Students' Use of L1 in Response to Referential Questions in Tertiary English Classes
Yükseköğrenim İngilizce Sını arında Göndergesel Sorulara Karşılık Öğrencilerin Ana Dil Kullanımı

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Abstract

Teacher questions play a significant role in English classrooms since they trigger interaction and promote oral production. Among teacher questions, referential questions that seek information not known by the teacher and are asked to elicit students' personal data, feelings, and ideas are particularly important because they require self-expression, in-depth thinking and complex use of language. It is likely for students in English classrooms to use L1 in response to referential questions due to the sophisticated responses they require and other factors such as lack of proficiency and/or motivation, yet the issue has not yet been investigated. This study aims to analyse English teachers' descriptions and views about the students' use of L1 in response to referential questions. Thirty-one instructors teaching at the tertiary level in Turkey participated in the study. The data were collected via open-ended questionnaires, focus group interviews, and teacher journals, and analysed via thematic analysis. The findings display the participants' descriptions of the contexts of students' L1 use in response to referential questions, their views on the reasons for the use of L1 and their attitudes about the issue. The study, as the first of its kind, has noteworthy conclusions and implications for English language teaching contexts.

Keywords: Referential questions, use of L1, code-switching, English language teaching, English as a foreign language

Öz

Öğretmen soruları İngilizce sınıflarında etkileşimi başlatmaları ve sözlü üretimi geliştirmeleri nedeniyle önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Öğretmen soruları arasında yanıtları öğretmen tarafından bilinmeyen ve öğrencilerin kişisel bilgileri, duygu ve düşüncelerini almak için sorulan göndergesel sorular özellikle önemlidir zira bu türden sorular kişinin kendini ifade etmesini, derin düşünmeyi ve karmaşık dil kullanımı gerektirmektedir. Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce sınıflarında öğrencilerin göndergesel sorulara karşılık ana dil kullanması bu soruların karmaşık ve çok yönlü yanıtlar gerektirmesi ve yeterlilik ve/veya motivasyon eksikliği gibi başka faktörler nedeniyle muhtemeldir ancak bu konu henüz araştırılmamıştır. Bu çalışma İngilizce öğretmenlerinin göndergesel sorulara karşılık öğrencilerin ana dil kullanımıyla ilgili betimlemelerini ve görüşlerini analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmaya Türkiye'de yükseköğrenim düzeyinde öğretim yapan 31 öğretim görevlisi katılmıştır. Veriler açık uçlu anketler, odak grup mülakatları ve öğretmen günlükleri aracılığıyla toplanmış ve tematik analiz ile incelenmiştir. Sonuçlar katılımcıların öğrencilerin göndergesel sorulara karşılık ana dil kullandıkları bağlamlara ilişkin betimlemelerini, ana dil kullanımının nedenleri ile ilgili görüşlerini ve bu konuya ilişkin tutumlarını ortaya koymaktadır. Türünün ilk örneği olan çalışmanın İngilizce dili öğretilen bağlamlara yönelik kayda değer sonuçları ve çıkarımları vardır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Göndergesel sorular, ana dil kullanımı, düzenek değiştirme, İngilizce dili öğretimi, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce

Introduction

Teacher questions play a significant role in the English classroom as they are the energizers of outputs produced by students, initiators of possible chain reactions of interaction and means for self-discovery and improvement (Brown, 2007). On the basis of the nature of interaction that teacher questions generate, they can be classified into two as display questions and referential questions (Brock, 1986; Long and Sato, 1983; Thompson, 1991; Thornbury, 1996). Display questions are questions that attempt to elicit information already known by the teacher so they are asked to check information. On the other hand, referential questions are those that request information not known by the teacher so they are asked to make students provide personal data, express their feelings and opinions and share information and ideas.

