Language of Instruction vs. Instructed Language.

_A Systematic Review of Research of What Language to Use in the Teaching of English as a Second/Foreign Language._

Luisiana Serone

Term: SPRING 2013

Supervisor: CHARLOTTA PLEJERT
Examiner: NIGEL MUSK
CONTENTS

1. Introduction ................................................................................................................. 4
   1.1 Research Questions ................................................................................................. 5
   1.2 Definition of Terms ................................................................................................. 5
   1.3 Organization of the Thesis ...................................................................................... 7

2. Theory on Learning ...................................................................................................... 7

3. Methodology ............................................................................................................... 8
   3.1 Data Sources ........................................................................................................... 8
   3.2 Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria .................................................................................. 9
   3.3 Organisation of the Results .................................................................................. 9

4. Results ...................................................................................................................... 11
   4.1 Empirical Articles ................................................................................................. 11
      4.1.1 Student-Centred Studies ............................................................................... 11
      4.1.2 Teachers’ Beliefs and Attitudes ...................................................................... 14
      4.1.3 Students and Teachers: Comparison of Views Concerning the Effectiveness of the Use of the Mother Tongue in FL Education ................................................... 15
   4.2 Non-Empirical Articles .......................................................................................... 22
      4.2.1 Re-thinking the Role of the Mother Tongue in L2/FL Classes: A Contrastive Analysis 22
      4.2.2 How and When to Integrate the L1 and Improve FL Exposure at the Same Time ..... 23
      4.2.3 Advantages Identified when Using the L1 as Language of Instruction .......... 24

5. Discussion and Conclusion .......................................................................................... 32
   5.1 Limitation of the Study ......................................................................................... 36
   5.2 Further Research .................................................................................................. 36

Abbreviations ................................................................................................................ 38
1. Introduction

In Europe, but generally in the whole world, there are more and more students learning a second language at an early age. According to Eurydice (2012), the network which provides information on and analyses of European education systems and policies, English is the most dominant foreign language taught in the schools in Europe. The knowledge of at least one more language after one’s mother tongue facilitates the mobility of people in Europe as well as overseas. In addition, the Eurydice Network (2012) reported that the inclusion of a second language is compulsory in the curricula of many European schools starting from the first grade of education.

According to Eurydice’s reports (2012), students’ awareness of the advantages coming from the ability to master a second language after their own mother tongue seems to have increased over the last two decades. Indeed, they consider learning a second language a useful tool for their further studies, to find better job opportunities and to succeed in the global society, generally. How it is possible to improve the quality of teaching and, at the same time, guarantee durable learning is something pertaining to the teaching policies of schools. Guidelines recommend that teachers use the target language as much as possible during class time, especially where the foreign language taught at school is not part of the environment outside the educational context. However, studies investigating teachers’ behaviour and students’ perceptions concerning the medium of instruction show results different from these recommendations.

The role of students’ native language in second/foreign language classrooms has been the subject of many debates. Research concerning this topic is divided into two main fronts. On the one hand, there are those who advocate that teachers should adopt the monolingual approach and that the target language should be the only language allowed in the classroom. On the other hand, there are those who maintain that students’ first language has an important role to play, especially in the classrooms where teachers and students share the same native language.

The aim of the current thesis is to investigate the role of the students’ first language in English as a second language teaching by means of a review of articles written on the topic between 1990 and 2013. It will identify the importance of using the L1 during the L2/FL learning and teaching process from both students’ and teachers’ perspective and it will then compare them. It will outline the reasons, the strategies and the advantages coming from using students’ mother tongue as a medium of instruction in a second/foreign language educational context. Several well-experienced foreign language teachers and researchers have investigated the validity and the effectiveness of the limited use of the students’ mother tongue in the second language learning process. Possible
addressees interested in this review are teachers already involved in foreign language courses as well as student teachers in training programs who wonder which might be the best way to approach the context of foreign language education.

Despite the fact that the history of language teaching methodology is marked by a concerted opposition towards the use of students’ first language in classrooms insomuch as it inhibits students’ proficiency in the target language, in the last century, its role has been re-evaluated. Most of the articles reviewed came to the conclusion that a limited and judicious use of the students’ mother tongue in the classroom does not reduce the exposure to the target language, but it can even bring advantages to the learning process.

1.1 Research Questions
The research questions to be addressed in the current review are the following:

- What are the effects on students when using the L1 in L2/FL classrooms?
- What are teachers’ attitudes and beliefs towards the use of the students’ mother tongue in L2/FL classrooms?
- Do students agree with their instructors’ practices?
- Why, how and for what purposes should students’ L1 should be integrated in L2/FL classrooms?

Studies included in the empirical articles section seek answer to the first three questions, whereas, studies selected within the non-empirical articles section try to shed light on the last point.

1.2 Definition of Terms
In the following review, two of the most recurrent words used are first language and second language. This section aims to illustrate their meanings and the different ways one may refer to them.

A definition of *first language* (in this paper often abbreviated L1) is given by Saville-Troike (2006). According to him, the first languages are assumed to be the languages which are acquired during early childhood - normally beginning before the age of about three years - and that they are learned as part of growing up among people who speak them (Saville-Troike, 2006:4). Usually, adults, and parents in particular, are involved in the mechanism of a child’s first language
acquisition. Moreover, it is a process that goes hand in hand with his/her cognitive and social development. The adjective ‘first’ derives from the fact that child’s acquisition occurs in a moment that precedes any other language learning. However, there are cases of children that simultaneously develop more than one language from birth. These are defined as bilingual children who, by chance or by choice, acquire two or more languages at the same time. Child bilingualism can be caused by different factors. For example, because of the immigration of parents to a new country, the child will probably be able to speak his/her parents’ heritage language at home, and the language of the host country at school. Or, after an interethnic marriage between two parents whose mother tongues are different, the child might speak two different languages according to which parent he/she is talking to.

Mother tongue and native language are other two ways to refer to the language that a child learns in earliest childhood.

The second language (in this paper often abbreviated L2) is generally the language that a person learns subsequent to learning his/her first one (Saville-Troike, 2006:2). This term also refers to a language that is not one’s mother tongue. There are several reasons why one learns a second language: compulsory education, better job opportunities, and personal interest. Usually, the term foreign language (in this paper often abbreviated FL) is also used to talk about a language acquired later than the mother tongue. FL and L2 are mostly used synonymously but in certain cases, a necessary distinction must be made between these two terms. Stern (1983) deals with their different meanings, which depend on the context where the learning process takes place. In the particular case of a language learned in a country where it is not the same language spoken by the local people, the linguistic input outside the classroom is not sufficient enough and where usually, within the class, teachers and students share the same native language, it is more appropriate to talk about FL. Conversely, where the language studied at school corresponds to the official language spoken by the people living in that country, L2 is the common definition. In this kind of context, usually teachers are mother tongue speakers of the instructed language and do not share the same first language as students, who, in turn, do not share the same native language of their classmates, in most cases.

However, within the argumentation of this paper, L2 and FL are used independently from this distinction of meanings. Indeed, instructors are often defined as EFL (English as Foreign Language) teachers in cases when they teach English as a second language in a bilingual or monolingual environment. To conclude, the target language is another term to denote any language that is the aim or goal of learning. (Saville-Troike, 2006:2).
1.3 Organization of the Thesis

The thesis starts with a section which sheds light on some of the principal methods that have determined the history of language teaching methodology. Subsequent sections will give information about how the articles for the current review have been collected, which were the main data sources used, and how the results have then been organised. This part is followed by the results coming from the selection of 28 articles. The review concludes with a brief summary of the main findings and with some reflections on the topic.

2. THEORY ON LEARNING

Before moving on to the argumentation of the findings from the empirical and non-empirical articles selected for the review, this section aims to illustrate the most common methods adopted in the area of FL teaching in the past centuries.

