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The Use of First Language while Teaching English in the EFL Classroom

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Resumen

El objetivo principal de esta síntesis de investigación fue analizar el uso del primer lenguaje para la enseñanza y aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera. Esta es una síntesis de investigación descriptiva. Se recopilieron quince estudios para su análisis y comparación. Los criterios de inclusión para estos estudios fueron artículos publicados y revisados por pares desde el 2000 hasta 2019. Los patrones de comparación fueron los usos sugeridos de la L1 en el aula de inglés como lengua extranjera, las ventajas y desventajas del uso de la L1 en una clase de lengua extranjera y las percepciones de los profesores y estudiantes sobre el uso de L1 en la clase de inglés como lengua extranjera. Los resultados demostraron que los profesores usan el primer lenguaje para dar instrucciones para las actividades, para explicar el vocabulario, revisar la comprensión, explicar puntos difíciles de la gramática, explicar diferencias entre el primer lenguaje y el lenguaje extranjero y proveer retroalimentación. Además, se evidenció que el uso del primer lenguaje presenta más ventajas que desventajas. La principal ventaja reportada fue el uso del primer lenguaje como herramienta de andamiaje mientras que, por otro lado, la principal desventaja fue el uso excesivo del primer lenguaje en la clase. Además, se reportaron percepciones positivas sobre el uso del primer lenguaje en la clase por profesores y estudiantes. Ambas partes mencionaron que el primer lenguaje juega un papel de apoyo en la clase de lenguaje extranjero. Finalmente, la primera lengua ha sido considerada como una herramienta de motivación que ayuda a los estudiantes a sentirse más seguros al aprender otro idioma.

Palabras clave: Primera lengua. Inglés. Lenguaje extranjero. Percepciones.



Abstract

The main purpose of this research synthesis was to analyze the use of the first language (L1) for teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL). This is a descriptive research synthesis. Fifteen studies were collected for analysis and comparison. The inclusion criteria for these studies were published and peer-reviewed articles from 2000 to 2019. The patterns of comparison were the suggested uses of the L1 in the EFL classroom, advantages and disadvantages of using L1 in the EFL classroom, and perceptions of teachers and students of using L1 in the EFL classroom. The results showed that teachers use the L1 for giving instructions for activities, explaining vocabulary, checking comprehension, explaining complex grammar points, explaining differences between L1 and foreign (FL), and providing feedback. Furthermore, it was evidenced that the use of L1 presents more advantages than disadvantages. The main advantage reported was the use of the L1 as a scaffolding tool while on the other hand, the main disadvantage was the overuse of it in the EFL classroom. Moreover, it was reported positive perceptions about L1 use in the classroom by teachers and students. Both of them mentioned that the L1 plays a supportive role in the EFL classroom. Finally, the L1 has been considered as a motivational tool that helps students to feel more confident when learning another language.

Keywords: First language. English. Foreign language. Perceptions.



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Dedication

I want to dedicate this research synthesis to my parents who have supported and trusted me all the time during my whole life. Also, I want to dedicate it to my beloved son Jhulian who inspired me to get my goals. This paper is dedicated to you.



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Introduction

The use of the first language in teaching English as a Foreign Language classroom has been a controversial topic since many years ago. It is because the monolingual approach suggests only the use of the target language in the EFL classroom. However, some researchers consider the first language as a resource for teaching and learning a new language (Almoayidi 2018; Galali and Cinkara 2017; Sharma 2006; Shabir 2017; Storch & Wigglesworth 2003). According to Almoayidi (2018), “the field of language teaching holds a belief that the use of L1 in FL classrooms helps to facilitate learning” (p. 375). Then, the importance of this research lies in considering how the first language is used in a foreign language classroom in our context and around the world. For that reason, it is important to know whether it is appropriate to use the first language in the foreign language context without affecting the English learning process. Some authors as Bhooth, Azman, and Ismail (2014) affirm that “using the L1 during collaborative tasks enhances learners’ language proficiency as they move through the zone of proximal development” (as cited in Alshehri, 2017, p. 21). So, the main purpose of this descriptive research synthesis was to analyze the advantages and disadvantages, the common uses, and teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the use of L1 in the EFL classroom. For developing this research synthesis, 15 studies for analyzing and comparing L1 use in the EFL classroom were collected. Also, a descriptive method was applied. Therefore, this research synthesis consists of the following chapters:

Chapter I. In this chapter, there is a description of the topic, the background, the problem statement, and the rationale. Moreover, the objectives and research questions are established.



Chapter II. This chapter describes the theoretical framework, key terms, and some important concepts related to the use of L1 in the EFL classroom.

Chapter III. This chapter presents the literature review, in which 15 studies about relevant works related to the use of the first language in the EFL classroom are described.

Chapter IV. This chapter describes the methodology and the inclusion criteria for the collection of information for this research.

Chapter V. This chapter showed the analysis of the data from the 15 studies presented in the literature review.

Chapter VI. This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations made from the analysis.



Chapter I

Description of the Research

1.1 Background

There are several arguments in the field of teaching in regards to the use of the first language (L1) while teaching a foreign language (FL) in the classroom. Some researchers affirm that it is necessary to address the use of the first language or the mother tongue (MT) in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Actually, there are contradictory views about whether to use or not use the first language in a foreign language classroom.

On one hand, Tang (2002) affirms that “The monolingual approach suggests that the target language ought to be the only medium of communication in FL, implying the prohibition of the native language” (p.36). In the study developed by He (2012), the author introduces that the monolingual principle has been dominating the FL classrooms for decades. Butzkamm (2019) explained that the monolingual principle refers to the avoidance of the L1 in the L2 classroom (p. 417). The author stated that the MT has to be avoided in FL instruction since it is the major impediment to target language (TL) development. He claims that the use of the mother tongue deprives learners of exposure to the target language. According to Nunan and Lamb, “Professionals in second language acquisition have become increasingly aware of the role the mother tongue plays in the EFL classroom” (Nunan & Lamb, as cited in Tang, 2002, p.37).