According to Nunan (1989), learners make more effort and more in-depth processing in answering referential questions compared to display questions since the former requires more complicated responses and creative production. Also, referential questions are maintained to prompt more participation in the classroom, since the responses to these questions are unlimited and they have the potential to lead to a positive context where the students can freely express

themselves and their opinions (Ozcan, 2010). As referential questions have no one specific answer, they are likely to pave the way for 'natural' responses and authentic communication (Nunan and Lamb, 1996). Moreover, the teacher's use of referential questions in language classrooms can enhance the chance for negotiation of meaning between the teacher and learners (Morell, 2007). As stated by Walsh and Li (2013), referential questions can also encourage learners to have debates and discussions, increase students' involvement and productivity and lead to more complex language use as they serve the main function of expressing personal meanings.

It was Long and Sato (1983) who first reported that referential questions, which are mostly used in conversations outside classrooms, were rarely asked by the teacher in the second language (L2) classroom and display questions dominated the classroom discourse. Studies focusing on the comparison of referential questions to display questions in L2 classrooms also found that language teachers ask more display questions in the classroom than referential questions (e.g. David, 2007; Erlinda and Dewi, 2014; Farahian and Rezaee, 2012; Fitriani and Amilia, 2017; Qashoa, 2012; Shomoossi, 2004; Yang, 2010; Yilmaz, 2016; Zohrabi, Yaghoubi-Notash and Khiabani, 2012). Additionally, according to research, referential questions can influence the extent and complexity of student output. For example, in the study of Brock (1986) on the effects of referential questions on adult ESL classroom discourse, referential questions were found to be replied with long sentences with a majority of logical connectors. There are also studies comparing the answers provided for referential questions with those given to display questions (Bozorgian and Fallah, 2017; Lindenmeyer, 1990; Ozcan, 2010; Qashoa, 2012; Yilmaz, 2016; Zohrabi, Yaghoubi-Notash and Khiabani, 2012) and they showed that referential questions are answered with longer and more complex outcomes compared to display questions.

It is likely for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students to answer referential questions in the first language (L1) due to the long and sophisticated responses they require as well as several other factors as mentioned below. Such kind of L1 use is dependent on the stances taken by practitioners regarding the use of L1 in the L2 classroom. There are mainly three stances on this issue, namely avoiding L1, extensive use of L1 or the use of L1 to a certain extent. According to the first view, L1 must be completely avoided from the classroom environment and the only language used in the class must be the language the students are learning, namely L2. This view is substantiated by audiolingualism, oral and direct methods (Larsen-

Freeman, 2000). At the other end of the continuum, L1 is seen to be central in L2 learning, thus the methodology depends on comparatively analysing the structural aspects of two languages and teaching lexical items and grammatical structures on the basis of translation. It is grammar translation method that supports this perspective (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). According to the third view, in-between the two extremes, the use of L1 is seen to be a supportive vehicle to be used limitedly, that is only in the appropriate circumstances. Thus the use of L1 is allowed as it promotes learning but the use must be limited and L2 must still be the governing language in the class. This paradigm gained prominence in English language teaching following the emergence of the communicative language teaching approach (Atkinson, 1993; Harmer, 1983; Weschler, 1997) and it still prevails to be the mainstream approach in current pedagogies. To illustrate, in the pedagogy of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), L1 is conceived to be an essential asset of a non-native speaker and moderate use of L1 in the English classroom is accepted to be an egalitarian and humanitarian way of embracing non-native users of English with their own backgrounds and characteristics (Kemaloglu-Er and Bayyurt, 2018, 2019a, 2019b). Also, in Global Englishes teaching, L1 is defined to be a resource that influences diverse varieties of English spoken by interlocutors with multifaceted L1 backgrounds and acts as a means to understand and be informed about such richness (Galloway and Rose, 2018).

There are several studies that highlight the existence and the necessity of L1 and its facilitating role in L2 learning underlining the fact that L1 use assumes a compensatory role in the L2 classroom and promotes learning, yet it must be used moderately and judiciously otherwise it may hinder the processes of learning and communication (e.g. Duff and Polio, 1990; Lally, 2000; Lin, 2008; Macaro, 2009; Macaro and Lee, 2013; Martin-Jones, 1995; Miles, 2004; Sampson, 2012; Sutherland, 2012; Turnbull, 2001; Üstünel and Seedhouse, 2005; Xu, 2012; Vaezi and Mirzaei, 2007; Zabrodskaja, 2007). In the Turkish context, in general terms, a positive attitude towards the use of L1 is seen among teachers and it is often believed that it has a supportive role both for learning and teaching L2 effectively in monolingual classes particularly at lower levels (Balabakgil and Mede, 2016; Koylu, 2018; Sali, 2014; Tasci and Atac, 2020; Timucin and Baytar, 2015; Yıldız and Yeşilyurt, 2017). On the other hand, there are also some teachers who think L1 as a barrier to foreign language learning that prevents exposure to L2 and chances to practice it (Yıldız and Yeşilyurt, 2017). Koylu (2018) indicated L1 by teachers was seen as a means addressing

