RJSSER

Research Journal of Social Sciences & Economics Review

Teachers' Bilingual Cognition in English as a Second Language (ESL) Context: Knowledge, Beliefs and Practices about Language-1 Use

* Maida Ijaz, MS Scholar (Corresponding Author)

** Dr. Muhammad Sabboor Hussain, Assistant Professor (English)

*** Dr. Aisha Farid, Assistant Professor (English)

_____

Abstract

There is a growing perception in the academic world that the ideas that people hold are the best predictors of the choices they make in their daily lives (Bandura, 1986). A growing body of data-based research proves that instructors' opinions impact their classroom actions and practices. This scenario stands established in different scenarios, but very little research focuses on teachers' and learners' cognition concerning L1 use in classroom settings; while some focus on beliefs and practices in Pakistan, little focus is at the college level. Cognition and belief of teachers regarding L1 use in the classroom and their peculiar practices influence their knowledge beliefs. This research used a Questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale to understand the knowledge, beliefs, and practices of language teachers about L1 use. After computations and analysis, the data is presented in a tabular shape and analyzed. At the same time, interviews are conducted to understand better the teaching creeds and reasons for the instructors' particular beliefs and practices. Twenty-two participants in this study were educators in different colleges in Pakistan who participated quantitatively; five of them were selected to investigate their opinions on bilingual cognition and their beliefs and practices of L1 usage in the classroom through interviews. The result shows that using L1 is very important and necessary for the smooth teaching/learning process and positively affects the learners, their psyches, attention span and motivation.

Keywords: ELT Classroom, Second Language Teaching, Teacher's Beliefs, Use of L1 in ELT, Teacher Cognition; First Language Use; Pakistani Higher Education; English Language Teaching (ELT)

Introduction & Background of the Study

The application of L1 use (Bilingual strategies) in the classroom in teaching English to other linguistic groups and speakers of other languages (TESOL) has long been a source of a heated argument. There have been periodic swings between the English-only classroom and the permitted use of learners' L1. In the past, analysts, academicians and researchers undervalued the relevance of L1, but this has changed fast in recent times. It is widely recognized as a crucial component of classroom management of English Language Teaching (ELT). The major focus of the recent studies in EFL and ESL is to study the benefits and harms of L1 use in a language class (Turnbull, 2002; Sameen, Farid & Hussain, 2021; Yanan, 2008; Hashemi & Sabet, 2013; Albasher, Hussain & Farid, 2018; Ahmad, Radzuan, & Hussain, 2018). The studies focused on teachers' and learners' perspectives on the effect of L1 use in English language learning and teaching in different contexts. It is important to notice that L1 use is more frequent and prominent in cases where the teachers are bilinguals with the same L1 as the learners' L1 (the shared language background). However, with the changed perspectives and realization of the dire need for learners' English language skills development, bilingual teachers are forced to focus on what medium of instruction and how much L1 they use or should use. Thus, practitioners' perceptions of L1 use in the L2 classroom have been a noteworthy crusade.

_____

*   GC Women University Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan Email: imaidaijaz@gmail.com
**   GC Women University Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan Email: saboor.hussain@gcwus.edu.pk
*** GC Women University Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan Email: aisha.farid@gcwus.edu.pk

Scope and Significance

Around the world, teachers' influence is very much recognizable; even though there has been an interest in teachers' cognition, their beliefs are still debatable and debated. Teachers' perspectives, just a subset of the wider issue of teacher cognition, have been investigated in relation to their classroom practices. Teacher beliefs, a subset of the wider area of teacher cognition, have been investigated as a factor affecting teachers' preferences and decisions in the classroom resulting in low or high linguistic proficiency development of the learners.