In her book, *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*, the linguist Larsen-Freeman (2000) presents a number of methods that have determined language teaching methodology throughout the years. For each method that the book deals with, the writer provides information about the main characteristics of the teaching process, the role of the students’ mother tongue, the profile of the teachers and so on.

In particular, this section illustrates three of the methods that Larsen-Freeman describes: the Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method and Communicative Language Teaching.

The Grammar-Translation Method is one of the most ancient methods applied in language teaching and it has been used by language teachers for many years (Larsen-Freeman, 2000:11). It was originally applied to the teaching of classical languages, such as Greek and Latin, in order to gain access to the classical literature, regardless of learners’ ability to communicate in the target language. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the Grammar-Translation Method was adopted by teachers in public schools to teach modern languages, such as English and French. The main aim of this method was teaching students the grammar rules and the vocabulary of the target language. The focus of the learning activities was on the translation from the FL to the L1 and lessons took place in the students’ native language for much of the time. The most evident disadvantage of this method was that students, once visiting the countries where the studied language was used, revealed that they were unable to express themselves and communicate with the local people.
Since the Grammar-Translation Method was not very effective in preparing students to use the target language communicatively, Larsen-Freeman (2000: 23) continues by saying that towards the end of the 19th century, the need for method which would have led to a more practical and useful knowledge of the FL brought the development of the Direct Method. It represented a critical reaction to the ancient Grammar-Translation Method and introduced the idea that the foreign language lessons were to be conducted only in the target language in order to teach students to use it communicatively. Not a word in the students’ native language was allowed in the classroom. Learners’ mother tongue was essentially considered as an interference to avoid. One fundamental name associated with the Direct Method is Krashen (1987) who argued that the use of the mother tongue in the learning process should be minimised in favour of the maximum exposure to the target language.

The last method included in Larsen-Freeman’s book (2000:121) that the current review deemed necessary to be illustrated is Communicative Language Teaching. It revolved around the idea of the use of the students’ mother tongue in FL classrooms once again. Communicative Language Teaching was developed towards the end of the 20th century and it set communicative competence as its main goal. The method advocated a more restricted but valued role of the L1. The target language was the medium of instruction; however, a limited use of students’ L1 was allowed to avoid misunderstandings.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data Sources

The thesis presents a review of 28 articles in all. A literature search of relevant articles inquiring whether the medium of L2/FL instruction should be the students’ mother tongue or not, and its effectiveness was conducted.

The two main sources used for retrieving data were the Humsam Library situated in Linköping University at Campus Valla and the World Wide Web. The library proved to be particularly useful since it gives students free access to online databases of many international journals. Some names of the most recurrent journals supplying articles on this topic are: the ELT Journal, the International Journal of English and Education, the Modern Language Teaching Journal, Multilingual Education, Humanistic Language Teaching.

Thanks to the all-in-one search service “UniSearch”, which covers most of the library’s resources, it was possible to query many databases at once. They are grouped according to their
topic of focus. For the humanistic category, particularly for the Language and Linguistics subject matter, UniSearch covers the following list of databases: Academic Search Premier, De Gruyter online, Linguistics and Language behaviour abstracts, MLA international bibliography, Web of Science, Wordfinder online, Jstor.

All these sources have been queried using the following search terms: first language use in class, medium of instruction, using mother tongue in teaching English, language of instruction and instructed language. In addition, other important research sources have been found in the list of references of the most recent articles.

3.2 Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

From the beginning, generated by the search terms, 52 articles were selected for the review. They all apparently seemed to match the interest of the paper from their title and abstract. After a more careful reading, some of them proved not to be pertinent in some respects. For this reason and due to the considerable amount of data, the decision to limit the review only to a selection of articles was made.

Therefore, it was decided that the current review would focus on the articles that considered only English as a FL instructed in some educational institutions of the world. Furthermore, in order to give a modern account of the recent findings, the time frame in which the investigations were conducted was also chosen as a parameter to select the articles. Thus, the review takes into consideration research published between 1990 and 2013.

The following literature has been excluded: research investigating the teaching of English as FL in remote countries where an official instruction language does not yet exist; those focusing on the role of the L1 culture in the L2/FL classroom; and finally articles dealing with the innovative methodology of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), which aims to teach academic contents through a second/foreign language.

3.3 Organisation of the Results

In the literature selected, 17 empirical articles and 11 non-empirical articles have been identified. The choice to separate the articles in two different groups was due to the fact that some articles show findings resulting from researches carried out on site, through interviews and direct observations or by tape recording a L2/FL educational context, whereas, some other articles present
principally authors’ views on L2/FL learning and teaching based on their experience as language teachers.

In the first group, mainly articles conducting an empirical study have been included. These studies investigated teachers’ attitudes towards students’ mother tongue and their most common practices and strategies to maximise the FL in the classroom and reported the same issue also from students’ perspectives. Some of them deal with English as a FL instructed at school, whereas others mainly focus on English as a FL studied at a tertiary level. The studies were conducted in several countries of the world such as Japan, Israel, Saudi Arabia, China, Colombia, Malaysia, UAE, Oman, Puerto Rico, California, and Nepal.

In the second group, mainly articles whose authors discussed teachers’ and students’ use of the mother tongue in EFL classrooms have been included. The authors of this second group of papers are all well-experienced EFL teachers specialised in language teaching methodology. Therefore, they examined several issues related to language teaching and focused on the advantages coming from teachers’ use of their students’ L1 in the classroom. Many articles included in the second group were written in first person and presented views on L2/FL learning and teaching developed by the authors themselves and based on their personal experience or coming out from discussions with their colleagues.

The papers were published in countries such as Romania, China, Australia, Germany, the Czech Republic, the USA, Canada, the UK, Japan, and New Zealand.

The articles selected are presented in two tables. Table 1 summarises information about the participants of the studies (their profile, their level of education and sometimes also their level of English proficiency), the methodology used to collect the data, the findings and in some cases also some pedagogical points suggested by the researchers at the end of their investigations.

It has been possible to identify three different types of participants. Some articles focused only on the teachers, some only on the students, and some on the class as a whole defined as both teachers and students. The students’ level of English proficiency ranged from beginners to advanced, while the teachers had one or more years of teaching experience. In order to give a broad outline of the common practices advocating the use or the avoidance of the students’ L1 while teaching a foreign language, studies conducted in all levels of education were considered. The review presents investigations carried out in elementary and secondary schools as well as in universities where mainly students involved in undergraduate programs and pursuing a bachelor degree were examined. To conclude, it was possible to recognise three types of methods adopted by the researchers of these studies. They are: experimental studies with tests used to verify students’ L2
proficiency before and after a lesson; observational studies, which consisted of direct observations or/and tape recordings of one or more sessions in the class; and finally survey studies, which included questionnaires handed out to both students and teachers or interviews with only teachers. Due to the fact that each method presents advantages and disadvantages and can only shed light on one aspect, some researchers opted for a combination of two or more methods in order to collect different kinds of data and then combine them. The discussion section will deal with a more detailed explanation of this issue.

Table 2 includes all articles which did not conduct any empirical study and for this reason the parameters to summarise the information were different from those in table 1. Table 2 focuses on the principal subject matter of the argumentation, on when, how and why teachers should and/or would use the L1 in FL classrooms and lastly it summarises the main attitudes and strategies suggested by the researchers to avoid excessive dependency on the mother tongue.

In order to facilitate their traceability, articles have been organised in the tables in chronological order from the most to the least recent.

4. RESULTS

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section includes articles whose authors conducted an empirical study in EFL contexts to collect data, whereas, the second section presents articles which mainly deal with the use of the mother tongue and the target language from the authors’ perspectives.

