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## USE OF THE FIRST LANGUAGE IN THE EFL CLASSROOM AS VIEWED BY ENGLISH PHILOLOGY STUDENTS

### SUMMARY

For years there have been debates among applied linguists and in-service teachers as to whether to allow any inclusion of learners' mother tongue in the process of foreign language teaching. Since second language acquisition theories do not offer a precise answer, the actual use of the first language in the classroom depends on the beliefs of teachers and learners. Recent research studies concerning teachers and students' views on whether learners' L1 should be present or avoided in the teaching context seem to suggest that at present the controlled use of the L1 is perceived as beneficial. This article presents the results of a survey study on the perception of the usefulness of the L1 conducted among pre-service teachers of English at the University of Białystok. The findings support the view that the purposeful employment of the L1 may result in an increase in learning outcomes.

**Key words:** role of the L1, foreign language teaching, pre-service teachers' perceptions of the L1

### STRESZCZENIE

#### Użycie języka ojczystego na lekcjach języka angielskiego – opinie studentów filologii angielskiej

Od wielu lat toczą się dyskusje wśród językoznawców i praktykujących nauczycieli, czy język ojczysty uczniów powinien być obecny w procesie nauczania języka obcego. Teorie nabywania drugiego języka nie dają jednoznacznych odpowiedzi. Zakres użycia języka ojczystego zatem zależy od przekonań nauczycieli i uczących się. Ostatnie badania na ten

temat przeprowadzone wśród nauczycieli i uczniów zdają się wskazywać, że ograniczone stosowanie języka pierwszego przynosi korzyści dydaktyczne. Artykuł przedstawia wyniki badań sondażowych dotyczących postrzegania użyteczności języka ojczystego przeprowadzone wśród studentów filologii angielskiej na Uniwersytecie w Białymstoku. Rezultaty potwierdzają wyniki dotychczasowych badań i wskazują, że stosowanie języka ojczystego w procesie uczenia się języka obcego może przynieść pozytywne rezultaty.

**Słowa kluczowe:** rola języka ojczystego, nauczanie języka obcego, postrzegania języka pierwszego przez studentów-przyszłych nauczycieli języków

## 1. Introduction

The debate as to whether to allow any use of the first language in a monolingual foreign language classroom has caused controversy for years<sup>1</sup>. Undeniably, there are supporters and opponents of both the inclusion and exclusion of the L1<sup>2</sup> in the process of FL mastery. On the one hand, the tendency to reduce or even strictly avoid L1 usage in the foreign language classroom still remains popular among some scholars.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, there are research findings which reveal the positive impact of L1 usage upon another language learning<sup>4</sup>. In particular, it has been argued that translation of vocabulary has proved to be an extremely effective learning strategy.<sup>5</sup>

For the last few decades applied linguistics and language education have shared rather negative attitudes towards L1 presence in the process of foreign language learning and teaching. Originally, this was due to the worldwide popularity of the contrastive analysis hypothesis (CAH) which highlighted the position that the L1 interferes with L2 learning and thus becomes an obstacle to the mastery of the latter. CAH seemed to be so appealing that “a large body of data challenging it was ignored for years”<sup>6</sup>. Later, both foreign language teaching and teacher training were inspired by the theoretical assumptions of “the strong version” of communicative language teaching (CLT), which

<sup>1</sup> E. Lewicka-Mroczek, D. Potocka, *Język ojczysty na lekcji języka obcego. Przegląd badań*, [w:] “Z problematyki kształcenia językowego”, E. Awramiuk, M. Karolczuk (red.), Białystok 2016, s. 211–228.

<sup>2</sup> The terms L1, first language and mother tongue are used interchangeably throughout this article. Similarly, the terms L2, FL, second language, another language and foreign language are used interchangeably, indicating no difference in meaning.

<sup>3</sup> A. Sampson, *Learner code-switching versus English only*, “ELT Journal”, 2012, 66, s. 293–303.

<sup>4</sup> T. Knight, *Learning vocabulary through shared speaking tasks*, “The Language Teacher”, 1996, 20, I, s. 24–29.