learners' needs to communicate and socialize with their instructors and lower foreign language learning anxiety. However, L1 was also defined to be a possible source of demotivation and a factor lessening students' oral production.

Referential questions may lead to students' in-depth thinking and complex responses in oral production and help to negotiate meaning between the teacher and students and among classmates via life like conversations. In addition, students may tend to use L1 in their answers to referential questions asked by the teacher in classrooms where English is learned as a foreign language, particularly those in which the teacher and students share the same native language. This was evidenced in the researcher's past classroom teaching experience as an English instructor in the preparatory English classes of a state university in Turkey and her colleagues' reports about the issue in the teacher meetings in the same institution. Yet, there are not any studies particularly focusing on students' use of L1 in response to teachers' referential questions in EFL classes. This study aims to analyse EFL teachers' descriptions and views about students' use of L1 in response to referential questions. Listening and speaking instructors working at the tertiary level in Turkey participated in the research. This qualitative study investigates the contexts concerning students' L1 use in response to referential questions, the reasons for this type of L1 use, and the teachers' attitudes about the issue.

The questions the study addresses are as follows:

1. How do the teachers describe the contexts of students' use of L1 in response to referential questions?

    a) Do the teachers use L1 in their classes? If so, to what extent and for what purposes do they use L1?

    b) What types of referential questions are answered in L1 by the students?

    c) To what extent do the students use L1 in their responses to referential questions?

    d) How do the teachers immediately respond to students' use of L1 in reply to referential questions?

2. What are the reasons for the students' use of L1 in response to referential questions according to the teachers?

3. What are the teachers' attitudes towards the students' use of L1 in response to referential questions?

    a) If they regard the students' use of L1 as a beneficial means, what benefits do they suggest?

    b) If they regard the students' use of L1 as a problem, what solutions do they suggest?

Method
Setting
This qualitative case study was conducted in the pre-intermediate level English preparatory classes within the School of Foreign Languages of a state university in Turkey in the spring semester of 2018. The university has undergraduate programs where 30 per cent of the courses are given in English, thus English preparatory class is a pre-requisite for the students who cannot pass the English proficiency exam of the institution. There are four courses in the English preparatory program, namely Main Course, Reading, Writing and Listening and Speaking. The study was conducted in the Listening and Speaking classes of the program. The pre-intermediate classes are given 26 hours of English lessons per week and 2 of them are allocated to Listening and Speaking lessons whereas 16 hours to Main Course lessons, 4 hours to Writing lessons and 4 hours to Reading lessons. Thus, Listening and Speaking as a course has the smallest rate in the curriculum in terms of the course hours. In the Listening and Speaking courses, a coursebook is used. The speaking activities that are done in the class are in the form of opinion exchange activities before and / or after the listening practice.

At the end of the academic year, a proficiency test consisting of Reading, Grammar, Vocabulary and Writing parts are given to the students. If they pass the test, they can start their majors. The students' listening and speaking skills are not tested in the proficiency test. Speaking is graded through speaking projects in the Listening and Speaking Classes and listening through achievement tests. Speaking projects involve individual oral presentations delivered to the class.

Participants
31 EFL teachers instructing listening and speaking courses in pre-intermediate level English preparatory classes at a state university in Turkey participated in the study. 26 of them were female and 5 of them were male. 10 of them had 1-5 years of teaching experience, 12 of them had 6-10 years of teaching experience and 9 of them had 11-15 years of teaching experience. The native language of all the teachers and their students was Turkish.

