes of low proficiency levels the learners will encounter problems understanding and learning what s/he means; they need some help and guidance at this level to become gradually capable of independent functioning. One way the teacher can provide the learners with help is through using L1 in the L2 classroom, it can be referred to as one form of other-regulation as the teacher uses L1 to mediate the process of foreign language acquisition. To provide learners with scaffolded help, the teacher uses L1 as a mediator; L1 can be seen as an already acquired available tool that helps learners to overcome the difficulties of acquiring a new language.

Therefore, on the basis of the principles of Socio cultural theory it is expected to find out a decrease in the amount of L1 use by the teachers as the learners' proficiency increases, because it is in the early stages that the learners need more help and the teachers use L1 as a mediator, but as their level increases they are expected to be more independent and so the expectation is that the amount of L1 should show a decrease.

1.3 Significance and purpose of the study

There are a number of studies carried out with the aim of quantifying the amounts of L1 and L2 use and a few which have further developed their work to consider the functions for L1 use by the teachers. As can be seen none of the previous studies conducted on the issue of teachers' L1 use have focused on the probable relationship, if any, between the learners' proficiency levels and the teachers' L1 use, to consider the effects of learners' proficiency levels on the amounts and purposes for L1 use in Second or foreign language classrooms. Moreover none of them have worked within a socio-cultural perspective. Therefore, this study was carried out to investigate the amounts and purposes for which teachers used L1 (Persian) in the foreign language (English) classroom. The purpose was to examine the teacher's L1 use at two different levels of proficiency to find out whether the amounts and functions for which L1 was used by the teachers would change with the change in the learners' proficiency levels or on the other hand it would remain stable.

English is taught as a foreign language in our country and most of the teachers are non native speakers of English. Teachers seem to do some amounts of code switching in the teaching process and it seems that most of them are not aware of their own practices. They don't know how much L1 or L2 they use and they don't even know for what functions they use them. Studies in this area can give an insight to the amounts of L1 use in our classes and make teachers aware of the potential benefits of L1 use in the process of L2 development. Moreover, the results of the study can also provide evidence to advocate vygotsky's socio cultural perspective and can be helpful in the development of his concepts and in this way can contribute to the knowledge in the field of second and foreign language learning.

Research questions

This study, therefore, according to its objectives seeks answers to the three following questions:

1. How much L1 and FL does an L2 teacher use in classes of different proficiency levels?
2. Does a second language teacher's amount of L1 use vary with a Change in the learners' proficiency level?
3. Does a teacher's use of L1 vary in terms of its functions with change in the learners' proficiency level?

1.4 Outline of the Study

The present chapter was an introduction to the background of the study and the underlying theoretical framework that consists the basis of the present study. In this section the significance and the purposes of the study and also the research questions were also introduced.

Chapter two deals with a review of the studies conducted on L1 use by teachers and learners in Second and foreign language situations.

Chapter three first introduces the setting and participants of the study; and then explains data collection and analysis procedures.

Chapter four reports the results of the study in two main sections. The first section presents a quantitative analysis of the amounts of L1 and TL use by the

teachers and the percentages of L1 use for different functions. Then it reports the results of qualitative analysis of the L1 use by the teachers in facilitating the process of L2 learning.

Chapter five presents the discussion of the results obtained in chapter 4 regarding the previous studies and based on the Vygotskian viewpoints, while chapter six concludes the findings from the study, discusses the implications for teaching, limitations of the study and gives suggestions for possible future research based on the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Regarding the issue of L1 use in FL classrooms there are two opposing views. One is that of the opponents of L1 use and the other is related to the proponents of L1 use in SL or FL classroom. In this section at first the ideas of the opponents and the research conducted with having this view are reviewed and then the ideas of the proponents of L1 use and the related research are explained.

2.1 Literature opposing L1 use in L2 classrooms

The first group which is referred to as the opponents of L1 use consists of those who emphasize exclusive L2 use in second or foreign language classroom. They advocate maximum or exclusive L2 use and rely on naturalistic approaches to language learning and Krashen's Comprehensible input (1981) to justify their views. They believe that L2 use should be maximized and the teachers and learners should not switch to L1 as they consider L1 use as a hindrance that interferes with the process of L2 development. They also believe that the process of L2 learning by adults is similar to L1 acquisition by children, so they emphasize that the adult second language learners should only use the second language and ignore the use of L1 in the second or foreign language classroom.