<sup>5</sup> B. Laufer, K. Shmueli, *Memorizing new words: Does teaching have anything to do with it*, “RELF Journal”, 1997, 28, 1: s. 89–108; I.S.P. Nation, *Learning vocabulary in another language*, Cambridge 2011.

<sup>6</sup> H. Dulay, H. Burt, S. Krashen, *Language Two*, Oxford 1982, s. 97.

advocates that language is acquired exclusively through communication in the target language. Thus, learning English is about using English to learn it<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, since the late 1980s formal foreign language teaching has been strongly inspired by Krashen's<sup>8</sup> input hypothesis and the claim that comprehensible input in the target language (among other influential variables) is decisive in the process of successful mastery of L2. All these factors have created a context supportive of the belief that maximum exposure to the target language is required<sup>9</sup>. This view has generally remained popular until today.

## 2. Overview of research into the relevance of the L1 in the language classroom

It is not surprising then that using the target language as the language of instruction seems to be glorified by practitioners. Language teachers, when asked about their opinion on the role of the L1 in FL teaching, declare themselves to be in favour of the view that language classrooms should remain the setting in which the target language is used exclusively or, at least, that it should dominate as, otherwise, educational outcomes are limited<sup>10</sup>. As highlighted in Yavuz's<sup>11</sup> research, teachers believe that "more communicative skills require the least use of L1". Therefore, use of the native language by practitioners is considered highly unprofessional as it deprives learners of the opportunities to use and master the target language as such. Moreover, the above study showed that some teachers claim that "overuse of L1 is making the students lazy. [...] when students switch to their native language they are neither cognitive nor analytic in understanding the target language".<sup>12</sup> Other research also reveals that references to the first language, even when helpful, tend to be avoided by in-service teachers<sup>13</sup>. Gebhard<sup>14</sup> drew attention to the fact that,

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<sup>7</sup> A.P.R. Howatt, *A History of English Language Teaching*, Oxford 1984.

<sup>8</sup> S. Krashen, *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications*, New York 1985.

<sup>9</sup> C. MacDonald, *Using the target language*, Cheltenham, England 1993; S. Kim, C. Elder, *Language choices and pedagogic functions in the foreign language classroom: A cross-linguistic functional analysis of teacher talk*, "Language Teaching Research", 2005, 9, s. 355–380.

<sup>10</sup> S. Imran, M. Wyatt, *Pakistani university English teachers' cognitions and classroom practices regarding their use of learners' first language*, "Asian EFL Journal" 2015, 17(1), s. 138–179.

<sup>11</sup> F. Yavuz, *The attitudes of English teachers about the use of L1 in the teaching of L2*, "Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences" 2012, 46, s. 4343.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>13</sup> K. Sharma, *Mother tongue use in English classroom*, "Journal of NELTA" 2006, 11(1–2), s. 80–87.

<sup>14</sup> J.G. Gebhard, *Teaching English as a Foreign Language*, Ann Arbor 1996, s. 84.

if students are not motivated to use English in the classroom or are pressured by peers to follow a hidden set of classroom rules that includes interacting in the students' native language, then [...] techniques to compel students to use English can become novelties for the students, ones that will likely wane in their effect quickly.

Such declarations are often in disagreement with genuine teaching practice, where the L1 is not only used but often abused, and which appears to be quite a common classroom behaviour<sup>15</sup>.

It cannot be denied, however, that gradually over the years a more liberal opinion claiming that a native language, when used occasionally by teachers of monolingual classes, is more educational than harmful, has gained numerous supporters among teacher trainers and in-service teachers<sup>16</sup>. There is evidence that using the first language facilitates both the teaching and the learning process. For example, Lin<sup>17</sup>, as a result of her diary study research conducted in Hong Kong, identified the positive influence of using students' L1 upon their comprehension, e.g. when explaining grammar and vocabulary. The teacher concerned found first language especially helpful for controlling discipline problems and giving instructions<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, it seems that using two languages in a foreign language classroom has no negative effects upon the process of vocabulary acquisition<sup>19</sup>. The sporadic presence of the L1 in the FL classroom is expected by learners and recognized as helpful in creating a learner-friendly, anxiety-lowering and motivation-sustaining environment<sup>20</sup>.