4.1 Empirical Articles

The empirical articles have been divided into studies that present investigations centred on students’ impressions concerning the inclusion of the L1 in foreign language classes as a medium to support their learning process and on the effects coming from this practice (Moore, 2013; Alseweed, 2012; He, 2012; Carson and Kashihara, 2012; Mouhanna, 2009; Ahmand, 2009; Bouangeune, 2009); studies which instead consider teachers’ beliefs and attitudes on the subject (Timor, 2012; Min and Li, 2008; Al-Buraiki, 2008); and finally studies that compare teachers’ and learners’ views on the effectiveness of the use of the mother tongue in FL education (Kafes, 2011; Pablo et al. 2011; Khati, 2011; Shimizu, 2006; Tang, 2002; Schweers, 1999; Duff and Polio, 1990).

4.1.1 Student-Centred Studies
Of all articles selected, 7 focus on students. In this section, data collected by using different methods will be presented and analysed. Indeed, three of the studies included in this category used questionnaires as a method to collect data (Carson and Kashihara, 2012; Mouhanna, 2009; Ahmad, 2009); three others preferred to conduct an experimental study by using testing materials (Alseweed, 2012; He, 2012; Bouaugeune, 2009) and only one study used direct observation of students’ interactions in class (Moore, 2013).

Carson and Kashihara (2012), Mouhanna (2009) and Ahmad (2009) conducted their study on the role of the mother tongue in tertiary education. Carson and Kashihara (2012) at the Hiroshima City University and Ahmad (2009) in Malaysia tried to identify students’ preferences regarding the use of their mother tongue in English as an FL classrooms. In both studies, a questionnaire fielded by the students attending a Communication in English course permitted the investigators to determine the main situations where students consider the use of their mother tongue to be necessary. These are: explaining difficult concepts, checking for comprehension, and defining new vocabulary items. Students also claimed that teachers’ code-switching between the mother tongue and the target language makes them feel less lost and tense and more comfortable during the lessons.

Mouhanna (2009), instead, investigated the general environment of English programs in the United Arab Emirates universities and problematised the total exclusion of the L1 from EFL classrooms by exploring students’ perception of this policy. From her study, a significant difference between the teaching styles in secondary schools and in tertiary EFL programs was detected. Students claimed that in Arabic secondary schools the L1 is over-used by teachers, whereas in the universities it is completely prohibited, thereby causing insecurity and gaps, especially in the students with a low level of proficiency.

In brief, all these three studies suggest that teachers’ code-switching should depend on the type of learners involved in the education program. Carson’s and Kashihara’s (2012) study highlighted an inverse relationship between students’ perceived need for L1 support and their L2 level of proficiency. The use of the L1 is more desired by beginners than advanced learners. In the same way, Mouhanna’s (2009) survey showed that students’ perception of the role of the mother tongue in EFL classes differs between beginner, intermediate and advanced students. Indeed, a higher proportion of beginners indicated that Arabic in the foreign language classroom helps them to learn English more successfully. Finally, Ahmad (2009) stressed on the fact that code-switching should be considered as a strategy and not be taken as a teaching method (Ahmad, 2009:52).
The following three articles verified whether or not the use of students’ mother tongue in the particular case of teaching grammatical topics positively affects students’ comprehension and process of learning, in tertiary education. Alseweed (2012) and Bouangeune (2009) used the same methodology and their studies are based on a grammar lesson about the active and passive form of verbs and the introduction of new vocabulary items, respectively. Pre and post grammatical tests were given to the students divided into two groups. In group A, the lesson was conducted entirely in the target language and not a word in the students’ L1 was allowed, whereas, in group B, the lesson was conducted by mixing the instructed language with the students’ native language. However, the two studies led to a different result. Alseweed (2012) proved that the use of the L1 does not play a positive role in foreign language teaching, since group A scores turned out to be higher than those of group B. On the other hand, Bouangeune’s (2009) study showed that using students’ L1 in teaching new vocabulary has a beneficial role, since the group which received teaching supported by translation in the L1 outperformed the group where the whole lesson was conducted only in the target language.

In addition, Bouangeune’s (2009) study demonstrated that in order to prevent students’ misunderstanding of the meaning of the new words, teachers should provide clear, simple and brief explanations by relying also on the learners’ mother tongue. A third article dealing with test materials, but intended in a different way from Alseweed (2012) and Bouangeune (2009), is the one written by He (2012). Students of a Comparative Linguistics course in an undergraduate education program in Hong Kong were asked to design a series of tasks for Chinese learners of English in local schools. In particular, they were asked to select a text of their choice from which to illustrate a difficult language issue to explain and then analyse the text from a comparative perspective. Three of the students’ tasks were selected for the current investigation and all showed attempts to make systematic use of the students’ mother tongue in the FL teaching. The study concluded by confirming the advantages coming from the comparison between the two language systems, i.e. the familiar one and the one being learnt.

The last study focussing on students is the recent article written by Moore (2013). The controversial debate on the use of the L1 by teachers and learners in FL classrooms prompted Moore to investigate the amount, the purpose and the function of L1 in EFL task-based interactions in a university in Japan. Two oral presentations, one in the first semester and the other in the second semester, were set for the students, who were required to work in dyads.

The linguistic behaviour of the students during the preparation phases of the presentations was observed and compared. The results from the study were that during the second task, the
amount of L1 used between the same partners increased due to the negotiation of the content. Indeed, while in the first task the topic was already established by the teacher, in the second task students were free to choose a topic of their own. This feature caused a greater need for the mother tongue during the negotiation phase of the topic. Moore (2013) showed that the L1 naturally occurs in the context of FL instruction, and that teachers and students need to develop an awareness of it by identifying the purposes of its use.

4.1.2 Teachers’ Beliefs and Attitudes

This section illustrates three studies which considered teachers’ talk in the classroom as matter of their research. In contexts where the FL studied at school is not the spoken language of the local people, teachers represent the only source of foreign language input. Therefore, what they say and how they speak in class is very important for the acquisition process of the students. The following articles investigate how often and for what purposes teachers prefer to code-switch to the students’ native language in EFL classes.

Timor (2012) and Al-Buraiki (2008) conducted their investigations on teachers of English for primary and secondary school learners. They both used questionnaires to collect teachers’ reports; however, Al-Buraiki’s (2008) study also includes the findings from closer observations of teachers’ attitudes and practices in the classroom followed by short interviews with some of them. Min and Li (2008) focused on teachers at tertiary level, instead. They analysed teachers’ verbal behaviour in FL classes by recording and interviewing them on their choices during the lesson soon after it took place.

Timor’s (2012) and Al-Buraiki’s (2008) findings tend to support the criteria of efficiency and naturalness identified by Cook (2001). Indeed, teachers claimed to rely on students’ native language to explain particular L2 grammatical structures that do not exist in the mother tongue in order to facilitate learners’ understanding. Comparisons between the instructed language and students’ L1 proved, in fact, to produce more effective results. Besides, the same teachers claimed that they communicate with individual students in the L1 and use it also for classroom management and giving instructions during the classroom activities. This practice makes the classroom environment more natural and spontaneous. Teachers interviewed by Al-Buraiki (2008) also agreed with the use of L1 especially with young learners.

According to Min and Li (2008), 60% of teachers participating in the study claimed to use ‘some Chinese’ in their EFL classes, whereas none of them claimed to have never used it. They used it especially to communicate with the students during the break, to teach grammar, to explain
course policy or to talk about administrative information. They also agreed that students’ ability is one of the main factors that influences the amount of L1 used in the classroom.

Overall, teachers participating in the studies illustrated above seemed to express positive views concerning the use of the L1.

4.1.3 Students and Teachers: Comparison of Views Concerning the Effectiveness of the Use of the Mother Tongue in FL Education

The last section concerning the empirical articles gives an account of 7 studies which explored the reasons for using or not using the L1 within an L2/FL learning context. The articles examined the situation from a teacher and student point of view. Data collected from the two kinds of participants have been compared to identify where and when students agree or disagree with their instructors’ practices, attitudes and beliefs.