On the other hand, Almoayidi (2018) stated that “the field of language teaching and learning holds a belief that the use of L1 in FL classrooms helps to facilitate learning” (p. 375). In the same vein, Storch (2003) proposed “the use of L1 as a tool of mediation to learn an FL” (p. 761). Therefore, the L1 acts as a tool to help learners to acquire a foreign



language. Besides, “the use of the L1 may provide learners with additional cognitive support that allows them to analyze language and work at a higher level than would be possible were they restricted to the sole use of their FL” (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003, p. 760). Hence, using the first language in the classroom would maximize the effectiveness of learning the target language because the L1 is a useful tool to develop tasks in FL (Colina & Mayo, 2009). Also, there is a study conducted by He that supports the use of L1 in the FL. He (2012) addresses the use of L1 for the benefit of FL development. His study about comparative linguistics showed that the use of L1 is especially useful for language tasks such as defining vocabulary items, practicing the use of phrases and expressions, and explaining grammar rules and other important notions (p. 4).

Considering the previous information, it is necessary to know if using the students’ L1 is positive or if it has some drawbacks. It is really important to take into account whether to use or not use the first language in a foreign language (FL) classroom.

1.2 Problem Statement

This research synthesis will try to establish whether it is appropriate to use the L1 in an FL classroom without affecting the high quality of learning a new language. Certainly, L1 plays an important role while learning a new language. According to Littlewood and Baohua (2009), the L1 can be an efficient way of clarifying the meanings of words, structures, or utterances; so that students can progress more quickly to the more important stage of active use and internalization (p.71). The problem is that some teachers ban or exclude the use of L1 in a foreign language classroom without taking into account that it could be a collaborative tool to accelerate the learning of a foreign language. To address



this problem, it is necessary to compare the results among studies in the field of learning and teaching.

Furthermore, empirical research in recent years has proved that L1 is “the most important ally a foreign language can have” (Butzkamm & Caldwell, as cited in He, 2012, p. 2). Teachers can use L1 as an instrument to improve English learning, and students can apply the knowledge learned in their first language, correctly in their target language. “Students always approach learning a foreign language with expertise in their L1, and this expertise remains a somewhat underexplored resource” (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003, p. 768). Thus, the use of the L1 in the EFL classroom can become an excellent tool for students since it can help them to comprehend new information when it becomes too difficult to understand the information in the FL.

1.3 Rationale

There is a contradictory view of using L1 in the EFL classroom. On one side “the monolingual principle refers to exclusive use of TL as the instructional language to enable learners to think in TL, with minimal interference from MT” (Howatt, as cited in He, 2012, p. 2), and on the other side, the use of the mother tongue is regarded as an alternative to teach a foreign language. “Starting with the L1 provides a sense of security and validates the learners’ lived experiences, allowing them to express themselves. The learner is then willing to experiment and take risks with English” (Schweers, 1999, p. 7). Then, the main issue to be discussed is the possibility of using the mother tongue while learning a new language instead of the only use of the TL.



Besides, the compensatory use of the L1, as well as the growth of confidence and experience, are likely to lead teachers to expand the scope of the TL as a natural medium for communication in this domain, while recognizing the importance of the L1 as a source of security and support (Littlewood & Yu, 2009, p. 72).

Therefore, it is important to determine if the use of L1 in a foreign language classroom is causing positive or negative effects. In order to do this, it is necessary to review several research studies on the field of foreign language teaching. This research synthesis will focus on summarizing the findings about the use of the first language in a foreign language classroom context to facilitate access to a brief and clear synthesis about the advantages, disadvantages, and activities of the L1 in a foreign language classroom.

1.4 Research Question

What advantages and disadvantages about using L1 in an EFL classroom have been reported?

Which common uses of the L1 in the EFL classroom have been reported?

Which perceptions of teachers and students about using L1 in the EFL classroom have been reported?

General Objective

To analyze the use of the L1 for teaching and learning in the EFL classroom.

Specific objectives

To determine the advantages and disadvantages of using L1 in the EFL classroom.

To analyze the common reported uses of the L1 in the EFL classroom.



To analyze teacher's and students' perceptions of L1 use in the EFL classroom.



Chapter II

Theoretical Framework

This research synthesis provides relevant information about L1 use in a foreign language classroom. Thus, in this section, it is important to understand and differentiate each one of the following terms related to language, mother tongue (MT) or first language (L1), foreign language (FL), and target language (TL). Moreover, first language acquisition and foreign language acquisition also will be explained. Furthermore, the role of the first language in the EFL classroom, the benefits of using the L1 to teach English as a foreign language (EFL), and the use of the L1 as a motivational tool for learning EFL will be reviewed in this section.

On one hand, according to Silvani (2014), the mother tongue or L1 is a language that people learn before another language when they are children. There is not any difference between mother tongue and first language, the distinction between them has disappeared for centuries, thus, mother tongue and first language are interchangeable terms (Chan, 2015). Also, Faridy and Syaodih (2016) stated that the mother tongue has an important role in preserving the local language, and it is a facilitator to acquire a second and third language. Besides, someone's first language is the language that they learned first and speak best; it is used especially when someone speaks more than one language (Collins, 2020).

On the other hand, foreign language and target language are related terms that play an important role in language acquisition. Foreign language and target language are interchangeable terms (Moeller and Catalano, 2015). According to the Macmillan dictionary (2020), a target language is the language that you are learning or translating



something into. According to Moeller and Catalano (2015), foreign language is learned largely in the classroom and is not spoken in the society where the teaching occurs.

2.1 First Language Acquisition

First language acquisition occurs when;

“Children acquire their first languages not by direct instruction (indeed, overt correction seems to have little impact on them), but by being immersed in rich, meaningful, and natural communicative settings. So, in the first language acquisition, humans learn best when their learning is self-motivated in “natural” settings and not “imposed” on them by direct instruction” (Gee, 1994, p. 332).

2.2 Foreign Language Acquisition

According to Moller and Catalano (2015), linguists distinguish between the terms acquisition and learning: ‘acquisition’ refers to the process of learning a first language naturally, without formal instruction, whereas ‘learning’ is reserved for the formal study of second or foreign languages in classroom settings. Whereby, foreign language learning refers to “the teaching of a modern language that is neither an official language nor the mother tongue of a significant part of the population” (p. 327).