Following primary findings on the supportive role of the L1, research on learners' perception of the place of the mother tongue in the language classroom has become popular over recent years again<sup>21</sup>. Although it can be gener-

<sup>15</sup> A.M.Y. Lin, Y. Wu, *May I speak Cantonese? Co-constructing a scientific proof in an EFL junior secondary science classroom*, "International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism", 2015, 18, s. 289–305, <https://hub.hku.hk/bitstream/10722/214647/1/Content.pdf>, DOA: 05.09.2017.

<sup>16</sup> D. Atkinson, *Teaching Monolingual Classes*, London 1993.

<sup>17</sup> A.M.Y. Lin, *Teaching in Two Tongues: Language Alternation in foreign Language Classrooms*, Washington 1990, <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED399799.pdf>, DOA: 05.09.2017.

<sup>18</sup> A.M.Y. Lin, *Teaching in Two Tongues: Language Alternation in foreign Language Classrooms*, Washington 1990, <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED399799.pdf>, DOA: 05.09.2017.

<sup>19</sup> E. Macaro, *Codeswitching in the L2 classroom: a communication and learning strategy*, in: *Non-native Language Teachers: Perceptions, Challenges and Contributions to the Profession*, E. Llurda (red.), Boston, MA 2005, s. 63–84.

<sup>20</sup> E.R. Auerbach, *Reexamining English only in the ESL classroom*, "TESOL Quarterly" 1993, 27/1, s. 9–32.  
C.W. Jr. Schweers, *Using L1 in the L2 Classroom*, "English Teaching Forum Online" 1999, 37/2, s. 6–9.  
E. Carson, H. Kashihara, *Using the L1 in the L2 classroom: The students speak*, "The Language Teacher" 2012, 36.4. July/August, s. 41–48.

<sup>21</sup> C.W. Jr. Schweers, *Using L1 in the L2 Classroom*, "English Teaching Forum Online" 1999, 37/2, s. 6–9.

ally concluded that learners are in favour of using their mother tongue, their views on L1 inclusion into the process of foreign language teaching are neither unambiguous nor explicit. Some of these inconsistencies are discussed below.

Schweers<sup>22</sup> conducted research on the perception and use of the mother tongue during English classes among teachers and students at Puerto Rico University. The study revealed that over 88% of the students expected L1 presence and all the teachers confirmed that they used the mother tongue to a certain extent in their teaching practice. 86% of the students stated that the L1 helped them to understand difficult concepts and 87% believed it facilitated the process of FL learning. It is worth highlighting that learners appreciated the use of the L1 more than their teachers, as it made the former feel more comfortable and confident as well as helped in defining new words and checking comprehension.

Brook-Lewis<sup>23</sup> investigated adult learners' perception of the L1 in the university context in Mexico. She collected declarative data through learners' diaries and reflective essays. The qualitative analysis was supported by findings gathered through a questionnaire administered to a group of 256 subjects, aged from 19 to 72. The following factors were identified as reasons why learners perceived the L1 as beneficial: supporting FL comprehension, making classes more attractive by offering opportunities to express oneself and reducing "classroom shock"<sup>24</sup>.

Carson and Kashihara<sup>25</sup> carried out a questionnaire-based survey among 305 first and second year university participants in EFL classes in Japan. The results revealed that most students wanted the inclusion of the L1 into the teaching process. The first language was recognized as necessary for understanding difficult concepts and vocabulary items. Moreover, the respondents' expectation was that teachers and learners shared the same mother tongue. As the participants of the study were organized into five different groups according to

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K.A. Brooks-Lewis, *Adult Learners' Perceptions of the Incorporation of their L1 in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning*, "Applied Linguistics" 2009, 30/2, s. 216–235; E. Carson, H. Kashihara, *Using the L1 in the L2 classroom: The students speak*, "The Language Teacher" 2012, 36.4. July/August, s. 41–48; G. Neocleus, *Closing the Gap: Student Attitudes Toward First Language Use in Monolingual EFL Classrooms*, "TESOL Journal" 2017, Volume 8, Issue 2, June, s. 314–341.