From the time of the advent of the DM in late 19th centuries, this view became so widespread and popular and gained such great acceptability that it has been hard for some researchers and teachers to even think of the role that L1 could have in the L2 classroom. As Cook (2000) asserts this monolingual principle is so acceptable nowadays that 'recent methods do not so much forbid the L1 as they ignore its existence altogether' (P. 404). As she refers although previously there was an emphasis on avoidance of L1 use, recent methods do not even refer to it because they consider it just as a negative factor which decreases the amount of L2 use and destroys the beneficial L2 input that the learners need for the development of the target language.

The opponents of L1 use believe in the exclusive use of L2 or L2_only position and they emphasize on avoiding L1 use in the foreign language classroom. Studies carried out with this view in mind have mainly focused on teachers' L1 use and have tried to quantify the amounts of teachers' L1 and TL use and examine the reasons and purposes for which L1 was used in the L2 classroom.

Duff and Polio (1990) was one of the first surveys which tried to investigate the amounts of FL and TL use in thirteen FL classrooms in the University of California, in the United States. Two fifty-minute sessions from each class were observed and audio-recorded. The analysis of the recorded data revealed that the amount of TL use varied from 10% to 100%, with an average of 67.9% and a median of 79%. In 1994, Polio and Duff conducted another study which was a continuation of the previous study in that the first one was just a quantification of L1 and L2 used by the teachers but the second study also investigated why and when they used FL and L1. They selected six of the classes and transcribed the second session of each of the classes they had audio-recorded. They identified eight major functions for the teachers' use of L1 which included classroom administrative vocabulary, grammar instruction, classroom management, empathy/solidarity, practicing English, unknown vocabulary/translation, lack of comprehension, and interactive effects involving students' use of English. They provided some suggestions to help teachers to maximize their use of FL in the classroom as they considered L1 as a debilitating factor that must be eliminated from the L2 classroom to provide learners with maximum opportunities for learning.

Liu et al. (2004) conducted a study to investigate the amount of L1 (Korean) and L2 (English) use in FL classes in South Korea after the Ministry of Education requested FL teachers to maximize their L2 use and gradually move to exclusive L2 use. Thirteen high school English teachers were selected and one 50-minute session of each of their classes was recorded. The results of the study based on the analysis of the transcriptions of the recorded data and the questionnaires used for both teachers and learners showed that the amount of English used by teachers varied from 10% to 60%, with an average of 57%, which was lower than the amounts found in other studies (e.g. in Polio and Duff (1990)); but it was higher than the amounts reported by teachers themselves (32%), and their learners (41%). The researchers believed that the mean (57%) gained through the analysis was less close to reality than the amount reported by teachers (32%) and the reason that the amount of L2 use reported by students (41%) was higher than that reported by teachers was that they had difficulty understanding spoken English; so the amount of English seemed more than the real amount to learners, and another reason was the difference in the type of questionnaires. The teachers used more English than the amount they reported; and it showed the effect of new curriculum guidelines on their practice. Eight functions were identified for teachers' L1 use including: Greetings; directions, instructional comments; questions to check comprehension; explaining text, words, or grammar; providing background information; managing student behavior; compliments, confirmation; and personal talk/jokes. The teachers used L1 for explaining vocabulary and background information more than other functions.

Kraemer (2006) in a qualitative study investigated L1 use by five teacher assistants in German-as-foreign language classes in the United States and found a relationship between years of experience and L1/L2 use. She found that the more experienced teachers used less L1 in their classes. This finding was in contrast with the results of other studies; Duff and Polio (1990) found no relationship between the years of teachers' experience and their L1 use. De la Campa and Nassaji (2009) also found no significant difference between the novice and experienced teachers in the amount of L1/L2 use; the difference was only in the functions for which L1 was used. Kraemer also advocated and considered more use of L2 by the experienced teachers as favorable and use of L1 as a factor that preferably should be omitted.

2.2 Literature supporting L1 use in L2 classrooms

The view of exclusive L2 use in L2 classrooms has been the dominant view in second and foreign language teaching for many years, but there are new voices heard in this area and these are of the proponents of L1 use in L2 classroom; who consider 'judicious' use of L1 as a factor that can facilitate the process of L2 development (Turnbull, 2001). This group believes that the role of L1 in L2 learning should be reconsidered and some like Auerbach (1993) even contend that

Whether or not we support the use of L1 is not just a pedagogical matter: it is a political one, and the way that we address it in ESL instruction is both a mirror of and a rehearsal for relations of power in the broader society (P. 10).