2.3 The Role of the First Language in the EFL Classroom.

Many linguists object to using L1 in an EFL teaching context due to the fact that the monolingual approach advocates the only use of target language for communicating in the classroom (Sharma, as cited in Jadallah and Hasan, 2010). The monolingual approach advocates that the target language should be the only medium of communication, which means, the prohibition of the first language, and instead of it, they emphasize the use of



target language because it increases the effectiveness of the learning (Solhi and Büyükyazı, 2011, p. 860). However, Salmona (2014) stated that the first language is useful for beginners' English learners, but she also affirmed that the L1 use should be reduced according to how students progress in their level of proficiency in the target language. Finally, the prohibition of using L1 in an English classroom may affect psychological aspects in the learners, that means, if the teacher prohibits that students use the L1, the learner could develop a feeling of insecurity among them (Silvani, 2014).

Furthermore, Pan (2010) argued the functions of the L1 in the process of learning a foreign language. Thus, the functions are the maintenance of interest in the task, developing strategies and approaches to make difficult tasks easier to develop. He also stated that L1 can facilitate class activities because it provides beneficial scaffolding that helps learners to understand the tasks and solve specific problems. Scaffolding is an important teaching strategy developed by Vygotsky. Scaffolding refers to the assistance by others in order to achieve more than learners may achieve in the ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development). Vygotsky defined the ZPD as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more knowledgeable others” (Doolittle, 1995, p. 3). Then, L1 could be used as a scaffolding strategy by both teachers and students. Teachers can use it as a tool to enhance the learning experience and maximize engagement in the classroom, and students could use it as a strategy to facilitate their learning (Bhooth, Azman, and Ismail, 2014). Also, L1 assists in the process and completion of the task and creates a social and cognitive space in which students can assist each other throughout the duration of the task (Anton & Dicamilla as



cited in Pan, 2010). Besides, Greggio and Gil (2007) stated that L1 plays an important role in the facilitation of interaction between classroom participants as well as foreign language learning; for example, L1 use helps as a learning strategy for explaining grammar and offering feedback.

2.4 The Advantages of Using the L1 to Teach EFL

Many researchers and authors (Schweers 1999; Tang 2002; Salmona 2014; Silvani 2014; He 2012) emphasize the value of using L1 and the positive role this plays in EFL teaching. Furthermore, many advantages can be mentioned about the use of the first language in the EFL classroom. Some advantages of teachers' use of L1 mentioned by Galali and Cinkara (2017) are the following ones: L1 is useful for explaining grammatical points to low proficiency learners, to check the meaning of unknown words or concepts, and to facilitate social interaction among students during an English class. According to Cook (2001), switching between languages and translation happens instinctively to all language learners and the L1 is an important resource in foreign language learning. In addition, "the use of L1 has also been promoted for certain procedures such as explaining difficult concepts, checking comprehension, raising confidence, explaining the rationale of language learning activities, error analysis, or vocabulary clarification" (Prodromou, as cited in Rodríguez and Oxbrow, 2008, p. 95). Besides, it is important to differentiate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) from English as a Second Language (ESL) because those are two different settings where teaching and learning take place. The use of L1 is more useful in an EFL due to it has a monolingual context where most of the students share the same first language or mother tongue, while, in ESL context the L1 is used in a



multilingual class where not all the students have the same MT/L1 (Krieger, 2012). For the reason mentioned before this research synthesis has focused only on the EFL context.

2.5 The Use of the L1 as a Motivational Tool for Learning EFL

According to Almoayidi (2014), L1 is a motivational tool for learning a foreign language because it motivates these learners to be active. Furthermore, L1 use is a motivational tool for learning a foreign language. It is important to mention that there are two types of motivation, “intrinsic motivation, which refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, and extrinsic motivation, which refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome” (Ryan and Deci 2000, p. 55).

According to Krieger (2012), “in an EFL setting, the L1 uses can be an extrinsic motivation, due to English may not seem relevant to some students since it is not part of their daily lives.” However, in some cases, students may study English for a test or to fulfill the curriculum while “in an ESL classroom, students are likely to have a higher intrinsic motivation because English is relevant to their daily lives. By being in the target language community, they have more opportunity to use English and to see immediate results from using it.” (ESL versus EFL student motivation section, para. 1).

Consequently, some authors support the use of L1 in the EFL classroom affirming that L1 plays a beneficial role in the process of learning the English language, and it facilitates the acquisition of a foreign language in a simple way. Also, for students, especially for lower-level students, L1 is a motivational tool for learning English because they feel comfortable when they use L1 in the classroom.



Chapter III

Literature Review

This section shows a review of studies that were conducted about the use of L1 in EFL classrooms. These studies help to understand the use of the first language while teaching English as a foreign language. This report also makes a comparison among articles related to this topic and is divided into three sections: 1) the L1 influence in teaching EFL, 2) the common uses of the L1 in the EFL classroom, and 3) advantages and disadvantages of using the L1 in an EFL classroom.

3.1 First Language Influence and its Role in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Tang (2002), conducted a study in China; the purpose of his study was to know whether Chinese as the L1 was used in the tertiary level of the English classroom, and if so, how frequently it was used and for what purposes, and the attitudes of the students and teachers toward using Chinese in the EFL classroom. The participants were three teachers and 100 first-year English major students of a university in Beijing. The methodology that he used was quantitative and qualitative. He collected data through observations, interviews, and questionnaires. In his study, he mentioned the positive role of the first language in the foreign language classroom. In the research, Chinese was used by the three teachers in the tertiary-level English classes to give instructions and to explain the meaning of words, complex ideas, and complex grammar points. The greatest use of Chinese was 13 times, and it was to explain the meaning of difficult words. Teachers used Chinese only when they had to explain abstract or culturally specific words. Chinese was used on



occasions when English explanations fail to work. Students judged that teacher explanations using L1 were effective for their understanding.

Another study was conducted by Tajgozar (2017) in Darab, Iran. The objective of this study was to find out the attitudes of teachers and students toward the use of L1 in an English class. The methodology he used was qualitative and quantitative and the instruments he used to collect data were questionnaires and interviews. The participants were 56 EFL learners of elementary, intermediate, and advanced level and 11 teachers. At the end of the research, he found out that L1 language motivates students to learn; besides, the atmosphere is better when students are acquiring a foreign language. Therefore, L1 becomes an influential factor in the acquisition of a foreign language. Finally, most of the participants showed a favorable perception toward the use of L1 in an English course.