22 C.W. Jr. Schweers, *Using L1 in the L2 Classroom*, "English Teaching Forum Online" 1999, 37/2, s. 6–9.

23 K.A. Brooks-Lewis, *Adult Learners' Perceptions of the Incorporation of their L1 in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning*, "Applied Linguistics" 2009, 30/2, s. 216–235.

24 *Ibidem*, s. 224.

25 E. Carson, H. Kashihara, *Using the L1 in the L2 classroom: The students speak*, "The Language Teacher" 2012, 36.4. July/August, s. 41–48.

their levels of proficiency, Carson and Kashihara<sup>26</sup> concluded that the L1 was definitely needed by students at lower levels of proficiency. The need for the inclusion of learners' L1 into the process of FL teaching decreased with the students' growth in linguistic proficiency. The majority of the respondents from the four groups including lower levels of proficiency believed that the native language should not occupy more than 40% of all class time, whereas in the fifth group, consisting of participants with more advanced linguistic skills, the frequency of use of the L1 was reduced. This was not surprising in view of the increased proficiency level and the reasons for incorporating the L1 that the subjects emphasized e.g. feeling more comfortable, less tense and secure.

Neokleous<sup>27</sup> conducted a longitudinal observation study on 116 upper-intermediate EFL learners (age ranging from 15 to 17) from four language schools in Cyprus. The study was supported by twenty-minute structured interviews with 57 learners. The focus of the study was to collect data on how often and in what circumstances students used their native language during EFL classes and to investigate their opinion about teachers incorporating the L1 in their instruction. The results revealed that there were numerous occasions for learners' to switch into their mother tongue, such as difficulties in answering the teacher's questions, clarifying their initial message, confirming whether they understood some information properly, requesting or joking.<sup>28</sup> As far as their attitude towards the presence of the L1 in English classes was concerned, the interviewed learners declared that they needed it. The majority of respondents (96.4%) highlighted the advantageous role of the L1 in FL classrooms. 94.7% of all the interviewed learners expressed the view that "potential omission [of L1] could have a negative effect".<sup>29</sup> The positive impact of L1 use upon learners' confidence-building was emphasized by a large group of students (75.4%). As noticed by Neokleous<sup>30</sup>, "a potential slip of a tongue or misuse of an L2 word could subject them to humiliation. The L1 could, therefore, function as a medium for avoiding such possibilities". The opportunity to resort to the native language in a foreign language classroom created a more friendly atmosphere and resulted in learners' increased participation in classes (confirmed by over 50% of subjects). Similarly, learners emphasized the beneficial role of teacher's usage of the L1 during foreign

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<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, s. 41–48.

<sup>27</sup> G. Neocleous, *Closing the Gap: Student Attitudes Toward First Language Use in Monolingual EFL Classrooms*, "TESOL Journal" 2017, Volume 8, Issue 2, June, s. 314–341.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, s. 321–323.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, s. 324.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, s. 327.

language classes. Integration of mother tongue and target language by their EFL teachers was especially expected by learners when explaining and clarifying vocabulary (57.9%) and grammar (70.2%). Translation was perceived by 57.9% of the examined learners as “sustaining their motivation, thus enabling them to keep pace with the lessons’ goals”<sup>31</sup>. A relatively smaller group of learners needed their teachers to give feedback (21%) or to encourage them in the L1 (8.8%).

As mentioned earlier, although more recent research on students’ perception of L1 use in the process of foreign language teaching generally shows that learners are in favour of it, some results indicate that their opinions are ambiguous. For example, Schweers’<sup>32</sup> research generally confirmed that Spanish-speaking university students perceived the use of the L1 as necessary. However, in the same study approximately 99% of learners expected that their teachers should only use the target language. Carson and Kashihara<sup>33</sup> drew attention to the correlation between the level of proficiency and the perceived usefulness of the L1. Although the participants of Neokleous’s<sup>34</sup> study were strongly in favour of the L1 inclusion, he also found a large group of respondents (61.4%) signaling the drawbacks of using the L1 by EFL teachers during English lessons. Almost 51% of the examined learners declared that they saw the “potential danger of their teachers over-relying on translating every new word at once.”<sup>35</sup> The students were clearly aware that such practices might make them dependent on the teacher’s translation. Some respondents in Brook-Lewis’s<sup>36</sup> study required more foreign language use than was actually offered in classes. They stated that English was so different that comparing it with Spanish could be misleading. They also believed that the use of FL was indispensable in the process of mastering it and that listening to teachers speaking English would improve their pronunciation. Brook-Lewis<sup>37</sup>, having analyzed learners’ perception of the inclusion of the L1 into the process of FL teaching, concludes as follows:

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<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, s. 330.

<sup>32</sup> C.W. Jr. Schweers, *Using L1 in the L2 Classroom*, “English Teaching Forum Online” 1999, 37/2, s. 6–9.

<sup>33</sup> E. Carson, H. Kashihara, *Using the L1 in the L2 classroom: The students speak*, “The Language Teacher” 2012, 36.4. July/August, s. 41–48.

<sup>34</sup> G. Neocleus, *Closing the Gap: Student Attitudes Toward First Language Use in Monolingual EFL Classrooms*, “TESOL Journal” 2017, Volume 8, Issue 2, June, s. 314–341.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, s. 331.

<sup>36</sup> K.A. Brooks-Lewis, *Adult Learners’ Perceptions of the Incorporation of their L1 in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning*, “Applied Linguistics” 2009, 30/2, s. 216–235.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem, s. 225.

Thus far it would appear that the scale was balanced on the issue of the incorporation of the L1, and the conclusion could only be that what works for some learners does not for others. However, participants' perceptions of the experience of participating in an EFL course in which the L1 was incorporated are overwhelmingly positive, and at times surprising.

It seems that the prevalent view on the use of the first language in language teaching and learning incorporates a set of beliefs and principles that Macaro<sup>38</sup> calls the "optimal position". The use of L1 in monolingual classes is perceived as a useful and natural practice, which has educational value when applied by teachers and their learners carefully and purposefully.

There is fairly extensive research concerning learners' and in-service teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of the first language in language education. The overview presented above includes only a selection of such studies. However, there is relatively little research on how pre-service teachers perceive the role of the L1 in foreign language instruction. Therefore, the general aim of this research study was to investigate the attitudes of prospective teachers of English towards this issue and to determine whether their participation in methodology courses at university had an impact on their views.

### 3. Methodology of the study

The sample for the research project consisted of 65 BA students in their first and second year at the Department of English of University of Białystok, Poland (group 1, N = 35 and group 2, N = 30, respectively). The first-year students were surveyed prior to their English language teaching course. By the time of the survey, the second-year students had completed a 90-hour course in methodology of teaching English as a foreign language. All students volunteered to take part in the study.

The research instrument used to collect the data was a structured questionnaire, which included the following techniques:

- attitude statements: subjects were asked to record their responses on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *definitely disagree* (1) to *definitely agree* (5);
- selected response items, in which the respondents were asked to select one or multiple options.

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<sup>38</sup> E. Macaro, *Codeswitching in the L2 classroom: a communication and learning strategy*. In: *Non-native Language Teachers: Perceptions, Challenges and Contributions to the Profession*, E. Llorca (red.), Boston, MA 2005, s. 63–84.

The following specific research questions were formulated:

1. How do the pre-service teachers under investigation perceive the role of L1 as compared to L2 in the process of teaching English as a foreign language?
2. Does the completion of the EFL methodology course change their view on the issue in question?
3. In which classroom situations should learners' L1 be used?

#### **4. Results and discussion**

Agreement with the following attitude statements present in the questionnaire was interpreted as demonstrating the respondents' preference for the exclusive use of the L2:

1. All English language teachers should use only English to communicate with their learners (regardless of their level).
2. All English language teachers should use only English to communicate with their learners (regardless of their age).
3. All learners of English (regardless of their level) should use only English to communicate with their English teachers.
4. All learners of English (regardless of their age) should use only English to communicate with their teachers.
5. All learners of English (regardless of their level) should speak English to communicate with other students.
6. All learners of English (regardless of their age) should speak English to communicate with other students.
7. The more English students use in the classroom, the better they learn how to communicate in it.
8. In order to really learn English students must use English exclusively.
9. Teachers should use English at all times regardless of how much English students choose to use.
10. Only English should be used to learn about the grammar and use of the English language.
11. Only English should be used to discuss tests, quizzes, and other assignments.
12. There are no situations in which Polish may be used in the English language classroom.