Statement of the Problem

Teacher participation in the reform process in Pakistan is negligible. The prevalent practice is to obey either the Ministry of Education's (MoE) or the Higher Education Commission's (HEC) directions. Teachers' voices as the practitioners in the field facing the partly bitter and partly sweet ground realities are not given due importance, representation, and recognition. It is impossible to improve the English teaching-learning situation in Pakistan without thoroughly comprehending these instructors' beliefs. Teacher cognition study findings also inform the need for teacher training, development, and policymaking. The Pakistani Education system has a narrow-minded approach toward teachers' beliefs to be incorporated into classroom practices. Very few studies focus on language use in relation to teachers' cognition, professional practices, or actual behaviour patterns. As a result, further research is needed to understand Pakistani ESL instructors' cognitions and classroom behaviours, particularly at the college level. This article focuses on this gap by investigating ELT instructors' knowledge, beliefs, and practices in the English classroom and their implications in Pakistan. Very little research focuses on cognition in relation to L1 use in classroom settings, while others focus on beliefs and practices in Pakistan in a general way. However, very less focus is on the college level, where students get ready to go to the university level, where the whole coursework and the official teaching-learning process is in English.

Limitations and Delimitations

This investigation emphasizes the Knowledge, Beliefs and Practices of teachers' L1 use in classrooms and does not focus on students' beliefs and perceptions. This study manages just a single cognitive factor, "language" other cognitive highlights such as learning and memory, executive skills, cognitive awareness, social cognition, and sensory and motor functions are all the implications of this study for future researchers. Due to time constraints, the study is delimited to Knowledge, Beliefs and Practices of L1 use in classrooms of four teachers. This study focuses on college education and college English language teachers. It does not focus on school and university levels nor considers the gender differences in teacher cognition about their teaching practices concerning L1 use in English language teaching.

Aims and Objectives

Investigating in-services teachers' beliefs and practices on L1 use may help better L2 use in the classroom. Teachers' well-reflected and research-based beliefs and practices help in learner development in a big way. The main objectives of the present study are to identify the following:

- Cognition and belief of teachers regarding L1 use in the classroom and their resultant practices
- Influence of their beliefs on the overall English language teaching (ELT) process.

Research Question

The basic research question (BRQ) for this study is: How do the beliefs about the use of the L1 held by teachers at the college level affect their classroom practices?

The subsidiary research questions are:

1) What role does the L1 play in the ELT classroom?
2) What are teachers' beliefs regarding using L1, and how do they inform and transform them into actual classroom practices?
3) What influence transforms the teachers' beliefs, and how does it affect their practice?

Literature Review

Borg defines the unmeasured cognitive aspect of teaching, or what teachers understand, assume, and reckon, as teacher cognition (Borg, 2003). Since general study themes have been included in language teachers' cognition research, there may occasionally be conceptual uncertainty (Borg, 2006). The definition of teacher cognition refers to several of these ideas without more clarification, most notably "knowledge," "beliefs," "practices", and "perceptions." While some have distinguished

between knowledge and belief, others frequently use the terms interchangeably (Woods, 2011). The ideas of knowledge and belief are interrelated, according to Fivers & Buehl (2012). They assert that "factually, these ideas are hard to unravel, and differences between them become blurred."(p. 476). Parallel thinking is held by Meijer (2001)), who states that "in the instructor's brain, elements of knowledge, beliefs, perceptions, and insights are intricately interwoven" (p. 446). According to one broad conclusion drawn from this research, the research on teacher beliefs is crucial for understanding instructors' behaviour patterns. Beliefs influence how we acquire and understand knowledge (Nespor, 1987), create a project, and present the course materials (Gain, 2001) and how teachers carry out the curriculum. Teacher cognition is a phenomenon crucial for teachers, educational administrators and learners to understand for smooth sailing of the effective, meaningful and mindful teaching/learning process.

The Use of L1

Research has revealed that L1 significantly impacts the L2 learning process. Learners develop and utilize new language using past linguistic expertise. Such achievements give compelling rationale and theoretical proof in favour of their application. In this context, Ellis (2008) says that during the target language acquisition process, students are inclined to establish their intermediate norms by leveraging their first language proficiency. He observes that pupils convert their thoughts from their native tongue to the target language. Viewed thus, Mother Tonge (MT) gives a great competitive edge to the ESL learner.

L1, as a mother tongue, is a language that an individual acquires in the early stages of life, becoming their natural way of thinking and communicating (Atkinson, 1987, p. 43). In English language teaching, the use of L1 is still debatable. Much research has been carried out to understand the concepts of language transfer and contrastive analysis and their role in second language learning. Stern (1992., p. 279) emphasizes the part that L1 plays in L2 learning as one of the most long-lasting disagreements in the history of language research. All this has led to the conflicting thoughts on the issue at hand.