Likewise, the study carried out by Karimian and Mohammadi (2015), in Iran, aimed to find the perceptions of teachers about the use of the first language in English classes. The participants were 40 teachers from different levels of English, half of them from Iran, and the other 20 from other countries. This study used a qualitative methodology where the instruments used to collect data were interviews. They found out that “teachers were inspired to use learners’ mother tongue in their language classrooms to make it more dynamic, to help learners feel a sense of security and also confirm their experiences” (p.64). Also, all teachers agreed that the L1 is a facilitator in an English classroom which brings benefits to their students.

Furthermore, the study carried out by Murga, Damían, and Tacoaman (2018) in Ecuador, aimed to analyze the perception that Ecuadorian learners have about the teacher’s



use of Spanish during their English classes as a foreign language and to investigate the role of the mother tongue in these classes. They used a qualitative multiple case study. They gathered information through surveys, video recordings, and an observation checklist template. The participants were three teachers and three groups of 25 learners from different universities. They found out that the use of L1 in the classroom does not seem to hinder the learning of an EFL, instead of that, it seems to facilitate in some of the lesson stages. Also, results showed that FL can help to learn and lead to improvements among the students.

3.2 The Common Uses of the L1 in the EFL classroom

Sharma (2006) conducted a study in Nepal. The purpose of her study was to investigate the use of Nepali as L1 at a secondary level of English classrooms. Besides, she wanted to find out how frequently L1 was used, for what purposes, and the attitudes of students and teachers towards using L1 in the EFL classroom. The methodology that she used was descriptive and quantitative and she collected data through questionnaires and classroom observations. The participants were 100 secondary level students from four secondary schools in Chitwan. She mentioned some uses of the first language in English as a foreign language. Then, in a reading task, she found out that teachers use L1 for explaining the meaning of words, giving instructions, explaining complex ideas, and explaining grammar rules. Thus, the greatest use of L1 in the classroom was 14 times. Furthermore, 87% of students think that students' mother tongue should be used in the English classroom. Finally, almost all of the students objected to the excessive use of the first language in the EFL classroom.



Similarly, Colina and Mayo's study (2009) had the main purpose of analyzing the use of L1 and its functions in oral interaction. The participants were 24 undergraduate students. The methodology that they used was quantitative and collected data in three collaborative tasks: jigsaw (a puzzle consisting of a picture printed on cardboard or wood and cut into various pieces of different shapes that have to be fitted together (Oxford, 2021)), text reconstruction is a strategy in which students reconstruct a text that they have listened to several times, they take notes and discussed about it, and dictogloss (a form of dictation in which students hear a complete text then try to reconstruct from memory (Macmillan, 2020)). Also, they audiotaped the interaction from the participants. They investigated the role of L1 in the learning of a foreign language. They found that L1 use in both tasks was similar, text reconstruction 78% and dictogloss 75%, but in jigsaw 50% of the learners produced a higher percentage of L2 use during the jigsaw while in the other two tasks the use of L1 exceeded 75%. Finally, they concluded that the L1 is an important tool for learners and that there is task-related variation in its use. Besides, students used their L1 Spanish for two main purposes: metacognition or talking about the task, and for metatalk, talking about talking.

Furthermore, Azkarai and Garcia's (2014) conducted a study in Spain. Their focus was to analyze the use and functions of the L1 in oral interaction. The participants were 44 EFL Spanish learners who were in a major Spanish university. The methodology was qualitative and quantitative. They collected data through questionnaires and oral interactions that were audio-recorded and transcribed. The authors mentioned some tasks,



such as dictogloss, text editing (students work collaboratively and receive feedback from their interlocutors), picture placement, and picture differences (both tasks are considered information-gap tasks in which students have to exchange information in order to complete the task, and their main focus is on meaning (Colina & Mayo, & Storch, as cited in, Azkarai & Garcia, 2014, p. 8)), and tasks that were completed using the L1 as a scaffolding tool. They found that L1 was used more frequently in speaking and writing tasks. Specifically, the proportion of L1 uses was higher in text editing. Besides, participants made more use of their L1 in the text editing than in the dictogloss and more L1 use in the picture placement than in the picture differences task.

The research carried out by Shabir (2017) in Australia, aimed to know if EFL teachers, from different backgrounds, actually believe in the use of L1 in L2 classrooms. The participants were 23 teachers that were studying Master of Applied Linguistics. Twenty-one were non-native student teacher participants from Pakistan, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Chile, Columbia, Taiwan, Vietnam, China, Korea, and Thailand where English is taught as a foreign language and two were native from Australia. The methodology was qualitative and quantitative. The instrument that he used to gather data was a closed-ended questionnaire with the statements on a four-point Likert scale where they had to indicate agree or disagree. Then, the majority of students (69.5%) agree that teachers use L1 for explaining grammar rules. Similarly, students use L1 because they tend to understand the difficult terms and concepts of grammar. Besides, students (56% agree) want teachers to use L1 at the time of giving and explaining assignments and homework. Finally, he found out that teachers are in favor of judicious use of L1 for particular activities where L1 can support a foreign language.



3.3 Advantages and Disadvantages of Using L1 in the EFL Classroom

Some researchers (Silvani, 2014; Mora, Lengeling, Rubio, Crawford, and Goodwin, 2011; Sa'd and Qadermazi, 2015; Storch, and Wigglesworth, 2003; He, 2012) explained in their studies the advantages of using L1 while students are learning a foreign language. Most researchers agree that L1 is a useful tool in the process of teaching a foreign language.

Research carried out by Silvani (2014) aimed to find out the perceptions on the use of the L1 by teachers and students and deduce the phenomena in the English classroom. In this study, she observed two different English classrooms with two different English teachers from second-year students of a junior high school. This study had a qualitative design, and the instruments to collect data were the observation and interview. The results showed that L1 was used several times during the learning process; also, it was beneficial for the students. In the study, some of the advantages that she found were the students' increased comprehension when the teacher used the L1 in an English classroom for activities, such as giving instructions, vocabulary definitions, and concepts about grammar, etc. Students also felt confident in asking the teacher about instructions, clarification, or pronunciation of words.

In another study, conducted by Paker and Karaağaç (2015) in Turkey, their main purpose was to analyze how much mother tongue/L1 do the instructors use in the classes and in which situations and the beliefs of the students regarding the use of mother tongue in EFL classrooms. The participants in this study were 20 English instructors and 286 students. This study used a mixed-method, and the data were collected through classroom



recordings, questionnaires. Some advantages that they mentioned are the use of L1 as a tool that helps students to understand the foreign language, to catch the students' attention, and to improve English proficiency. In the end, the result showed that the instructors used L1 most for rapport-building purposes, making the topic/meaning clear (by giving examples, explaining, making extra explanations, etc.), explaining difficult concepts or ideas, etc. Finally, the instructors and the students were aware of the importance of using the target language as much as possible in the classroom.