Agreement with the following attitude statements present in the questionnaire was interpreted as demonstrating the respondents' positive perception of the value of the L1:

13. Polish should be used to discuss course policies, attendance and other administrative issues.

14. Polish should be used to explain new vocabulary, otherwise learners cannot really understand new words.
15. Polish is acceptable when learners (regardless of their age) face any communication break-down.
16. Polish is acceptable when learners (regardless of their level) face any communication break-down.

Table 1 below presents the mean, median and mode values of the respondents' agreement with the statements, where 1 indicates *definitely disagree*, 2 *disagree*, 3 *partially agree*, 4 *agree* and 5 *definitely agree*.

**Table 1.** L2 and L1 preferences

Statement	L2 preference											L1 acceptance				
	1	2	3	3	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Mean	2.94	2.78	2.94	2.80	3.09	3.03	4.27	3.50	3.00	3.03	2.98	2.05	3.80	3.16	3.61	3.50
Median	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00
Mode	3	3	3	3	3	3	5	4	3	3	2	1	4	3	4	4
Standard Deviation	1.210	1.205	1.203	1.198	1.137	1.214	1.198	1.277	1.098	1.154	1.161	1.038	1.086	1.237	1.018	1.054

The majority of the students partially agreed with the statements which showed a definite preference for the use of the L2 in the language classroom. There were only two statements in the first category (L2 preference) that generated high mean values:

- The more English students use in the classroom, the better they learn how to communicate in it.
- In order to really learn English students must use English exclusively.

This may suggest that the participants of the study embrace the main principle of the Communicative Approach, which states that foreign language is learned most effectively in the process of communication.

The only two statements that the respondents disagreed with concerned teaching grammar and discussing the results of tests and assignments. On the other hand, three out of four statements in the second category (L1 acceptance) produced comparatively high mean values. The respondents partially agreed only with one statement:

- Polish should be used to explain new vocabulary, otherwise learners cannot really understand new words.

The results indicate that the participants in the study believe that the mother tongue plays an important role in the process of teaching a foreign language.

One of the factors that might have affected their beliefs in this respect is their opinion that too much Polish was used by their English teachers in the primary, lower secondary and secondary schools (mean, median and mode values respectively: 3.63, 4.00, 5; 3.36, 3.50, 5; 3.06, 3.00, 5).

Negative correlations were established between the respondents' expertise in EFL methodology and their views on the use of the L2 with respect to statement 2 (Spearman's  $\rho = -0.276$ ,  $p = 0.026$ ) and statement 3 (Spearman's  $\rho = -0.366$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ). Correlational analysis indicated that the more knowledgeable the pre-service teachers were, the less frequently they supported the view that teachers should use only English when communicating with younger learners and that learners, regardless of their level of proficiency, should communicate with their teachers in the target language.

As shown by the Mann-Whitney test, there were differences between the two groups within the sample in relation to statements 1, 2, 3, 4 and 11 ( $U = 261.0$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ;  $U = 235.5$ ,  $p = 0.006$ ;  $U = 203.5$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ;  $U = 219.5$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ;  $U = 267.0$ ,  $p = 0.044$ ). Table 2 below presents the mean, median and mode values of the respondents' agreement with the five statements in relation to the two groups of students.

**Table 2.** Differences between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students in terms of L2 and L1 preferences

Statement	1	2	3	4	11
1st year students					
Mean	3.20	3.11	3.32	3.14	3.29
Median	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Mode	3	3	4	3	3
Standard Deviation	1.106	1.231	1.007	1.089	1.073
2nd year students					
Mean	2.63	2.40	2.48	2.38	2.66
Median	3.00	2.50	2.00	2.00	3.00
Mode	3	3	3	3	3
Standard Deviation	1.273	1.070	1.271	1.208	1.045

The analysis of variance demonstrated that the respondents in group 1 were inclined to value the exclusive use of L2 more than second-year students. This may suggest that the completion of the EFL methodology course, which included the discussion on the role of the L1 and micro-teaching tasks, contributed to the second-year students' less rigid attitude towards the employment of the native language in the language classroom.