Pablo et al. (2011) and Kafes (2011) present the findings of two research projects conducted at a university in Mexico and in Turkey, respectively. Pablo et al. (2011) collected data on the use of the L1 in the context of FL teaching through questionnaires handed out to students pursuing a bachelor degree and by interviewing some of the teachers of their faculty. Teachers claimed that students’ native language can be used to different degrees and depending on several factors. For example, they claimed to employ the L1 as a teaching method to explain grammar, unfamiliar expressions, new vocabulary and to give instructions. They also explained that it helps not to waste time in long explanations. However, the most evident reason why instructors make use of their students’ mother tongue was to establish a rapport with them and attempt to lower their affective filter. Students’ revelations agreed with their instructors’ statements. However, they also indicated that the L1 should be exclusively used to socialise with their classmates and converse about topics which do not concern school matters.

Kafes’ (2011) study also suggested that the use of the L1 by language instructors facilitates their communication and relationship with students. However, data collected through tape recording the lessons for five weeks, showed a decreasing amount of L1 occurrences in the final weeks.

Khati’s (2011) study, conducted at secondary level schools in Nepal, confirmed the same observations as Pablo et al. (2011) for teachers to switch to their students’ L1 but in addition, the researcher shed light on another aspect of students’ inhibition to speak the target language when addressing their instructors. They, in fact, claimed that they hesitated to speak English in class because of being afraid of criticism or losing face in front of their classmates or even receiving negative comments by the teachers.
Shimizu’s (2006), Tang’s (2002) and Schweers’ (1999) studies present many similarities. They all investigate the effectiveness of the use of the mother tongue in tertiary education in Japanese, Chinese and Puerto Rican universities, respectively. Although they reported that some of the teachers participating in their investigation claimed that learners need as much exposure to the FL as possible during the limited class time, where in most of the cases it is the only place to receive correct linguistic input, the majority of them recognised the pedagogical and affective benefits coming from the practice of highlighting differences and similarities between the L1 and the instructed language. Tang (2002) revealed that the use of the mother tongue in EFL classes does not reduce students’ exposure to the target language, but rather plays a facilitating and supporting role.

The last article reviewed in this section is written by Duff and Polio (1990). Their study considered two kinds of variables that can influence the language used in the classroom. These are classroom-external variables (meaning learners’ L2 proficiency, teachers’ experience, departmental policy) and classroom-internal variables (meaning the level of difficulty of the topic taught in classroom). However, from their investigation it was demonstrated that no relationship exists between teachers’ teaching experience and the amount of FL used during foreign language lessons. The teachers interviewed asserted that the L1 is a more effective medium than the FL when explaining grammatical points, complex concepts or the meanings of new words.

At the end of their articles, Khati (2011) and Duff and Polio (1990) concluded by suggesting some effective techniques to reduce the over-use of the mother tongue in EFL classes and to maximise students’ exposure to the target language. Khati (2011) advised teachers to start the lesson by spending a few minutes talking in the target language about general topics of interest with the class rather than going straight to the textbook. Duff and Polio (1990) recommended that teachers use comprehensible input by improving upon their talk. If students appear not to have understood the instructor’s utterances, they have to be repeated slowly, through paraphrase or by using simple syntax and words. This strategy appears to contrast with Min and Li’s (2008) study, where most of the teachers participating in the survey claimed that they resort to translations into Chinese of what had just been said in English as soon as students showed signs of misunderstanding.

The following table summarises the main key points of the empirical articles presented so far. Table 1 presents information concerning the profile of the participants of the studies, the methodology used to collect data and highlights the principal findings. Where applicable, some pedagogical points have also been included. The articles in the table below are listed according to their year of publication, from the most to the least recent one.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author (Year), Country</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Methods and Data</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Pedagogical Point(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paul J. Moore (2013), Japan</td>
<td>12 students • tertiary education • intermediate level of English</td>
<td>Observation of L1 use by learners in dyads during the preparation phase leading up to two oral presentation tasks, one in the first semester, the other in the second semester.</td>
<td>In the second task, the amount of L1 use between the same partners increased due to the negotiation of form in content-creation activity.</td>
<td>L1 use naturally occurs in the L2 classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carson E. &amp; Kashihara H. (2012), Japan</td>
<td>305 students • tertiary education (first- and second-year students enrolled in English communication courses)</td>
<td>Questionnaire fielded to the students to identify students’ preferences regarding the use of L1 in the EFL classroom, which varies with their L2 proficiency levels and the classroom situations when students prefer or do not prefer the use of the L1.</td>
<td>L1 is necessary to explain difficult concepts, checking for comprehension, defining new vocabulary items. Reasons for using L1 in the L2 classrooms are: to make the students feel less lost and tense but more comfortable.</td>
<td>An inverse relationship between students' L2 proficiency and the number of students perceiving a need for L1 support has been noticed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timor T. (2012), Israel</td>
<td>112 EFL teachers • primary and secondary education</td>
<td>Questionnaire.</td>
<td>Teachers’ positive attitude towards the use of the L1 in EFL classroom was demonstrated. Most of them seem to benefit from using Hebrew in English classrooms.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alseweed M. A. (2012), Saudi Arabia
• 26 male students
• tertiary education (English program)

The study was based on a grammar lesson on the active and passive form of the verbs. Pre and post grammatical tests were given to the students divided into two groups: Group A where the lesson was conducted entirely in the L2 and Group B where the lesson allowed the use of the L1.

- The use of the L1 in teaching L2 grammar does not benefit the students. Group A scores were higher than Group B scores.
- Students’ mother tongue does not play a positive role in teaching grammar.

He E.A. (2012), China
• 14 students
• tertiary education
 (Comparative Linguistic Course)
• advanced level of English

Students were asked to design a series of tasks for Chinese learners of English.

- The mother tongue is regarded as a valuable resource in foreign language instruction.

• 8 English and French as a second language teachers
• 112 students (18-26 years old)
• tertiary education

Data were collected through interviews for the teachers and questionnaires for the students.

- Both students and teachers agree with the use of L1 in classrooms to different degrees depending upon different factors.
- Excess use of the L1 is negative.

- Difference: teachers indicated that L1 is good for establishing a relationship with the learners; students think L1 is exclusively for outside the class conversations.

Kafes H. (2011), Turkey
• 5 classes (about 25 students each)
• tertiary education
• beginner level of English

Data were collected through tape recording over five weeks.

- The purposes of L1 use were: facilitating teacher-student communication, rapport and learning; checking comprehension; explaining the classroom tasks and new vocabulary items; and classroom management.
- The data showed a gradually decrease in the amount of L1 use in the final week of the observation.
Khati A. Raj (2011), Nepal

- 3 classes
- secondary education

Three classroom observations and two focus group discussions among teachers and students studying at secondary level.

Both teachers and students favour a limited use of the mother tongue in EFL classrooms for different purposes such as giving instructions, clarifying difficult concepts, explaining new words and grammar points, etc.

Mouhanna M. (2009), United Arab Emirates

- 124 students
- tertiary education
- beginner, intermediate and advanced level of English

Survey of 21 closed and open-ended questions to collect qualitative data; semi-structured interview with the head of the EFL program.

Students perceive the role of the L1 in the EFL classroom in different ways, according to their level of proficiency in the foreign language. Lower level students need more L1 use.

The over-use of the L1 in EFL classroom is negative. However, UAE universities need to adopt a more realistic policy for L1 use particularly for lower level learners.

Ahmad B. H. (2009), Malaysia

- 299 students
- tertiary education
- beginner level of English

Questionnaire on students' perception of teachers' code-switching in the classroom.

Students assert that code-switching was used by the teachers for several purposes. Learners' perception of the presence of psychological support given by the L1 was positive.

The study confirms that there is a significant relationship between teachers' code-switching and learners' positive affective learning state as well as their learning success.

Bouangeune S. (2009), Laos

- 169 students
- tertiary education
- beginner level of English

Testing materials (pre- and post-tests) to check whether using learners' mother tongue in EFL classrooms enhances their retention of new vocabulary items.