Besides, a study carried out by Sa'd and Qadermazi (2015) in Iran, about the L1 use in EFL classes, their main purpose was to analyze learners' attitudes towards using L1 in English as a foreign language classroom. The participants were 60 elementary Iranian learners between 14 and 22 years old. The methodology was quantitative and qualitative and the instruments they used to gather data were questionnaires, interviews, and class observation. They showed several advantages of the use of the L1 in the EFL classroom; for example, they mentioned that students feel more comfortable and avoid confusion when the teacher uses L1 in an English classroom, additionally, the comprehension by students when teachers gave instructions or explained some grammar points or lexical items was better. Finally, the results showed that most students had a positive attitude towards using L1. So,

they agreed with the use of the L1 as a facilitator tool in an English foreign language class.

Furthermore, a study conducted by He (2012) in China. In which his main purpose was to establish an explicit link between MT and TL in classroom instruction. The participants were 14 students of a comparative linguistic course. The students were



Mandarin and Cantonese native speakers. The methodology that he used was qualitative and collected data through linguistic tasks. In his study, he found that there are three different ways of using L1 systematically for the benefit of TL development 1) taking advantage of similarities between Chinese and English 2) taking advantage of differences between the two language systems, and 3) taking advantage of learners' conceptual understanding in L1 for TL learning. Finally, L1 is a valuable resource in TL instruction.

In the same way, Abdullah and Ismail (2014) conducted a study in Yemen; the purpose of their study was to know how the EFL Yemeni students perceive the use of the L1 and the role it plays in the EFL classroom. The participants were 45 EFL second-year undergraduate students from the Department of English Foreign Language, at a University in Yemen. The methodology that they used was qualitative and quantitative and collected data through questionnaires and interviews. This research found that the EFL Yemeni students perceive the use of Arabic as a useful facilitating tool in their learning of English as a foreign language

Conversely, the use of L1 in an EFL classroom also implies some disadvantages to students in the process of learning. The study by Büyükyazı and Solhi (2011) in Turkey, aimed to analyze the use of L1 from teachers in their foreign language classrooms and the reasons for using it. This was a demographic study of teachers. This questionnaire was sent out to 110 teachers, and exactly 72 were returned. However, only 57 of them were taken to the final evaluation since some of them lacked the information required. The methodology was qualitative and the instrument they used was questionnaires. They mentioned some disadvantages of using L1 in an English class, among these disadvantages there are, for



example, the classroom is the only place where students have the opportunity to practice a foreign language, and also, the use of FL enhances learners' thinking skills and communicative competence. The result of this study showed teachers allowed students to use the L1 only in low levels learners because it is beneficial for them; however, using the L1 in the EFL classroom reduces the opportunity of practicing the target language.

Another study was conducted by Galali and Cinkara (2017) at Salahaddin University, Irak. Their main purpose was to analyze the learners' attitudes towards the use of L1 in a target language. The participants were 258 EFL learners. The methodology that they used was quantitative and qualitative and collected data through questionnaires and interviews. They considered some disadvantages such as the fact that using L1 was unappropriated because it distracted the attention of the students. They also mentioned that students felt that they were doing two different things at the same time when the teacher changed from one language to another one, and they could not concentrate properly. Finally, the results showed that most of the learners had a slightly positive attitude toward L1 use as a facilitator in an English class.

In conclusion, different studies were presented in this section in order to know the positive role of L1 use in a foreign language classroom. This section showed some similarities among studies and authors that agree with the use of L1 in the EFL classroom. Furthermore, it is important to mention that the majority of the studies show the advantages of using L1. In which the most important is using L1 as a scaffolding tool. However, there are few disadvantages to using it. In which the main disadvantage is the overuse of L1 in the EFL classroom. According to Carless (2007), “There is a need for a balanced and



flexible view of MT use in the task-based classroom” (p. 336). Finally, using L1 should be balanced to get the best results in the process of learning a foreign language.



Chapter IV

Research Methodology

In the words of Light and Pillemer, a research synthesis allows us to “learn from existing findings, to ‘discover what is known’” (as cited in Norris & Ortega, 2006, p. 279). Therefore, for this research synthesis, several studies were reviewed that provides a context for the analysis of the results of each study. Besides, it is categorized as a descriptive research synthesis about the use of L1 in a foreign language classroom. According to Lambert and Lambert (2012) “The goal of qualitative descriptive studies is a comprehensive summarization, in everyday terms, of specific events experienced by individuals or groups of individuals” (p. 255). Moreover, the key phrases that were used for looking at the studies were: a) L1 in the foreign language acquisition, b) the role of L1 in the EFL classroom, c) the influence of the mother tongue in the EFL, d) cross-influence of L1 on TL. The databases for looking for information were Scopus, Taylor & Francis, EBSCO, and Google Scholar. Furthermore, the journals in which the articles were reviewed are the following *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, *Language Teaching Research*, *Procedia-Social, and Behavioral Sciences*, *Center for Educational Policy Studies*, among others. Additionally, the references from the studies were checked. The criteria for selecting the studies were a) published and peer-reviewed articles, b) published from 2000 to 2019 for practical purposes c) articles about L1 in the EFL classroom, and c) the role of L1 in the process of teaching EFL. Furthermore, there was not any restriction related to the design, age of participants, number of participants, and the methodology of the studies. Finally, three categories were considered for the analysis and these are the advantages and disadvantages of using L1 in an EFL classroom, the



common uses of the L1 in the EFL classroom, and teachers' and students' perceptions of the L1 use in the EFL context.



Chapter V

Analysis

In this synthesis, 15 studies were analyzed to meet the objectives of the research. The studies collected were classified according to the year of publication, educational level, location, the advantages and disadvantages of using L1 in the EFL classroom, the suggested uses for the L1 in the EFL classroom, and teachers' and students' perceptions on the use of the L1 in the EFL classroom.