She claims that there are no empirical and pedagogical evidence to support the monolingual principle. Cummins (2007) and Cook (2001), also strongly emphasize that there is no contradiction between providing the learners with large amounts of target language input and using learners' L1 in the foreign language classroom. Cook (2001) suggests that 'overall, accepting that students should meet natural L2 communication in the classroom supports maximizing the L2 rather than avoiding the L1' (P. 409).

Studies considering the role of L1 in L2 classroom as a facilitative and supportive factor have focused on two main domains. One is the learners' use of L1 during their collaborative interaction and the other is the use of L1 by SL or FL teachers. Researchers investigating L1 use in student-student interaction have conducted their studies within a socio cultural framework; examples are brought in the following.

Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) studied the use of L1 in six pairs of learners completing two different tasks: a text reconstruction task and a short composition task. The data for the study was collected through audio-recording the learners' talk when completing the tasks and interviewing the learners after task completion. The learners were found to use L1 for four different functions: task management, task clarification, vocabulary and meaning, and grammar. In composition task, the learners used L1 for task management and task clarification; and in reconstruction tasks they used L1 for clarifying vocabulary and meaning and to discuss grammatical points. Whereas the students were reluctant to use their L1 and they believed that it would slow down the speed of task completion and it was better for them to use more L2, even those learners who didn't use L1 believed that it would be helpful.

Anton and Dicamilla (1999) investigated L1 use in L2 learners' collaborative interaction within the framework of socio cultural theory. The study showed that interpsychologically L1 provides the learners with the opportunity to work in the zone of proximal development (zpd); to provide scaffolded help to each other, and to reach a shared perspective on the task (intersubjectivity); and intrapsychologically L1 is seen as a cognitive tool for private speech.

Swain and Lapkin (2000) investigated the use of L1 by two French classes completing two different tasks in pairs. One class was required to complete a dictogloss task and the other a jigsaw task. They found three functions for the L1 used in the completion of these two tasks: L1 assisted learners in understanding and managing the task, it made learners focus on language form, vocabulary use, and overall organization and it helped learners to establish the tone and nature of their collaboration.

Storch & Aldosari (2010) examined the effect of proficiency pairing and task type in 15 pairs of Arab learners learning English in a FL context (Saudi Arabia). They investigated the effect of proficiency pairing and task type on the amount of L1 use and the functions of L1 use in the learners' interactions in completing three different tasks: a jigsaw; a composition; & a text-editing task. For the data analysis both L1 words and turns were counted. The amount of L1 use by learners was limited; the amount of L1 words was only 7% of the total words and the amount of L1 turns only 16% of the total turns. The learners used L1 for five different functions: task management, generating ideas, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. From among them the most frequent function for L1 use was for task management. The study concluded that task type affects the amount of L1 use by learners more than the proficiency pairing.

Hersej Sani (2009) in a longitudinal study investigated the impact of the use of pair work and L1 use by learners on the acquisition of morphosyntax in an EFL context. There were three groups of learners, from which the members of one group completed the task individually, but the members of the two other groups completed the tasks in pairs. From those working in pairs one group was allowed to use L1, but the other group had to use only the TL. The findings of the study revealed that learners who completed the tasks in pairs showed better performance in acquiring morphosyntax than those who completed them individually and still the group allowed using L1 performed better than the two other groups. He concluded that L1 had important roles in the L2 classroom including enabling learners to manage the tasks, and focusing learners' attention on form if it was the teachers' concern.

The mentioned studies examining the role of L1 in L2 classroom have focused on L1 use by the learners for completing different tasks and have found some functions for L1. They all confirm the beneficial role of L1 in facilitating learners' collaborative interaction. All these studies were conducted within socio-cultural perspective. Studies considered L1 use by teachers, however, have no special theoretical framework; some have quantified the amount of L1 and TL use. Other studies have quantified L1 and L2 use and also have tried to find out the functions for L1 use.

In an exploratory research Macaro (2001) examined L1 use by student teachers in a FL context. He gained a mean of 6.9% for L1 use which was an insignificant amount. The study found no link between the student teachers' L1 use and the learners' level.

The study conducted by De La Campa and Nassaji (2009) was one of these studies which investigated the amount of L1 use and the reasons and purposes for which L1 was used in two German-as-foreign language classes. On the whole the amount of L2 use was 88.6% and the amount of L1 was 11.3%. The study also examined whether there was difference between the novice and experienced teachers in the extent of L1 use and the functions for which they used it. Both teachers used L1 quite frequently in their classes, but there was difference in the purposes for which they used L1. While the novice instructor used L1 especially for translation, the experienced one used it to make a comfortable and enjoyable environment for his learners.