Students were divided into two groups: -the experimental group receiving L1 in vocabulary instruction; -the control group without any use of L1.

Generally, students in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group. The rate of the right answers for the experimental group was 86.9% while for the control group it was 77%.

Students in the control group had more difficulties in understanding the meaning of the new vocabulary.

In order to prevent students' misunderstanding of the meaning of the new words, teachers should provide clear, simple and brief explanation also using learners' mother tongue.

This study confirms the effectiveness of using L1 in teaching a second language.
Min C. & Li Y. (2008), China
- 13 teachers
- tertiary education

Recording of teachers' verbal behaviour during two 45' sessions of classroom;
15'-20' interviews done with the teachers soon after the class.
None of the teachers claim never to have used 'some' Chinese during English classes. One of the most observed practices used by the teachers was to repeat in Chinese what had just said in English.

Students' ability is one of the main factors that influences teachers' language use. Mother tongue use in the English classroom ensures students' comprehension and helps lower their affective filter.

Al-Buraiqi M. A. (2008), Oman
- 56 teachers
- primary level

Observation and interview of 6 female teachers to see how often they used the mother tongue in their teaching and for what purposes;
Questionnaire given to other 50 other teachers about the use of L1 in class.
The first six teachers claimed to use Arabic for different reasons: to explain concepts, grammar and vocabulary; to give instructions and feedback; for class management. They assert that L1 use supported learners' understanding.

In the questionnaire, teachers agree that L1 use is more needed with young learners and a relationship between the topic and the L1 use exists.

Shimizu M. (2006), Japan
- 25 teachers
- 98 Japanese students
- tertiary education

Questionnaire investigating their attitude towards L1 use in the classroom; the occasions; the frequency and the effectiveness.
The study showed that appropriate and judicious use of the mother tongue can be beneficial for students as well as for teachers.
Tang J. (2002), China
- 100 students
- 20 teachers
- tertiary education
- intermediate level of English

Classroom **observation**: three first reading classes (50') were observed and recorded;

**Interviews**: the three teachers whose classrooms were observed were interviewed afterwards;

**Questionnaire**: distributed to 100 students and 20 teachers to discover their attitudes toward using the L1 in English classrooms.

The classroom observations indicate that Chinese is used on occasions when English explanations failed to work, hence the L1 plays a supportive and facilitating role in the classroom.

All the teachers claimed that the amount of L1 spoken depends on the students' foreign language proficiency. 70% of the students and teachers think that Chinese should be used in L2 classes for many reasons. It helps mainly to understand difficult concepts and ideas better.

Schweers Jr C.W. (1999), Puerto Rico
- 4 teachers
- classes of the professors participating in the study
- tertiary education

**Recording** of 35' sample from three classes at the beginning, middle and end of the semester to see how how frequently and for what purposes teachers used the L1 in their classes.

**Questionnaires** filled out by those teachers and their classes.

Both students and teachers agree with the use of Spanish in English classrooms to some degree, especially to facilitate comprehension.

Duff P.A. & Polio C. (1990), California
- 13 classes
- tertiary education

Classroom **observation**: two 50' sessions of each class were observed and audio-recorded;

**Student's questionnaires**: inquiring about their motivation and attitude toward the amount of L1 used by the teachers;

**Teachers' interviews**: to elicit information about their background, training, philosophy and attitudes.

Over half of the teachers observed used the L2 less than 90% of the time. However, students expressed satisfaction with the amount of the L1 used in FL classroom. The L2 used in the classroom does not depend on teachers' proficiency or their teaching experience.

The mother tongue was used by the majority of the teachers and students responded positively toward its use. L1 in EFL does not reduce students' exposure to the L2 but rather plays a supportive and facilitating role.

The pedagogical and affective benefits of L1 use justify its limited and judicious use of the it in foreign language classrooms.

Some pedagogical techniques to improve L2 use are suggested.
4.2 Non-Empirical Articles

The following sections will illustrate some articles whose authors aimed to re-examine the L2-only approach, which was mainly dictated by the Direct Method, and re-think the role of the learners’ mother tongue in EFL classes (Weschler, 1997; Butzkamm, 2007; Rinvolucri, 2001); some articles whose authors gave an account of some principles supporting the integration of the students’ L1 in L2/FL classrooms and presented some strategies for improving the use of the target language during class time (Nation, 2003, 1997; Gill, 2003; Littlewood and Yu, 2011; Voicu, 2012); and finally, it will conclude with some non-empirical studies which focused on the teachers’ purposes when using their students’ mother tongue and tried to identify the main advantages coming from the practice of using the L1 as a language of instruction (Auerbach, 1993; Cook, 2001; Harbord, 1992).

4.2.1 Re-thinking the Role of the Mother Tongue in L2/FL Classes: A Contrastive Analysis

Three of the non-empirical articles selected called for a re-examination of the views according to which the students’ L1 should be avoided in foreign language education and presented a range of reasons to integrate the learners’ native language within L2 classes.

In his article, Weschler (1997) argued against the policy of English-only classrooms. He claimed that an already existing language (that is one’s mother tongue) influences anyway the mind of a L2/FL learner, even when its use is forbidden by teachers. According to him, mental translations are unavoidable and adults, especially, will always ask for the meaning of what teachers say during the lesson. For this reason, Weschler (1997) proposed an alternative language teaching method, defined as the Functional-Translation Method, which appeared to be a combination of the Grammar-Translation Method and the Communicative Method. Its main features are the focus on a contrastive analysis between the L1 and L2; the teachers’ use of language in accordance with the needs of their students; the implementation of communicative procedures according to which teachers are no longer lecturers dispensing their knowledge but rather guides and facilitators of the students’ activities in class; and finally, the creation of a language learning environment where learners and instructors cooperate.

In line with Weschler’s views, Butzkamm (2007) entitled his paper “We Only Learn a Language Once” to say that the mother tongue is a child’s strongest ally and should, therefore, be used systematically because every new language confronts an already existing mother tongue (Butzkamm, 2007:30). There has been no evidence that motivates the rigid avoidance of the mother
tongue in FL classes. Therefore, Butzkamm (2007) advised teachers to work with students’ natural tendency rather than against it, particularly, at the very first stage of their learning process.

The last article selected, which stressed the contrastive analysis between the students’ mother tongue and the language that is being learnt, deals with Rinvolucrī’s (2001) account of his long-time teaching experience.

At the beginning of his career as a teacher of English as an L2, Rinvolucrī claimed to be one of those who strongly believed that the Direct Method, described at the beginning of the current review, was the most effective one to approach L2 teaching. He used to discourage students’ from bringing and using their own bilingual dictionaries in the classroom and to adopt mime as a strategy to explain unfamiliar vocabulary. As a result, he often observed failure and misunderstanding among his learners. In the early 90’s, Rinvolucrī met a colleague from the Cambridge Academy who made him re-think the importance of knowing students’ L1 while teaching English. Consequently, Rinvolucrī developed a new methodology based on the fact that since the mother tongue and the target language are both frequently present in learners’ minds, they should also be present in their learning activities. In his account (2001), he also gave a summary of some of the activities and practices that teachers could implement to work on the two languages, the students’ native language and the target language, in parallel by teaching contrastively. He aimed to help teachers to understand how it is possible to re-think the methodology adopted in class in order to promote students’ learning.

4.2.2 How and When to Integrate the L1 and Improve FL Exposure at the Same Time

As already pointed out in this review, the use of the students’ mother tongue while teaching English has been disregarded for many years. However, in the last decades foreign language teaching methodology has undergone a change. More and more researchers and theorists have started to call for a balanced and flexible view of the use of students’ L1.