Cook (2001) has been a great proponent of L1 use in L2 learning. He believes that L1 supports L2 acquisition. Even if some teachers tend to practice L2 only approach in their teaching, there is strong evidence that learners always experience a mental connection between L1 and L2. Cummins (2007) has generated the Linguistic Independence Principle that emphasizes the positive transfer of academic proficiency from L1 to L2 and highlights the importance of the effective use of L1 in L2 teaching and learning. However, many studies consider L1 use as a hindrance in L2 learning and stress its avoidance to maximize learning (Turnbull,2001; McDonald, 1993; Krashen, 1981). McDonald (1993) insists on avoidance of L1 use in L2 classes because a classroom is the only place where learners find exposure to L2, and the opportunity cannot be sacrificed by using L1. Krashen's Input hypothesis (1981) also asserts the implementation of an L2-only approach to maximize the efficiency of L2 input. Various studies found arguments for and against using L1 in L2 learning/teaching.

Arguments Against L1

We can find many studies contradicting the use of L1 in second-language education. They show the negative influence of the mother tongue; because of that, they insist on using the target language while teaching L2. According to them, overdo of L1 lessen the experience of a second language, hinders language use, and reduces learners' exposure to L2 (Turnbull, 2002). In the Pakistani context, a study was carried out by Sameen, Farid & Hussain (2021) among university students to determine the impact of teachers' code-switching in English classes on students' English language skills development. They concluded that too much dependence on code-switching led to students' poor English language skills development. Therefore, it was recommended that, if necessary, students' first language use in learning English as a second language may be practised only in the first phase of the university education and must be shunned as the students' progress.

Arguments in Favour of L1

Some arguments favour the use of L1 in class. Tang (2002) finds that learning where teachers use L1 to explain complex phenomena, problematic words, and grammar-related notions is quite effective. According to him, 70% of teachers favour using L1. Recent studies (Yanan, 2008) point out that despite there were negative effects of L1, it is impossible to avoid the use of the first language; according to him, excessive and intensive use of the first language causes a negative impact on the

process of learning, while timely and little use of L1 can help the new learner of language to overcome any confusion and anxiety. Hashemi & Sabet (2013) concluded in their study about the use of Persian in teaching English in Iranian universities that judicious use of L1 might help English language learners overcome the problems of anxiety, nervousness, and low self-esteem. Albasher, Hussain and Farid (2018) studied the role of L1 (Arabic) in addressing foreign language classroom anxiety in Arab English language learners. They have concluded that learners' L1, if used occasionally and judiciously, aims to keep learners' self-esteem and self-image intact and brings their FLCA down, helping speed up the language learning process.

The above-given studies show that there is still a lot of confusion about using L1 in the education environment, which demands further research on this topic. It also shows us that most research is conducted at the university or school level, whereas there is no focus on the college level. The present probe brings together the focus on the college level and the teacher's cognition and use of L1.

Methodology

This study follows a mixed-method approach by using both qualitative and quantitative methods. This study was conducted in Pakistan; a total of 21 English Language teachers with diverse teaching experience from 1 year to twenty years from different colleges participated in this study. The researchers used convenience sampling and approached the participants who agreed to participate. Triangulation was applied by using a survey and a semi-structured interview to reach some valid conclusions.

The participants were instructed to fill out a closed-ended questionnaire with 19 items on their use of L1. The adapted questionnaire (Cronbach's alpha coefficient calculated as 0.7 in Hashemi, SM, 2013) was validated and localized by a panel of English language teachers/experts whose useful criticism and feedback helped finalize the tool. This poll investigated not just participants' opinions but also the volume and persistence of L1 usage in L2 classrooms. Participants were asked to rate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statements on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being a strong agreement. Data analysis is based on descriptive statistics for the survey results using frequency distribution and percentage. Each assertion's data was tallied in percentages, and the "mean" was determined to assess the degree of consensus surrounding each claim.