Data Collection

The data collection was performed through a triangulation process to ensure validity and reliability. The data were collected via open-ended questionnaires, focus group interviews and teacher journals. The teachers were informed about the study, the procedures and confidentiality and voluntarily participated in the research.

At the beginning of the academic semester, after being informed about referential questions by the researcher, all the listening and speaking instructors (n= 36) working in the research setting were asked if they witnessed students' use of L1 in response to referential questions in their classes via personal talk, text messages or e-mail and those who stated they did (n=33) were asked if they would be willing to participate in the research. Then the teachers who volunteered to participate in the research (n= 31) were given information about the study and they were trained about referential questions as a group. Training sessions were conducted in two steps. First an informative and interactive presentation focusing on forms and functions of referential questions, concrete samples and related research was made by the researcher. Secondly, the aim and scope of the study was explained to the teachers and they were asked to observe their pre-intermediate level classes with regard to the students' use of L1 in response to referential questions for a period of 8 weeks. The other class types available in the setting were the intermediate and advanced classes at the time of the study. Yet, pre-intermediate level classes were chosen as the class type since this level was shared by all the teachers and also the extent of L1 use was stated to be high at this level. Also, the teachers were asked if they would like to volunteer to keep teacher journals and write their descriptions of the cases and their reflections about the reasons and their attitudes concerning the students' use of L1 in response to referential questions for a period of 8 weeks. The volunteers were determined (n=11) and they were told to send their journals to the researcher on a weekly basis. At the end of 8 weeks, i) all the participants were given open-ended questionnaires where they were asked to write their descriptions of the pertinent contexts of L1, their reflections about the reasons for L1 use and their attitudes about the issue and ii) all of them were interviewed about the given topics through focus group interviews in groups of 5 to 6 and iii) their journals were collected.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis has been implemented in this study. In qualitative data analysis, patterns in textual data are identified, examined and interpreted to address research questions via relevant

themes, categories and descriptions (Patton, 2002). As a qualitative analysis method, thematic analysis was employed. In thematic analysis, the salient and recurring themes are defined and classified by moving back and forth within the data via multiple readings (Creswell, 2013). For this purpose, the data from the open-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and teacher journals were thematically investigated through iterative readings and in-depth analyses and repetitive patterns were meticulously refined, categorized and defined.

Findings
Descriptions about the Contexts of L1 Use in Response to Referential Questions

For contextual descriptions, the teachers were asked if they used L1 in their classes and if so, to what extent and for what purposes they used L1. Almost all the teachers stated that they spoke English most of the time in their classes and used Turkish at a low level only in some cases according to the students' needs for instance to give warnings so as to attract attention when classroom discipline is deteriorated, provide the Turkish equivalences of complex or abstract words or phrases, clarify instructions when they are not well understood, make humour and sometimes talk with the students if they have a problem with the lesson or the school. A few teachers pointed out that they never spoke L1 in the class.

The kinds of referential questions answered in L1 by students was the second contextual factor analysed. The teachers told that they often asked referential questions before the listening activities about the current theme of the listening for warm-up purposes or after the listening activity to relate the topic to students' life and the referential questions responded in L1 usually displayed the following characteristics:

1. They asked for the opinion of the student about the given theme (e.g. Questions that start with "What do you think about…?").
2. They asked for the reason for the personal fact or opinion of the student (e.g. "Why" or "why not" questions).
3. They required advanced forms of vocabulary and concepts necessitating specialization in the given topic (e.g. regression in economics).
4. They were about the subjects that the students emotionally experienced or felt close to and wanted to talk about in the language they felt emotionally comfortable with, which was stated to be L1 by the teachers (e.g. memories concerning tragic

events like failures, loss of a family member or stressful events like the university placement exam).

5. They stimulated sudden reactions like surprise or anger and the students tended to speak in L1 to express their emotions (e.g. bitter feelings about the inadequacies of the education system).

6. They highly attracted interest in the whole class as they had popular subjects and stimulated exuberant talks and discussions (e.g. questions about football teams or horoscopes).