Nation (2003) introduced the Balanced Approach according to which teachers need to show respect for the students’ L1 but they also have to recognise the importance of maximising their FL exposure in the classroom. In order to do so, he suggested that some strategies can be implemented to increase the use of the target language. Such strategies are carrying out classroom management in the FL, discussing the tasks firstly in the L1 and introducing as much vocabulary as possible required for it, so that teachers can be sure of students’ understanding.

In line with Nation’s Balanced Approach, Gill (2003), Littlewood and Yu (2011) and Voicu (2012) explained that the L1 can been considered as an important tool for teaching and learning a
second language and illustrated some principles for integrating it in the right place, at the right moment during a foreign language class. Voicu (2012) claimed that the L1 must be regarded as a means to an end and that the target language must be used where possible and L1 when necessary (Voicu, 2012: 214). Gill (2003) asserted that there are appropriate times and places for the L1 to play an auxiliary role in FL classes and enhance students’ learning. For example, uses of the L1 are more suitable for beginner levels, to highlight similarities and differences between the two languages, for classroom management, to give instructions and to discuss recurring errors.

Littlewood and Yu (2011) shared these same principles for an appropriate use of the L1 in FL classes. Despite the fact that many teachers would argue that in most cases the classroom is the only opportunity for students’ exposure to the target language, Littlewood and Yu’s (2011) paper showed that a rational and judicious use of the L1 in FL classrooms can even be advantageous for students’ proficiency in the instructed language. In their article, they illustrated some of the national policies demanding a monolingual approach that are in force in schools in many countries. They observed that there is a discrepancy between these official guidelines and teachers’ actual practices in the classroom. Sometimes factors such as the pressure from exams, the class size, the students’ language proficiency or even the teachers’ lack of confidence, inevitably cause an over-use of the L1 by both instructors and learners. Nevertheless, some strategies can be adopted to increase the use of the target language without sacrificing students’ L1. First of all, teachers should feel more determined and confident, and then they should start the class with tasks that are already familiar and that require simple language already assimilated by the students.

In a previous study, Nation (1997) adopted the same argumentation from the students’ point of view. He tried to identify the situations where learners might feel the need for the L1 support and for each of them he tried to suggest a solution for teachers. It can happen that in group activities, students refuse to speak the FL because they think their language proficiency is not sufficient yet. Teachers could prevent this situation by dedicating the initial part of the lesson to introducing the skills and the language items useful for the following group activity. In addition, teachers could work more on the setting of tasks in order to make them more attractive to students. Role plays such as pretending to be a tourist in a foreign country or an international phone call may raise students’ interest in carrying out the task appropriately. Finally, teachers can inform their students about the benefits of using the target language before the task takes place in order to motivate them.

4.2.3 Advantages Identified when Using the L1 as Language of Instruction
This last section of the non-empirical articles focuses on the teachers’ purposes when using their students’ mother tongue in L2/FL classes and tries to identify the main advantages coming from the practice of using the learners’ mother tongue as a medium of instruction.

Auerbach’s (1993) article presented a critique against the monolingual approach which strongly discouraged the use of L1 in foreign language classrooms. She thought that the exclusion of the students’ L1 in favour of maximal exposure to the target language is not necessarily productive, in the particular case of lower levels of English learners. Her article aimed to be an invitation to re-examine teachers’ practices in class and an illustration of the learning benefits coming from the incorporation of students’ L1 in foreign language education. Auerbach (1993) stressed the concept that the presence of the L1, especially at the beginning levels, reduces students’ affective barriers, provides a sense of security and paradoxically brings about more rapid progress in FL acquisition. In addition, she supported students’ development of the sense of control over their learning process. According to her views, teachers should negotiate their teaching strategies with learners and decide with them when the L1 is more or less needed.

Situations where the L1 can be used positively in teaching a second language have already been discussed. Cook (2001) summarised them as: conveying and checking the meaning of new words; explaining grammar rules; organising tasks and activities in class; maintaining discipline; gaining contact with individual students; and testing exercises. In agreement with Butzkamm (2007), she claimed that avoidance of the L1 in FL classes has no straightforward theoretical rationale. In addition, in her paper (2001), Cook identified some criteria supporting the positive use of the mother tongue in foreign language classrooms. The first factor mentioned is efficiency concerning the effectiveness of comparing the two linguistic systems while teaching in order to raise students’ comprehension. The second is learning which regards the support given by the mother tongue to enhance target language acquisition. The third factor identified is naturalness which relates to students’ preference and convenience of using their native language to talk about certain topics. The last factor illustrated by Cook (2001) is external relevance regarding the help that students can receive from their mother tongue in order to be able to use the instructed language in several contexts beyond the classroom.

This last study, written by Harbord (1992), concludes the revision of the non-empirical articles and deals with the teachers’ purposes for using the L1 in the FL classroom. Although he argued that a mother tongue strategy must be replaced wherever possible by a corresponding L2 strategy, even Harbord (1992), in line with the authors reviewed so far, could not deny that the use of students’ native language leads to many advantages. In his view, mother tongue usage in FL
instruction facilitates teacher-student comprehension, facilitates teacher-student rapport and facilitates learning.

The table below summarises the principal views of the authors of the articles presented in this second section of the results. It highlights the principal subject matter of the investigations, it gives information about when, how and why teachers seem to use the L1 in L2/FL classes and lastly it describes attitudes and strategies that can be adopted in order to avoid an excessive dependency on the mother tongue by both instructors and learners.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author (Year), Country</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>When, How and Why to use the L1 in L2/FL classrooms</th>
<th>Attitudes and strategies suggested to avoid an excessive dependency on L1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voicu C. G. (2012), Romania</td>
<td>On the students’ and teachers’ use of the mother tongue in English classrooms.</td>
<td>L1 should be considered “as a means to an end”. <strong>The target language must be used where possible and L1 when necessary.</strong> (p.214). <strong>Appropriate L1 use:</strong> -for beginner levels; -for time-saving to explain vocabulary and grammar points; -to discover the similarities and differences of both languages; -for classroom management; -to give instructions; -to discuss some recurring errors.</td>
<td>Teachers should always control how and when the mother tongue is used. They should not waste time in eliminating its use in the classroom, but they should concentrate on the ways of exploiting and playing with the L1. A <strong>rational and judicious use of L1 in the EFL classroom can only be advantageous.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Littlewood W. &amp; Yu B. (2011), China and Australia</td>
<td>On teachers’ use of the L1 in FL classrooms.</td>
<td><strong>Principles for integrating the L1 in second language classrooms:</strong> -clarifying the meaning of the words, structures and utterances; -comparisons between the target language and the L1 increase confidence; -using translations as a tool for learning.</td>
<td><strong>Strategies for maximising target language exposure:</strong> -teachers’ own determination and confidence; -communication strategies; -‘starting simple’ strategy (using the L1 for tasks that are already familiar to students and require simple L2); -using the L2 for classroom management.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10 statements for using the L1 as a support for language acquisition:
1. Every new language confronts an already-existing mother tongue;
2. Eratz-techniques for meaning-conveyance work less well than the mother tongue;
3. Pupils are more confident when using mother tongue in FL classes;
4. Quick translations in the mother tongue helps without interrupting the flow of the conversation;
5. Mother tongue helps teachers to use comprehensible input and assists faster acquisition;
6. Bilingual techniques allow teachers to bypass the grammatical progression of the textbooks;
7. We need to associate the new with the already familiar;
8. Interference can be avoided;
9. Native language must be used systematically, selectively and in a judicious way;
10. Newly acquired FL items rely on the mother tongue.

Nation P. (2003), New Zealand
Key point: “Second language use in the foreign language classroom needs to be maximised wherever possible”. (p.1)
Reasons why learners use the L1:
- Low proficiency in the L2;
- Missing naturalness of using the L2 to do certain tasks;
- Shyness toward classmates;
- Lack of interest

Nation introduces the ‘Balanced Approach’ according to which teachers need to show respect for learners' L1 but they also recognise the importance of maximising the L2 in the classroom.