Table 1

Year of Publication of the Studies

Author/ Year	Year of studies' publication	N
Storch & Wigglesworth (2003);		5
Tang (2002); Sharma (2006);	2000- 2009	
Carless (2007); Colina & Mayo (2009)		



He (2012); Büyükyazı & Solhi	10
(2011); Mora et al. (2011); Azkarai	
(2014); Silvani (2014); Al Hariri	
(2015); Karimian and Mohammadi	2010-2019
(2015); Tajgozar (2017); Sa'd &	
Qadermazi (2015); Galali &	
Cinkara (2017)	
<hr/> N=	15

Table 1 shows the year of publication of the studies to know how the topic has evolved from 2000 to 2019 which involves almost two decades. In this case, we are referring to the use of the first language or mother tongue for learning a foreign language. Ten out of 15 studies are from the last decade. It is important to emphasize that the year of publication is important because, despite the fact the use of the L1 has been considered a traditional tool since it is quite related to the translation method, this tool continues to be used in the teaching of foreign language. As Ibrahim (2019) states, “using (L1) or mother tongue as a teaching technique has had many complications, once it had been accepted as a teaching technique for a long time as in the case of Grammar-L1 Method” (p.21). Besides, researchers in recent years continue investigating why and how L1 is used in the EFL classroom either by students or teachers (Tajgozar, 2017; Sa'd & Qadermazi, 2015 and Galali & Cinkara, 2017).



Table 2

Education Level

Author / Year	Education Level	N
Al Hariri (2015)	Elementary school	1
Sharma (2006); Silvani (2014); Carless (2007); Paker & Karaağaç (2015)	High school	4
Tang (2002); Storch & Wigglesworth (2003); Colina & Mayo (2009); Azkarai & Garcia (2014); He (2012); Galali and Cikara (2017)	University	6
Tajgozar (2017); Karimian & Mohammadi (2015); Büyükyazı & Solhi (2011); Sa'd & Qadermazi (2015)	Multilevel*	4
N=		15

* The category multilevel includes studies that count on two or more levels.

Table 2 shows a tendency of using L1 in the tertiary level of the EFL classroom. For example, Tang (2002) evidenced through his study at the University of Beijing that teachers used translation of some words, complex ideas, or even whole passages as a good way for learning a foreign language. Besides, L1 is used in elementary school as shown in the study



of Al Hariri (2015) that was conducted in an elementary school; she found that L1 would help students to build a solid basis in learning being a scaffolding tool for learning the target language. Moreover, L1 is used in high school. For example, in the study conducted by Silvani, she found out that there were several uses of the first language in the English classroom during the teaching and learning process, such as giving instruction, explaining complex concepts, and grammar points. In the same way, multilevel indicates that L1 has been used in all levels of education in the EFL classroom. Four out of the 15 studies conducted in different levels of education found useful, the use of L1 to perform different activities in the EFL classroom. For example, Karimian and Mohammadi (2015) found that teachers of all levels agreed that the L1 is a facilitator in an English classroom which brings benefits to their students. Finally, in the comparison of three levels of education, the L1 was used as an important tool for teaching and learning EFL in all the levels. Even though some teachers oppose the use of L1 in the university, the studies analyzed here shown that L1 was also used at this level (Tajgozar, 2017; Karimian & Mohammadi, 2015; Büyükyazı & Solhi, 2011, and Sa'd & Qadermazi, 2015).

Table 3

Location

Author / Year

Continents

N



Tang (2002); He (2012); Tajgozar (2017); Karimian and Mohammadi (2015); Sa'd and Qadermazi (2015); Galali and Cinkara (2017); Paker and Karaağaç (2015); Büyükyazı and Solhi (2011); Bhooth, Azman, & Ismail (2014); Sharma (2006)	Asia	10
Azkarai and Garcia (2014); Colina and Mayo (2009)	Europe	2
Shabir (2017)	Oceania	1
Murga, Damían, and Tacoaman (2018)	South America	1
N=		14

Note. From the 15 studies, only Silvani's study does not mention any place.

Table 3 shows that most of the studies chosen for this research synthesis have been conducted in the Asian continent; namely, two in China, three in Iran, one in Iraq, one in Nepal, two in Turkey, and one in Yemen. Two of them have been conducted in Europe concretely in Spain. Thus, this suggested that L1 is used as a learning tool around the world. For instance, He (2012) conducted an investigation with EFL learners and their teachers in the Chinese context to investigate the link between the MT and the TL in the classroom. Also, several authors investigate the use of L1 in Asian countries (Büyükyazı & Solhi, 2011; Bhooth, Azman, & Ismail, 2014; Karimian and Mohammadi, 2015; He, 2012; Galali and Cinkara, 2017; Paker and Karaağaç, 2015; Sa'd and Qadermazi, 2015; and



Sharma, 2006; Tang, 2002; Tajgozar, 2017). Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that in the study of Murga et al. (2018) conducted in Ecuador at three universities, they evidenced that “the use of L1 at initial levels is necessary, but according to the progress of students in each level the use of L1 could be reduced” (p, 68).

Table 4

The Advantages of Using L1 in the EFL Classroom

Author Advantages	L1 helps to learn English more effectively	L1 plays a supportive tool in the EFL classroom.	Using L1 as a scaffolding tool	Providing feedback	L1 reduces stress and anxiety
Al Hariri (2015)		✓			✓
Azkarai and Garcia (2014)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Bhooth et al. (2014)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Büyükyazı & Solhi (2011)		✓			
Colina and Mayo (2009)	✓	✓	✓	✓	



Galali & Cinkara (2017)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Karimian & Mohammadi (2015)					✓
Murga et al. (2018)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
He (2012)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Sa'd and Qadermazi (2015);	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Shabir (2017)		✓			✓
Sharma (2006);		✓			
Silvani (2014)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Tajgozar (2017)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Tang (2002)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
N=	10	14	10	10	4