The extent of L1 use in response to referential questions was the third contextual factor analysed. There were three groups of teacher descriptions about the extent of L1 use: Firstly, some teachers stated that their referential questions were answered directly by using L1. The students started their replies in L1 and used L1 in their entire reply. Even if the teacher warned them, they did not avoid using L1. In the second group, the students started answering the teachers' questions in English and switched to L1 at some point and continued with L1 use until they completed their entire answer. The third group of students used English most of the time but switched to L1 for practical purposes, for example when they needed to ask for the equivalence of a word / phrase, but then they switched to English again and completed their answers in English. Thus, there was excessive and habitual use of L1, moderate use of L1 and little use of L1 in the responses of the students.

The teachers were also asked to describe their immediate reactions to students' L1 use in response to referential questions. All the teachers said their immediate reaction to L1 use in reply to referential questions was that they often warned the students who switched to L1 to speak in English. Yet some teachers mentioned that they sometimes ignore the students who use Turkish all the time and stay indifferent to their acts as they are tired of having warned them several times. The act of using L1 in the answers to referential questions was mostly tolerated in the search for the equivalence of the unknown or non-remembered words and the teachers said they supplied their students with the required word or phrase and then encouraged them to continue in L2. On the other hand, all the teachers were seen to have negative attitudes towards the students who displayed habitual and excessive use of L1 in response to referential questions and complained that although they warned them, these students continued speaking in L1.

Views on the Reasons for L1 Use in Response to Referential Questions

Low Proficiency Level

The most common reason stated by the teachers for the use of L1 in response to referential questions was the low proficiency level of the students. The teachers said since most students' proficiency level was low, they could not build the sentences in the way they wanted as their English remained inadequate in expressing themselves, and thus they used L1 for compensation purposes. According to the teacher observations, the students were seen not to know or remember the grammatical structures and/or the vocabulary needed to express themselves, therefore they were unable to continue with communication and they switched to L1 to establish fluency. The ones who used L1 right from the beginning were defined to be at a very low proficiency level as well as unmotivated as mentioned below.

Complex Responses Required by Referential Questions

According to many teacher reports, as referential questions normally require long and complex responses, most of the students could not construct the required structures and convey the meanings necessary to express themselves. Thus, due to the complex nature of referential questions and the students' low proficiency level inadequate to deal with such complexity, most of them tended to use L1, by which it was said to be easier to negotiate meaning. Particularly when the students were asked to express their opinions and/or reasons for their thoughts or actions, they were said to highly use L1.

Lack of Practice with Referential Questions in the Current Setting

A majority of teachers stated that the students are not accustomed to making practice with referential questions since in the courses other than listening and speaking, display questions are asked more than referential questions. Except for their two-hour listening and speaking courses, the only course where teacher-student interactions take place most was said to be the Main Course but it was pointed out that in this course, a great deal of time is devoted to grammatical practice and teacher questions often focus on comprehension check rather than opinion exchange. Thus, students' lack of speaking practice with referential questions might have hindered their communicating effectively in L2 and caused them to switch to L1 as a compensatory option according to most teachers.

Students' Previous Learning Experience and Educational Backgrounds

Most teachers mentioned that students' previous learning experience and educational backgrounds had an impact on their use of L1 in response to referential questions. The students were said to have inadequate L2 speaking practice and insufficient ask-and-answer practices with referential questions in their English lessons before they started studying at the university. Additionally, according to most teachers, the students' backgrounds with the university placement exam also affect their attitudes towards speaking in English in the lessons. The teachers said speaking in English is a real challenge yet the general tendency among their students is to avoid dealing with challenging issues as they are tired of studying for the university placement exam in the previous year so they seem to deem preparatory class year as a period of resting and are likely to prefer easy solutions like speaking in L1 in communicative activities. To illustrate, they are reported to find it easy to answer particularly challenging referential questions (like "why" questions) in L1 since replying such questions in L1 is performed with much less effort.

Students' Lack of Immediate Needs for Communication

It was stated by several teachers that their students did not try to express themselves in English in reply to referential questions because they did not have immediate needs for communication as i) they studied in a monolingual EFL classroom where the students and the teacher shared the same native language, ii) they were going to do their majors in dominantly Turkish-medium departments and iii) lived in a country where English is used as a foreign language. Furthermore, since this was the students' first year at the university, most of them were reported to think that they had at least four years to use English in real life.