Strategies for increasing the L2:
- Carrying out classroom management in the L2;
- Discussing the task before hand in the L1;
- Introducing as much vocabulary as possible.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Publication Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Role of the Native Language in Foreign Language Classrooms</th>
<th>Ways of Using the L1 Positively in Teaching a Foreign Language</th>
<th>Criteria for the Judicious Use of the Mother Tongue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gill S. (2003), Czech Republic</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>The mother tongue represents a powerful resource that can be used to enhance learning, but it should be used in a principled way.</td>
<td>There are “appropriate times and appropriate places” for an auxiliary role of the L1:</td>
<td>Efficiency relates to doing something more effectively through the comparison with the mother tongue;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- when it seems more realistic;</td>
<td>Learning concerns whether FL learning is enhanced by the use of the students' mother tongue;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- to give students a sense of security;</td>
<td>Naturalness relates to whether students prefer the use of their mother tongue to the FL regarding certain topics;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- for using time more efficiently;</td>
<td>Relevant when the mother tongue helps students to use the FL they may need beyond the classroom. It may be associated with the use of English for communication purposes, everyday topics, conversing, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- to foster students' cooperation;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- to provide information about timetable or room changes,...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- classroom management;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- in contact with individuals;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- checking comprehension, explaining errors, difficult concepts, grammar and language rules, cross-cultural issues, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook V. (2001), Canada</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>On the re-examination of teaching methods according to which the students' first language should be avoided in foreign language classes by both teachers and students.</td>
<td>Ways of using the L1 positively in teaching a foreign language:</td>
<td>Efficiency relates to doing something more effectively through the comparison with the mother tongue;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- to convey and check the meaning of words or sentences;</td>
<td>Learning concerns whether FL learning is enhanced by the use of the students' mother tongue;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- for explaining grammar;</td>
<td>Naturalness relates to whether students prefer the use of their mother tongue to the FL regarding certain topics;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- for organising tasks and activities;</td>
<td>Relevant when the mother tongue helps students to use the FL they may need beyond the classroom. It may be associated with the use of English for communication purposes, everyday topics, conversing, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- for the maintenance of discipline in the class;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- to gain contact with individual;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- for testing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rinvolucri M. (2001), UK</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>On some activities that make principled use of the students' first language, whether or not the teacher speaks it.</td>
<td>Since mother tongue and target language are both frequently present in learners' mind, they should also be present in the learning activities. Rinvolucri advises teachers to work on the two languages in parallel by teaching contrastively. Using students' mother tongue in a judicious way in EFL classrooms is important.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nation P. (1997), New Zealand

On the strategies to maximise L2 use in foreign language classrooms where learners and teachers share the same language, without excluding the role of the L1.

Students might need the L1 support:
- in group activities when their L2 proficiency is not enough;
- when carrying out a task;
- when they do not feel motivated.

Strategies for improving the use of the L2:
- pre-teaching focused on skills and on language items useful in group activities;
- choosing a more natural task such as a role play (being a tourist, making an international call, ...);
- informing the students about the benefits of using the L2 and using a non-threatening task.

Weschler R. (1997), Japan

On the “Functional-Translation Method” which is a combination of the best of the Grammar-Translation Method with the best of communicative methods.

Acquiring a foreign language means a constant negotiation of meaning with an already existing language.

Mental translations are unavoidable. Students, especially adults, cannot escape the influence of the L1. They will always ask for the meaning mentally, if not orally even if it is not allowed by the teachers. It is a natural tendency.

Adults cannot learn a second language as directly as children learn their first language because they are afraid to make mistakes and lose face in front of their classmates.

Parameters of the Functional-Translation Method:
- focus on contrastive analysis by teaching new structural patterns contrastively;
- using bilingual teaching materials;
- help the students to understand and convey the meaning of the ideas most useful to them by using language in accordance with the needs;
- using ‘communicative procedures’. The teacher is no longer a lecturer dispensing information but rather a guide and a facilitator of the students’ activities;
- creating a real language learning environment where students and teachers cooperate.

Auerbach E.R. (1993), Boston

The article does not want to be an attack on those who advocate the monolingual approach but rather an invitation to re-examine classroom’s practices and the pedagogical effectiveness of using the L1.

Reasons for incorporating the L1 in FL instruction:
- by including initial literacy in the L1 and a bilingual approach beginner levels students will be able to participate in EFL classes;
- by using the L1, affective barriers to English acquisition will be reduced and rapid progress in the FL will follow;
- the use of the L1 does not impede the development of thinking in the foreign language but rather it facilitates this process;
- it allows learner-centred curriculum development.

Teachers can help foreign language learners to consider the advantages and the disadvantages of L1 versus L2. Teachers move from being a problem solver to a facilitator of critical reflection. In this way students develop metacognitive awareness of language learning strategies and gain a great sense of control over their own learning process.
Harbord J. (1992) On the teachers' purposes when using the L1 and the alternative techniques that encourage the use of the target language. The article is based on Atkinson's (1987) article. Mother-tongue use in L2 classrooms:
- facilitates teacher-student communication;
- facilitates teacher-student rapport;
- facilitates learning.
L1 use is not a device to be used to save time in classrooms or to make students' and teachers' lives easier. A mother-tongue strategy must be replaced wherever possible by a corresponding L2 strategy.
5. **Discussion and Conclusion**

The role of the students’ mother tongue in EFL classrooms has been the subject of many debates. Starting from the history of language teaching methodology, beliefs swung between those who believed in the merit of using only the target language in FL classes, and those who advocated an integrated use of both the L1 and the target language. The first group suggested that the monolingual approach was the only possible one to employ in FL classes, especially in contexts where the target language is not part of the outside-school environment and where students have the opportunity to be exposed to the instructed language just during class time. The second group supported a limited and principled use of L1 as medium of instruction in FL lessons in order to avoid students’ inhibition and misunderstandings.

The Grammar-Translation method, adopted since the 17th century, mainly aimed to teach students the FL grammar and lexis. The translation from the target language to the mother tongue was the principal learning activity. In most of the cases, teachers and students shared the same L1, which also played an important role during lessons. After having identified many disadvantages coming for the implementation of the Grammar-Translation method, primarily students’ lack of communicative ability with L2 native speakers, a change was needed. The Direct Method, appearing for the first time at the beginning of the 20th century, forbade the use of students’ L1 in FL classes by both instructors and learners in order to develop a better communicative proficiency in the foreign language. However, in the last two decades, a re-evaluation of the students’ mother tongue in FL classes has been taking place thanks to the adoption of Communicative Language Teaching. In this context, a reference was made to Larsen-Freeman (2000) whose book presents the history of language teaching methodology throughout the centuries.

The current paper aimed to review a selection of 28 articles on the topic to give a clear illustration of the situation concerning the most common language teaching practices adopted in EFL classes between 1990 and 2013. Studies focusing on EFL instructed in the schools of different countries have been examined in two different sections: empirical articles and non-empirical articles. The first section identified the importance of using the L1 during the L2/FL learning and teaching process from both students’ and teachers’ perspective. The second section tried to define the reasons why learners’ mother tongue should be integrated in the L2/FL learning process, the strategies in order to do so and the advantages arising when teachers use the students’ mother tongue as a medium of instruction.
The empirical articles investigated the matter of the language of instruction in FL classes through research carried out in situ. For the current review, the choice of categorising these investigations according to the point of view they focused on was taken. In particular, it was possible to identify three main perspectives: the students’, the teachers’ and that of both teachers and students.

It would also have been possible to present the articles by categorising them according to several other factors, for instance, according to learners’ level of education or according to the years of teaching experience of their instructors. However, relevant differences have not been identified in these cases. Indeed, studies conducted in primary/secondary education or in tertiary education led to the same conclusion, that is, the amount of L1 in L2/FL classes should depend on different factors, such as the students’ level of proficiency in the target language, rather than their age, or the difficulty of the topic instructed. One article exemplifying this statement is Mouhanna’s (2009) in which students enrolled on an English program in the university still claimed to feel the need of L1 support because of their low level of proficiency in the foreign language caused by teachers’ over-use of their L1 during their years at secondary school.