Five participants were selected to undergo interviews to address the second question and third research questions specifically, and interviews with the instructors were conducted and recorded. These were critical in gathering qualitative information on instructors' attitudes toward using the L1. All the interviews were semi-structured, providing the scope to go as deep into the investigation as possible (Drever, 1995). We had a subject list we wanted to address, but instructors were free to discuss anything else they thought was pertinent. Furthermore, because our precise questions were based on the questionnaire, teachers were asked to give personal experiences and examples to solidify these beliefs and opinions.

Analysis

Table 1. Main outcomes

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean
Statement 1. My students appreciate how I teach grammatical principles in English classes using my first language.					
0.00 %	4.5 %	9.1 %	68.2%	18.2 %	4
2. Whenever I use L1 in my English classes, students frequently use L1 rather than English.					
4.5 %	18.2 %	9.1 %	50 %	18.2 %	3.59
Statement 3. Students try less to understand my usage of English the more I speak in my first language.					
4.5%	31.8 %	9.1%	45.5 %	9.1%	3.22

Statement 4. My pupils appreciate how I teach basic grammar ideas in English and more complex topics in my own language.

0.0 %	13.6 %	22.7 %	50 %	13.6 %	3.63

Statement 5. Since using L1 in English classes lessens students' exposure to the language, teachers should not use it.

0.00 %	40.9 %	13.6 %	27.3 %	18.2 %	3.22

Statement 6. Understanding a word's meaning in your first language is the only way to understand it in English fully.

0.00 %	40.9 %	0.0%	40.9 %	18.2 %	2.95

Statement 7: L1 use in English classes must be kept to a minimum.

0.00%	27.3 %	9.1 %	54.5 %	9.1 % 3.90

Statement 8: I occasionally use L1 to explain my objectives

0.00 %	9.1 %	4.5%	77.3 %	9.1 %	3.86

9. The usage of L1 in English classes helps pupils feel less anxious.

4.5 %	13.6 %	0.00%	63.6 %	18.2 %	3.77

Statement 10: When I speak to my students in their first language, they feel more at ease.

0.00 %	9.1%	0.00 %	68.2 %	22.7 %	4.04

Statement 11: My students can convey sentiments and thoughts they c describe in English using their first language.

0.00 %	9.1 %	9.1%	63.6%	18.2 %	4.13

Statement 12: It is important to discuss how L1 differs from English and vice versa.

0 %	9.1 %	22.7 %	40.9 %	27.3 %	3.86

(Adapted from Hashemi, SM, 2013)

Teachers' responses to statements 1,2, and 3 show that students strongly request using L1 to explain grammatical rules, to give directions for class events, to give instructions effectively, and to learn new and more words. According to teachers, most students require L1 for clarification purposes.

Similarly, responses to item 6 demonstrate that students (40.9% percent agreed and 18.2% strongly agree) grasp difficult grammatical phrases and concepts in L1.

For reading material (item 9), there is considerable agreement between instructors' beliefs and students' expectations against translating English literature into L1. Eighty-six percent of instructors (68.2%) want their students to translate text into L1 for text comprehension. It demonstrates that most instructors are opposed to text translation in L1. On the statement about the minimal use of L1 in the classroom, teachers agreed (54.5) and strongly agreed (9.1%).

It is seen that students sense extra comfort when using L1 to some extent, and they can express something they cannot shape up in L2. It is good for the classroom environment and the smooth understanding of L2.

Table 1 Do you think the following reasons prompt the use of L1 in the ELT classroom?

Purpose	Number of respondents	Percentage
Clarification	9	40.9%
Giving instructions effectively	11	50%
Translation	4	18.2%
Socializing	5	22.7%

Most teachers agree that they use L1 for clarification (40.9%) which helps students understand and builds the required ability to do well in their studies and remember L2-related words in long-term memory and helps them understand future plans and purposes. In comparison (50 %) say that they use L1 mostly to give students instructions effectively, increasing their proficiency and work efficiency. If they know all the steps of their task clearly, they will be able to do the task better and better. 18.2% use it for translation, and 22.7% use it for socialization with students as student-teacher relation gets more open, free, and frank, and the students can ask about any confusion or tell any observation freely.

Table 2 How often do you use L1 in Classroom?