Teachers' Varying Policies on the Use of L1

The participants said the teachers' policies concerning the students' use of L1 in the EFL class also influence the students' tendency to opt for L1 in their answers to referential questions. According to their reports, the teachers may prefer to allow or ban L1 in the class and if allowed, the extent of L1 to be permitted as well as the cases defined by the teacher in which L1 use can be tolerated highly affect the students' attitudes and actions about the issue. To illustrate, if the teachers use too much L1 in the class, the students would also be inclined to excessively use L1 or if the teacher tolerates the use of L1

in the replies of some students to referential questions, then a general implication might be students are allowed to use L1 in their answers to such questions in whole-class discussions. Moreover, it was stated by most teachers that in Listening and Speaking classes, since the main target is communication, they speak English most of the time. However, as the participants said, the teachers in the other courses might be using too much L1 and not encouraging students to speak in English and that may be one reason why students have the habit of using L1 while replying their referential questions.

Curricular and Exam-Related Issues

As a great majority of teachers explained, although the aims of the English preparatory program seemed to be highly communicative, the content of the curriculum was stated to focus on the improvement of grammar, vocabulary and reading and writing skills much more than listening and speaking skills. This was said to affect the students' low performance in speaking in English particularly in reply to referential questions which necessitate relatively long and complex answers. All the participants complained that Listening and Speaking had the fewest course hours within the entire curriculum and the least impact on the students' overall grades.

Moreover, all the teachers complained that in the evaluation system of the institution, speaking occupied a small place since it is not tested in the proficiency exam. It was reported that it is just evaluated through speaking projects which involve oral presentations and the contribution of those speaking projects to the overall grade is very little. Moreover, almost all the speaking projects involved tasks requiring preparation before the actual performance. There was only one speaking project which demanded students to make a spontaneous speech on a given subject. Thus, spontaneity in the very nature of interactions via referential questions is something that the students were not accustomed to and this fact might have also caused the students to use L1 in response to referential questions.

Attitudes of Teachers towards Students' Use of L1 in Response to Referential Questions

The teachers' attitudes towards the students' use of L1 in response to referential questions varied according to the functions and extent of the use of L1. All the teachers said they tolerated little use of L1 in cases when the students could not remember or didn't know the required word and asked for its equivalence and then continued in English. Most teachers were also tolerant of L1 use at a moderate level

for example when the students got stuck in expressing themselves in the middle of their answers and switched to L1 and completed their answers in L1. The teachers reported they were tolerant in such situations because of the low proficiency of the students and contextual conditions preventing communicative use of English in the setting. Another case they tolerated involved students' switching codes due to sudden emotional reactions like excitement or anger and they regarded such actions as normal human reactions. However, all the teachers had negative attitudes towards the excessive and habitual use of L1 in response to referential questions. They reported that these students' attitudes cause frustration and annoyance since they are not willing to improve their speaking skills and deteriorate the communicative aura of the setting by insisting on using L1 and even teasing their classmates making efforts to speak in English and discourage their attempts.

L1 Use as a Beneficial Means

Several teachers regarded L1 use in students' responses as a useful means that gives the students a sense of security to reduce the challenges that may stem from their limited language proficiency. Additionally, L1 was reported to give the students a feeling of naturalness when they talk about their lives and help to build rapports with the classmates and the teacher and thus increase motivation.

L1 Use as a Problem

Despite the communicational, emotional and motivational benefits of low or moderate level of L1 use in the responses to referential questions, all the teachers reported excessive use of L1 in students' responses to such questions is a problem since it not only seriously diminishes actual oral performance and production but also reduces motivation to learn English communicatively and use it in real life. Thus, the main targets of the speaking lessons which is being able to communicate in English effectively in the class and real life would not be met under such circumstances according to the teachers.