Table 4 shows that all the 15 studies included in this research synthesis demonstrate that using L1 brings more advantages than disadvantages. Most of the authors mentioned that the L1 was used as a supportive and facilitating tool in the EFL classroom because



students learn more effectively using L1 as a scaffolding tool (Al Hariri, 2015; Azkarai & Garcia, 2014; Bhooth et al. 2014; Büyükyazı & Solhi, 2011; Colina & Mayo, 2009; Galali & Cinkara, 2017; He, 2012; Murga et al., 2018; Sa'd & Qadermazi, 2015; Shabir, 2017; Sharma, 2006; Silvani, 2014; Tang, 2002 and Tajgozar, 2017). For example, in the study of Abdullah and Ismail (2014), they mention some advantages such as the fact that students benefit from using L1 in their classrooms because it helps them to cooperate with their classmates; also, it is a scaffolding tool because it helps to translate words, and to give some explanation; so, the use of L1 could be useful when students are learning new things. Furthermore, there are other advantages as L1 becomes an influential factor in the acquisition of a foreign language (Tajgozar, 2017), for instance, L1 makes the classes more dynamic, and learners feel a sense of security (Karimian & Mohammadi, 2015). Besides, Sharma (2006) and Shabir (2017) mentioned the judicious use of the mother tongue especially for particular activities such as helping students to learn English more effectively, because using L1 saves time, and students feel comfortable. Another, advantage mentioned by few authors was that the L1 helps students to reduce stress and anxiety in the EFL classroom (Al Hariri, 2015; Karimian & Mohammadi, 2015; Tang, 2002, and Shabir, 2017). Besides, some researchers emphasize that “professionals in second language acquisition have become increasingly aware of the role the mother tongue plays in the EFL classroom” (Nunan and Lamb as cited in Tang, 2012, p.37).

Table 5

The Disadvantages of Using L1 in the EFL Classroom



Author Disadvantages	The excessive use of the first language in the EFL classroom does not allow to practice FL	Students feel disappointed
Al Hariri (2015)	✓	✓
Bhooth et al. (2014)	✓	✓
Büyükyazı & Solhi (2011)	✓	
Galali and Cinkara (2017)	✓	
Sharma's (2006)	✓	
Shabir (2017)	✓	
N=	6	2

Note. Only 6 out of 15 studies show disadvantages.

Some authors such as Abdullah and Ismail, (2014); Al Hariri, (2015); Büyükyazı and Solhi, (2011); Galali and Cinkara, (2017); Shabir, (2017), and Sharma, (2006) stressed both sides; advantages and disadvantages of using L1 in an EFL context. The advantages



have been already mentioned before. However, six studies from the 15, reported disadvantages of using L1 in an EFL classroom. Sharma (2006) and Shabir (2017) objected to the excessive use of L1 in the EFL classroom because it can have negative effects on the learning process. Besides, Büyükyazı and Solhi (2011), and Galali and Cinkara (2017) mention another disadvantage. They affirm that using L1 in an EFL classroom reduces the opportunity of practicing the target language, and distracts the attention of the students during the exchange between two languages. Finally, Al Hariri, (2015), and Bhooth et al., (2014) found that some students feel disappointed about using L1 in the EFL classroom because it does not help to improve their use of English in class.

Table 6

Suggested Uses for the L1 in the EFL classroom

Author/Year	Uses of L1			
	Giving instructions for activities	Explaining the meaning of words (vocabulary) and using L1 to check comprehension	Explaining complex ideas, and complex grammar points, and the differences between L1 & L2	-Providing feedback
Al Hariri (2015)		✓		✓



Azkarai and Garcia (2014)	✓	✓		
Bhooth et al. (2014)	✓	✓	✓	
Büyükyazı & Solhi (2011)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Colina and Mayo (2009)	✓	✓	✓	
Karimian & Mohammadi (2015)		✓	✓	✓
Murga et al. (2018)	✓			✓
Paker and Karaağaç (2015)	✓	✓	✓	✓
He (2012)		✓	✓	
Sa'd and Qadermazi (2015);	✓	✓	✓	
Shabir (2017)	✓	✓	✓	✓



Sharma (2006);	✓	✓	✓	
Silvani (2014)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tajgozar (2017)	✓	✓	✓	
Tang (2002)	✓	✓	✓	
N=	12	14	12	7

Table 6 shows that 12 out of 15 studies use L1 for giving instructions in the classroom. For example, according to Silvani (2014), teachers give instructions using L1 so that students clearly understand what they have to do in their tasks and they do it successfully. Furthermore, most of the studies, 14 out of 15, use L1 for explaining the meaning of words and to check comprehension. (Al Hariri, 2015; Azkarai & Garcia, 2014; Bhooth et al., 2014; Büyükyazı & Solhi, 2011; Colina and Mayo, 2009; He, 2012; Karimian & Mohammadi, 2015; Paker & Karaağaç, 2015; Shabir, 2017; Sharma, 2006; Silvani, (2014); Sa'd & Qadermazi, 2015); Sharma, 2006; Tajgozar, 2017, and Tang, 2002). For instance, Tang (2002) found that “L1 is useful for language tasks such as defining vocabulary items, practicing the use of phrases and expressions, and explaining grammar rules and some important ideas” (p. 41). The other uses that EFL teachers would give to the L1 are for providing feedback and for helping students to reduce stress and anxiety. Moreover, Karimian and Mohammadi (2015), Shabir (2017), and Paker and Karaağaç (2015) talk in their studies about the judicious use of the mother tongue in the



classroom. They warn that the “overuse of their own language deprives students of the chance to learn English” (Karimian & Mohammadi 2015, p. 67), so, students should make use of the L1 only if it is necessary.

Table 7

Teachers’ Perceptions on the Use of the L1 in the EFL Classroom

Author / Year	Perceptions	N
He (2012); Büyükyazı and Solhi (2011); Karimian & Mohammadi (2015) Murga, Damían, and Tacoaman (2018) Bhooth et al. (2014); Sa’ d and Qadermazi (2015); Galali & Cinkara (2017)	Positive	7
Al Hariri (2015); Shabir (2017)	Positive and Negative	2

Note. Only, 9 out of 15 studies show perceptions

*There are no studies in the negative category because none reported only negative views.

It is important to know what is perception, and psychologists define perception as a sensation perceived of something material or an abstraction (Angell, 1918). Then, table 7 shows that from the 15 studies nine presented teachers’ perceptions. Most of the perceptions of teachers about using L1 in the EFL classroom are positive. He (2012);



Bhooth et al. (2014); Büyükyazı and Solhi (2011); Karimian and Mohammadi (2015); Murga, Damían, and Tacoaman (2018); Sa'd and Qadermazi (2015); Galali and Cinkara (2017), and Shabir (2017) mentioned that teachers perceive the L1 plays a facilitating role in the class that helps students to comprehend better the TL. However, He (2012) suggests that for using the first language effectively in the EFL classroom, L1 should be used systematically and judiciously. Besides, Al Hariri (2015) has a particular point of view because he found that some teachers use L1 for creating better relationships among students. It is worth mentioning that from the studies analyzed there are no studies with only negative perceptions. However, two studies present positive and negative perceptions of teachers. The positive perceptions reported in this study go in line with the ones previously reported. On the other hand, there are some negative perceptions of teachers. For example, Shabir (2018) mentioned a very important point to consider about the use of L1 in the EFL classroom, and which is the “excessive use of English can have negative effects on the learning” (p. 246). In the same way, Al Hariri (2015) found out that few teachers do not use L1 in their classes because they feel that they do not need it. So, they preferred to maximize the use of the target language in the classroom because for some students it is the only place for practicing the TL.