Answer	Number of respondents	Percentage
Always	1	4.5%
Usually,	11	50%
Sometimes	10	45.5%
Never	0	0%

Table-2 shows us how much teachers use L1 in their classroom environment 50% use it usually while 45.5% use it sometime in their classroom while 4.5% that is 1 out of 22 use it always at the same time, and no one opted for never shows us that each of them has used L1 to some level in their ELT classroom. It also shows us the importance of using L1 in the classroom and making an effective learning process for students.

Table 3 I Use L1 in Classroom

Amount of Use	No. of respondents	Percentage
0%	0	0%
10-20%	3	13.6%
20-40%	9	40.9%
50-70%	10	45.5%
80-100%	0	0%

This graph again shows us that no one opted for 0%; almost 3 participants opted for 10-20 percent, that is 13.6%, nine participants went for low forty percent, and ten (10) went for between 50 to 70 percent at the same time, no one opted for 100 percent. Hence, it indicates that L1 use can be low or high, but no one uses L1 or L2; they opt to use it according to to need.

Interviews

The interviews revealed teachers' attitudes toward the use of L1. We looked at the answers teachers gave to our questions and found recurring themes that these responses generated.

All the teachers agreed that L1 was helpful in college-level ELT classrooms. According to one teacher, "At the initial and basic level till Matric or O-level use L1 is highly recommended because our cultural and native structure plays a great role in it". Another comment was about the need to expose L1 in the classroom. Participants replied, "it will meet the needs of their learning and their juxtaposition with L2. It will lead to a comfortable co-existence of L1 and L2."

As one of the participants shared that before teaching, he used to think that the ideal way was using the direct method to have higher proficiency of students. However, in reality, they need L1 and gradual input toward the direct method. Teaching the indirect method is not applicable due to syllabus constraints at the college level because it has translation and vocabulary that must be understood before learning.

All the participants repetitively said that "students are very used to using L1 to learn L2 from primary to elementary to secondary level… they are unable to let go of L1 during learning."

According to another participant, "L1 is necessary for English Language classroom because students have no proper interaction with vocabulary" according to him ", students at an initial level do not have to take help from L1 to build their concepts."

When asked how they form this opinion, one participant said, "our society is made up of so jumbled in multi-cultured, economic and political zones where parents are fed-up with education. They consider as a taboo and anti-religious branch of knowledge… it will be difficult to guide and convince the students and parents without using L1 the efficacy and credibility of L2. While another participant said, "As an English language teacher, it helps me to share my knowledge with students clearly and independently. It fills the gap and develops understanding between the students and teachers."

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that professors frequently use L1 mostly for ease of clarification, smooth working, and productivity with the massive collaboration of dispelling, for translation purposes and to some extent socializing in the classroom. All this helps the students to a better understanding of their task and for their future L2 understanding and use. At the same time, increasing the learning aptitude and covering the lack of L2 vocabulary and knowledge sharing becomes easy. The findings are in line with the previous studies carried out in other parts of the world— Hashemi & Sabet in Iran (2013) and Albasher, Hussain & Farid in KSA (2018).

To answer the second question, "What are teachers' beliefs regarding the use of L1, and what are their actual classroom practices?" teachers tend to believe that social and economic factors play their part in cognition building. Many other differences hinder the L2 learning proficiency and their regular use of L1 from primary to metric level as a learning tool. L2 has become so rigid that using L1 is necessary. They need to cover the lack of L2 knowledge of students. Even if they think L1 is required, they also believe it should be used as minimum as possible. It should be used according to the need of the students. It depends on what they are teaching; for example, if they are teaching translation, there will be much use of L1, while if they are reading and discussing something, they only point to difficult words in L1 for students' understanding.

The third question was, "what has influenced their beliefs and how has it changed their practice?" They mostly shared that students needed a basic answer to give them the knowledge to become more proficient in L2. Even one participant believed that there should be only the use of the target language. However, after getting into teaching and in the reality of the classroom, he understood the need for L1, that is, to "deliver knowledge smoothly", "cover lack of vocabulary", and "give ideas that are unable to be delivered in L2 vocabulary". These findings show that though Pakistani English language teachers in colleges understand the importance of providing maximum comprehensible input to their learners, as stressed by Krashen (1981), McDonald (1993) and Turnbull (2002); however, they understand that the students entering colleges are not so comfortable in L2 only instruction. They require some help through L1 in comprehending difficult concepts, and thus, L1 may be used according to the learners' needs and problems, supporting the findings of the studies like Tang (2002), Yanan (2008) and Sameen, Farid & Hussain (2021).