Proposed Solutions to Excessive and Habitual Use of L1

The excessive and habitual use of L1 in students' responses to referential questions can be solved mainly by increasing the weekly hours of the Listening and Speaking courses and including an interactional speaking part in the proficiency exam as stated by teachers. Also, according to the participants, students should be given systematic training about the importance of English in real life. Furthermore, they should be consistently reminded that the classroom

is the only opportunity for them to improve their speaking skills since they are living in a monolingual environment. As for teachers, it was reported that teachers should act in a coordinated way about the extent of the use of L1. In order to do this, the teachers of the same class should meet regularly and exchange ideas on this issue. Lastly, it was reported the books should be selected on pre-set and well-defined criteria and the extent and effectiveness of referential questions should be included in this criteria list. It was also pointed out that in cases where the referential questions are inadequate, the teachers should compensate them with meaningful and effective formulations.

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to investigate a non-investigated topic in EFL literature, namely students' use of L1 in response to referential questions. For this purpose, EFL teachers' descriptions of the contexts of students' L1 use in response to referential questions, their views on the reasons for this type of L1 use and their attitudes towards the concerning act were analysed. According to the findings, the teachers reported that they rarely or never used L1 in the classroom and warned the students against the use of L1, however they all witnessed students' use of L1 in response to their referential questions. The types of referential questions that the students answered in L1 mostly sought opinions or reasons. Also referential questions with topics that required advanced vocabulary and specialization and those that triggered emotional reactions and / or attracted common interest in the classroom were stated to be answered in L1. As for the extent of L1 use in reply to referential questions, there was excessive and habitual use of L1, moderate use of L1 and little use of L1 in students' replies. It was the excessive and habitual L1 use that the teachers complained about most. The teachers were found to tolerate the students who used L1 at low or moderate levels but also encourage them to speak in L2 at the maximum level possible.

The main reason stated for the use of L1 in response to referential questions was the students' low proficiency level versus the complexity in responses required by referential questions. As the investigated group was pre-intermediate students, their proficiency level was said to be inadequate to answer referential questions fully in L2 since this type of question normally requires lengthy and complicated responses as stated by teachers and confirmed by research (Bozorgian and Fallah, 2017; Lindenmeyer, 1990; Ozcan, 2010; Qashoa, 2012; Yilmaz, 2016; Zohrabi, Yaghoubi-Notash and Khiabani, 2012). Thus the students who could not express themselves

satisfactorily in L2 due to their lack of proficiency were said to use L1 as a compensatory tool to negotiate meaning. On the other hand, not only low proficiency levels of the students but also their lack of practice with referential questions in the current setting and in their language learning backgrounds were found to cause the participants to use L1. As shown by research, display questions are asked more than referential questions in English language classrooms (e.g. David, 2007; Erlinda and Dewi, 2014; Farahian and Rezaee, 2012; Fitriani and Amilia, 2017; Long and Sato, 1983; Meng, Zhao and Chattouphonexay, 2012; Shomoossi, 2004; Qashoa, 2012; Yang, 2010; Yilmaz, 2016; Zohrabi, Yaghoubi-Notash and Khiabani, 2012) and this was reported to be the case in the research context as well since the students were stated to be exposed to practice with referential questions at minimal levels in the whole curriculum. This means students do not usually have enough experience with in-depth thinking and intense speaking in English as required by referential questions. They are used to rote learning and have little or no experience with critical thinking and language production. This is due to their prior learning experience dominated by preparations for centralized multiple-choice exams. Another factor is current learning experience in the research setting which gives more significance to form-focused instruction and particularly neglects language production through speaking.

There was also lack of motivation among students learning English in the research setting as observed and experienced by the teachers and this was found to affect the use of L1 in response to referential questions. Since these questions normally require complex answers, L1 was opted by these unmotivated students not having the willingness to deal with sophisticated matters as an "easy" solution to convey their messages. Students' being in the first year at university was stated to affect students' preferences for L1 use since they were said to be tired of having studied hard for the university placement exam and see the English preparatory year as a year of relaxation. Lastly, the students were said to think that they do not have immediate needs for communication in English as they study in an EFL context marked with monolingual classes and extensive Turkish-medium instruction.