On the one hand, student-centred articles, such as Carson and Kashihara’s (2012), Mouhanna’s (2009) and Ahmad’s (2009) investigations, indicated that learners showed positive perceptions concerning the inclusion of their L1 in FL instruction. They identified typical situations where native language support is more needed, which are: explaining difficult concepts, checking for comprehension and defining new vocabulary items. However, the three studies mentioned above suggested that teachers’ code-switching from the target language to the students’ mother tongue should depend on the type of learners involved in the education. Indeed, L1 support is more desired by beginners with a low level of English proficiency than advanced students whose familiarity with the instructed language is higher.

Moore’s (2013), Bouangeune’s (2009) and He’s (2011) studies confirmed the advantages coming from the comparison between the two language systems when teaching grammatical topics as well. The only contrasting voice identified by this review seems to be Alseweed (2012), whose investigation proved that the use of students’ L1 by instructors does not play an effective role in the teaching of grammar.

On the other hand, teacher-centred articles, such as Timor’s (2012), Min and Li’s (2008) and Al-Buraiki’s (2008) studies, seemed to identify instructors’ positive views concerning the use of the students’ mother tongue in class but also during the break, to establish a good relationship with students and to make the educational environment more natural and spontaneous.
Overall, Pablo et al. (2011), Kafes (2011), Khati (2011), Shimizu (2006), Tang (2002), Schweers (1999) and Duff and Polio (1990), whose studies analysed data collected from both learners and FL instructors in order to compare them, showed students’ general agreement with their teachers’ practices, attitudes and beliefs. According to all the teachers interviewed, the L1 is a more effective medium than the FL when introducing grammar, difficult concepts and new words. It also helps not to waste time in long and misleading explanations and to create a more relaxing educational environment by lowering student’s affective filter.

In some cases, the argumentation of the results of this first section of the current review added also information concerning the methods chosen by the researchers to collect their data. Different kinds of methods could shed light on some specific aspects of the language teaching practices in both L2 and FL contexts. Questionnaires handed out to students attending different universities in the world by Carson and Kashihara (2012), Mouhanna (2009) and Ahmand (2009) identified their perceptions and preferences regarding the use of the native language in FL classes. However, a closer observation of the learners’ linguistic behaviour in the class when working in dyads (Moore, 2013) and being tested to verify their proficiency in the language being learnt (Alseweed, 2012; Bouangeune, 2009) gave the researchers a valuable insight on the classroom situation. Some researchers investigating teachers’ beliefs and attitudes opted for a combination of two methods, such as Min and Lin (2008), whose study was based on both recording lessons and follow-up interviews with teachers. The interviews permitted the instructors to explain and justify their verbal behaviour observed in class.

In order to gain greater empirical validity, Tang’s (2002) and Duff and Polio’s (1990) studies also opted for a triangulation. Indeed, they combined data collected from three different sources: classroom observations, interviews with teachers and questionnaires distributed to students to investigate their attitudes and motivations toward the inclusion of the L1 in FL classes.

The non-empirical articles presented views on L2/FL language teaching and learning according to some well-experienced teachers. Some of their articles proposed to re-examine the English-only approach advocated by the Direct Method. Firstly, there are Weschler’s (1997), Butzkamm’s (2007) and Rinvolucri’s (2001) studies which suggested that teachers should work with their students’ natural tendency to rely on their mother tongue in order to understand better the target language. Weschler (1997) introduced the Functional-Translation Method by which he did not aim to come back to the Grammar-Translation method adopted before the 20th century, where students’ L1 used to play a dominant role in FL education. He intended rather to stress more the contrastive analysis between the L1 and the L2 in order to show respect for the students’ mother
tongue without reducing the exposure to the target language. Rinvolucri (2001) pointed out that not knowing students’ L1 is a professional weakness. Teachers should be able to teach contrastively by working with the target language and the mother tongue of the students in parallel since these two linguistic systems are both frequently present in the learners’ mind (Rinvolucri, 2001:44). ‘We Only Learn a Language Once’ Butzkamm (2007) claimed, in order to say that every new language unavoidably confronts an already existing mother tongue (Butzkamm, 2007:30). They all came to the conclusion that both languages, the new language being learnt and the already familiar one, should be present in the teaching context and that making comparisons between the two linguistic systems can be a useful strategy to avoid misunderstandings.

The second section of the non-empirical articles dealt with scholars who illustrated some principles to integrate L1 in the right way and at the right moment during a FL class. (Nation, 1997, 2003; Gill, 2003; Littlewood and Yu, 2011; Voicu, 2012).

Taken as a whole, their findings favoured a limited and principled use of students’ L1 in L2/FL instruction. Both teachers and learners expressed positive views concerning the use of the L1 in FL classrooms. However, in almost every article reviewed, the terms judicious, selective and systematic appeared several times to say that teachers should always control when, how and why the mother tongue is used. According to Mouhanna (2009), the use of the L1 needs to be limited to amounts which do not deprive students of L2 exposure (Mouhanna, 2009:16). Voicu (2001) claimed that the L1 must be regarded as a means to an end and that the target language must be used where possible but L1 when necessary (Voicu, 2001:214). Teachers’ code-switching between students’ L1 and the instructed language must be taken as a strategy and not as a teaching method.

The review of the non-empirical articles concludes with Cook (2001) who affirmed that there is no proof that motivated the rigid avoidance of the use of the students’ L1 in L2/FL classes; Auerbach (2003) whose article dealt with the all-or-nothing approach, according to which a strict avoidance of the students’ L1 in class, as well as an excessive dependency on it, do not facilitate the learning process; and finally Harbord (1992) who claimed that the use of the mother tongue by FL teachers is not a device to be used in order to save time or to facilitate teachers’ and students’ lives. It should rather represent a tool to facilitate comparisons between the two language systems, to highlight their similarities and differences in order to promote language acquisition.

The current review concludes by saying that there is not a best way to teach a language after learning one’s mother tongue. Learning and teaching a second/foreign language are not easy processes. It is not possible to identify criteria that can work in every kind of situation. Teachers can only rely on small but efficient expediants. Indeed, their teaching practices should differ according
to the profile of the learners and once their needs and learning pace have been analysed. Importance should be given to the students’ L1 without reducing their target language exposure.

5.1 Limitation of the Study

Despite the fact that the current thesis reviewed 28 articles dealing with FL teaching in many countries and at any level of education, it is limited in two respects. Firstly, most of the articles selected conducted their investigation on the role of the students’ mother tongue in monolingual contexts, that is, in situations where teachers and students all share the same mother tongue. It is possible that different information would have been gathered if the current review had selected articles which investigated the role of the learners’ mother tongue in multilingual classes, that is, within an educational context where students do not share the same native language as their classmates.

Secondly, the language policies in force in the institutions where the investigations took place were often ignored by the researchers of the articles selected. There is just one article dealing with this aspect of language teaching methodology, but a more detailed comparison between the official guidelines prescribed by the school headmaster with real teachers’ practices in class would have added more information for the addressees of the review.

5.2 Further Research

Future research should distinguish studies conducted in a monolingual context, where students and instructors share the same native language, from studies conducted in multilingual context. In the case of English studied as a second language in an English speaking country, it rarely happens that teachers know all their students’ native languages.

In addition, more research is needed to investigate the motivation of the students when learning English as a second or foreign language, which would be a significant factor influencing their perceptions of the need for their mother tongue in the classroom.

Finally, the language policies prescribed by the headmaster of the educational institution under investigation should be determined and compared with teachers’ real practices.
ABBREVIATIONS

EFL: English as Foreign Language
FL: Foreign Language
L1: First Language, Mother Tongue, Native Language
L2: Second Language
REFERENCES