Conclusion

According to this research, it is crucial to recognize the value of L1 while teaching L2, and its excessive usage in the classroom might impede student progress. It enables pupils to practice and learn the language via meaning negotiation, but English should be the primary language of communication in the classroom (Schweers, 1999). There should be a thematic progression, logical switch, and smooth transition between L1 use at the initial stage and total L2 use when the learners attain the desired proficiency in the target language.

References

Ahmad, I., Radzuan, NRM., & Hussain, MS., (2018). Use of First Language in the Classroom: Non-native EFL Teachers' Beliefs in Teaching English to Adult Learners in Bilingual Context Arab World English Journal, 9 (2).

Albasher, K., Hussain, MS., & Farid, A., (2018). Use of Saudi EFL Adult Learners' L1 to Address Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety. *Arab World English Journal, 9 (2),* 379–396.

Atkinson, D., (1987). The mother tongue in the classroom: A neglected resource. *ELT Journal, pp. 41*, 241–247.

Bandura, AN., (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory.* Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Borg, S., (2003). *Review article: Teacher cognition in language teaching: a review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, do.".*

Borg, s. (2006). *Teacher Cognition and Language Education: Research and Practice.* Continuum.

Cook V. (2001). Using the first language in the classroom. *Canadian Modern Language Review, 57*(3), 402–423.

Cummins J., (2007). Rethinking monolingual instructional strategies in multilingual classrooms. Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 10(2), 221–240.

Drever, E., (1995). *Using Semi-Structured Interviews in Small-Scale Research. A Teacher's Guide,* Edinburgh: Scottish council of research in education.

Ellis, R., (1994). The Study of Second Language Acquisition, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. vii + 824 pp

Fives, H., (2012). Spring cleaning for the "messy" construct of teachers' beliefs: What are they? Which have been examined? What can they tell us? doi:10.1037/13274-019

Gahin, GH., (2001). An investigation into Egyptian EFL teachers' beliefs. In Bridging the gap between teacher and learner: Selected papers from the 2000 international conference. *Vol. 5.*

Hashemi, MK., (2013). The Iranian EFL Students' and Teachers' Perception of Using Persian in General English Classes. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, p. 2.

Krashen SD., (1981). Second language acquisition and second language learning. Oxford: Pergamon Press Inc.

McDonald, C., (1993). Using the target language. Cheltenham, U.K.: Mary Glasgow.

Meijer, P., ((2001)). Similarities and Differences in Teachers' Practical Knowledge About Teaching Reading Comprehension. *Journal of Educational Research - J EDUC RES.*, 171-184. doi:10.1080/00220670109599914.

Nespor. (1987). The role of beliefs in the practice of teaching. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, pp. 19*, 317–328.

Sameen, S., Farid, A. & Hussain, MS., (2021). A critical discourse analysis of the impact of code-switching on modern adult language learners' motivation in Pakistan. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 17 (1),* 109-121.

Schweers, C., ((1999). Using L1 in the L2 Classroom. English Teaching Forum, *37*, 6-13.

Stern, HH., (1992.). Issues and options in language teaching. *Oxford Press*, 260-79.

Tang, J., (2002). Using L1 in the English classroom. . *English Teaching Forum*, 36–43.

Turnbull, M., (2002). Teachers' uses of the target and first languages in the second and foreign language classroom. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, pp. 22*, 204–218.

Turnbull M., (2001). There is a role for the L1 in second and foreign language teaching, but ... *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 54*(4), 531-540

Woods, D., (2011). Two dimensions of teacher knowledge: The case of communicative language teaching. *Fuel and Energy Abstracts.*, 39. DOI: pp. 381–390. 10.1016/j.system.2011.07.010.

Yanan, S., (2008). *The L1 in L2 Learning - Teachers' Beliefs and Practices.* Lincom GmbH.