In terms of curricular factors, the most influential reason affecting L1 use in reply to referential questions was the little amount of listening and speaking in the entire program. The program focuses on the improvement of grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing much more than listening and speaking and does not test listening and speaking in the proficiency test. Speaking is tested only through oral presentations prepared and presented by the students to the whole class.

They lack spontaneity and naturalness and thus hinder them from ask-and-answer practices with referential questions, which seek personal information as in real life. Such lack of practice with speaking in L2 was reported to cause the students to opt for L1 as a practical and supportive means to get by in their interactions.

Although the participant-teachers in this study reported that they never used L1 in the classroom or rarely used it for functional purposes, they stated they thought the teachers in other courses extensively used L1 in the classroom for particularly grammar and vocabulary instruction and devoted little time to communication practice. Since referential questions naturally need long and sophisticated responses, the students' lack of speaking practice in the entire program and lack of proficiency in speaking in L2 seem to have a significant role in their use of L1 in the current study.

The teachers were seen to be tolerant of little and/or moderate use of L1 in response to referential questions since they deemed it as a helpful means for students to express themselves and a vehicle to communicate their sudden emotions. L1 was defined to be a useful aid that gives students a sense of security, increases their motivation to speak and helps to build rapports among class members. These findings are in line with those of research on teachers' views of L1 use in Turkish contexts that highlight the supportive role of judicious use of L1 in English classrooms (Balabakgil and Mede, 2016; Timucin and Baytar, 2015; Koylu, 2018; Sali, 2014; Tasci and Atac, 2020, Yıldız and Yeşilyurt, 2017). The results also reflect that the teachers are in favour of policies where L1 is seen to be an asset of EFL learners aiding to promote learning and creating a positive environment and thus limited and judicious use of L1 is supported as in ELF and Global Englishes pedagogies (Kemaloglu-Er and Bayyurt, 2018, 2019a, 2019b; Galloway and Rose, 2018). On the other hand, all the teachers in the current study believed excessive and habitual use of L1 in reply to referential questions was a problem as it prevents students from speaking in L2 and acts as a barrier before expressing oneself effectively in the target language. According to the participants, as a hindrance before the goal of L2 oral performance and production in the EFL classroom, excessive and habitual use of L1 in reply to referential questions can primarily be addressed by increasing the extent and significance of speaking in the curricular and exam system, emphasizing the importance of asking referential questions in the whole institution, enabling uniformity in teachers' policies allowing limited use of L1 and encouraging maximum use of L2 as well as referential questions in classroom interactions.

The study implies that L1 use can well be a part of responses to referential questions since they express personal facts and opinions and often sophisticated matters about real life, thus, require complex and long answers. Hence, L1 use at low or moderate levels is likely to act as a compensatory means to communicate the intended messages within these replies. On the other hand, excessive and habitual use of L1 in reply to referential questions would act as a barrier before efficient L2 production, which addresses the fact that maximum use of L2 should be encouraged in students' responses to referential questions. For this purpose, EFL curricula should emphasize teachers' and students' speaking in L2 at maximum level and apply policies with very limited use of L1 in the classroom. Another implication is that as referential questions encourage critical thinking, students must be made accustomed to practicing ask-and-answer activities with these in-depth questions in the whole curriculum so that they can answer such questions effectively. Thus, institution-wise, the use of referential questions should be encouraged in all the courses and at all levels.

It is a fact that only with the sound collaboration of teachers, students, and curriculum designers can referential questions be increased and effectively employed in English language teaching contexts. Then students can get accustomed to intense interactions involving in-depth thinking processes with referential questions and the more they deal with such complexity, the more they could improve their proficiency and speaking production in L2 and the less they may use L1 in their responses. Teachers should also make decisions on their policies about the extent of L1 allowed in the classrooms and cases where L1 can be permitted. L1 use in response to referential questions must also be addressed in these policies on the basis of relevant research and stakeholders' experience and opinions. Future research can be applied with larger groups and quantitative and/or experimental research designs. This study as the first of its kind to investigate the use of L1 in response to referential questions has addressed the matter in multifaceted ways and shed light on the significance of effective L2 spoken production in tertiary EFL classes.

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