Table 3 and 4 below present the results yielded by research question 3, which concerns the use of the L1 and L2 in particular teaching/learning contexts.

**Table 3.** Classroom contexts in which teachers should use L2

	classroom management and administration	explanation of new topic or assignment	grammar instruction	explanation of unknown vocabulary	controlling classroom discipline	problems with comprehension	developing a positive relationship with students	giving feedback	teaching young learners	teaching beginners
Mean	0.30	0.84	0.70	0.73	0.69	0.33	0.80	0.89	0.63	0.30
Median	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00
Mode	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0
Standard Deviation	0.460	0.366	0.460	0.445	0.467	0.473	0.406	0.315	0.488	0.460
Per cent	29.2	83.1	69.2	72.3	67.7	32.3	78.5	87.7	61.5	29.2

**Table 4.** Classroom contexts in which teachers should use L1

	classroom management and administration	explanation of new topic or assignment	grammar instruction	explanation of unknown vocabulary	controlling classroom discipline	problems with comprehension	developing a positive relationship with students	giving feedback	teaching young learners	teaching beginners
Mean	0.66	0.27	0.38	0.41	0.41	0.52	0.33	0.19	0.44	0.73
Median	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Mode	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Standard Deviation	0.479	0.445	0.488	0.495	0.495	0.504	0.473	0.393	0.500	0.445
Per cent	64.6	26.2	36.9	40.0	40.0	50.8	32.3	18.5	43.1	72.3

Over 60% of the respondents declared that English should dominate in the following situations:

- giving feedback;
- explanation of new topic or assignment;

- developing a positive relationship with students;
- explanation of unknown vocabulary;
- grammar instruction;
- teaching young learners.

Over 50% of the participants stated that Polish should be used in three classroom contexts:

- teaching beginners;
- classroom management and administration;
- problems with comprehension.

It seems that the results yielded in response to research question 3 are not homogeneous. Although the majority of the respondents assert that in most situations teachers are expected to use the target language, there is still a considerable number of respondents who believe that the native language may be employed in many circumstances to solve problems and facilitate learning.

## 5. Conclusions

The findings of this research study clearly demonstrate that the pre-service teachers under investigation are in favour of using the mother tongue in the language classroom. Despite their unanimous opinion that language is acquired in the process of communication, they still seem to perceive the L1 as an important teaching/learning tool. Such beliefs may underlie their reluctance to accept the exclusive use of the L2 in the language classroom. The factors that affect the respondents' opinions may be diverse, including deficient teaching skills or previous learning experience. The expository mode of teaching favours using the native language as a means of providing step-by-step instruction. The traditional transmission model of teaching, which is still prevalent in many Polish educational settings, may have influenced the students' perceptions of the use of the L1. The results may suggest as well that the respondents adhere to the view that the moderate use of the mother tongue is allowed or even desirable if it facilitates learning, which forms part of the 'weak version' of CLT.

On the other hand, the respondents in the study declare that the target language should be used in a number of teaching situations, such as presenting new topic or task, providing feedback, explaining new lexical items, presenting grammar structures and developing a good rapport with learners. They also restrict the use of the L1 to classroom management, teaching beginners and dealing with comprehension problems. These classroom contexts seem to provide sufficient justification for resorting to the native language.

In conclusion, the results of the study suggest that the pre-service teachers under investigation believe that learning a foreign language in the L2 environment is necessary to develop communicative competence. Using the L1 in a moderate way makes the process more efficient. Interestingly, the respondents who have more expertise in teaching, namely second-year students, show slightly more liberal views with respect to the use of the L1 than first-year students. It should be noted as well that the findings show a certain degree of ambiguity and it seems that the students' opinions are still in the process of modification and change.

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