Table 8

Students' Perceptions on the Use of the L1 in the EFL Classroom

Author / Year	Perceptions	N
Bhooth et al. (2014); Colina and Mayo (2009);	Positive	6



He (2012) Sharma (2006); Paker and Karaağaç (2015); Sa'd and Qadermazi (2015);		
Al Hariri (2015)	Positive and negative	1

Note. Only, 7 out of 15 studies show perceptions

*There are no studies in the negative category because none reported only negative views

Table 8 presents that from the 15 studies seven showed the students' perceptions. From the analyzed studies, most of the students' perceptions are positive ones. Students perceive the use of L1 in the classroom as a facilitating tool for learning English. Also, it helps students to complete tasks and to be engaged with the target language (Bhooth et al., 2014; Colina and Mayo, 2009; He, 2012; Sharma, 2006; Paker and Karaağaç, 2015; and Sa'd and Qadermazi, 2015). Moreover, Sharma (2006) found out that L1 helps students feel less lost in the class. Besides, Paker and Karaağaç (2015) found out that L1 helps students learning an FL, but the most important thing is that students are aware of the importance of using the target language in classes. There are no studies that present only negative perceptions. However, there is only one study from the seven that presents positive and negative perceptions of students. Al Hariri (2015) found that most of the students agree that L1 should not be completely avoided. However, some students mentioned that using L1 does not help them to improve their use of English.



Finally, from the 15 studies analyzed, it is clear that there are more advantages than disadvantages of using L1 in the EFL classroom, with the main one being the use of L1 as a scaffolding tool (He, 2012; Tang, 2002, and Tajgozar, 2017). The main disadvantage would be the overuse of L1 in the EFL classroom. So, it is important to make judicious use of L1 for particular activities where L1 can support a foreign language (Shabir, 2017, and He 2012). Furthermore, there are many uses of the L1 in the classroom such as comprehension of instructions, explanation of some grammar points, explanation of vocabulary, and providing feedback. Also, it is important to mention that there are more positive perceptions of using L1 than negative ones from both teachers and students. Teachers believe that L1 is an important tool that would help students in learning a foreign language. In the same way, students perceive the L1 as a facilitating tool for learning the FL. In the end, through the analyzed studies, it has been demonstrated that L1 is a beneficial tool for learning English.



Chapter VI

Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

The purpose of this research synthesis was to analyze the use of L1 for teaching and learning English in the EFL classroom. The analysis of 15 studies and the findings allowed us to assume that the use of the L1 might be beneficial for learners as well for teachers since the L1 has become a useful tool for learning a new language (Silvani, 2014).

Regarding the first question that relates to the advantages and disadvantages of using L1 in the EFL classroom, there are important findings. The main advantage reported from the studies is that the use of the first language is beneficial for teachers and students to facilitate the teaching and learning process (Bhooth, Azman, & Ismail, 2014). For example, L1 helps students to learn English effectively because it saves time (Shabir, 2017; Sharma 2006). It means that students make use of L1 when they have issues comprehending the concept of any difficult word or complex idea. It could be better for the students to look for its equivalent in their native language for comprehending faster. Another advantage is that L1 plays a supporting role in the EFL classroom. In the same way, Pan (2010) affirms that the first language can facilitate class activities because it provides beneficial scaffolding that helps learners to understand tasks and solve specific problems. Furthermore, it was reported that scaffolding is an important function that the L1 fulfills in the process of learning English as a foreign language because it helps to develop more easily the task (Pan, 2010). Moreover, L1 helps students to reduce stress, and anxiety and for those reasons, it has become a motivational tool for learning the target language (Karimian &



Mohammadi, 2015; Shabir, 2017). On the other hand, the main disadvantage of the use of the L1 in the EFL context was its overuse which could have negative effects on learning the target language (Al Hariri, 2015; Bhooth et al. 2014).

To answer, the second question, the several uses of L1 in the EFL classroom were analyzed. Based on the conclusions most of the studies reported that teachers use L1 in the EFL classroom for giving instructions, checking comprehension, explaining vocabulary, explaining complex ideas, and complex grammar points. The use of L1 was for supporting students in order to get successful tasks. Besides, the L1 helps students to reduce anxiety because using L1 makes students conscious of the similarities between the target language and the mother tongue (Cook, 2001). Also, it was reported from the studies that the least use that teachers give to the first language is for providing feedback. However, it is worth mentioning that making excessive use of the L1 is not suitable for students because they need to maximize the use of the target language.

In order to answer the third question related to teachers' and students' perceptions about the use of the first language in the EFL classroom the different results from the studies were examined. The results have demonstrated that teachers and students have positive perceptions because both of them perceive that the L1 plays a facilitating role since students understand better some difficult concepts of the English language such as grammar points, and the meaning of difficult words. On the other hand, there is only one negative perception that was reported by teachers and it was the excessive use of the L1 in the EFL classroom. Regarding this, Shabir (2018) mentions that the "excessive use of L1 can have negative effects on learning process" (p. 50). Finally, it is important to highlight that there



was not any study that mentions only negative perceptions. So, that means that using L1 in the EFL classroom might have more advantages than disadvantages.

6.2 Recommendations

Teachers should consider the most important uses of the first language in the EFL classroom. They should use L1 for explaining vocabulary, explaining complex grammar points, and checking comprehension. However, it is worth mentioning that teachers should avoid making overuse of the first language, to give advantage to their students to learn effectively the target language.

Based on the conclusions, students could make use of L1 in the EFL classroom as a scaffolding tool when they have low language proficiency and according to their progress in the target language, its use should be reduced to master the English language.

In this synthesis, there were not enough studies conducted in elementary school and high school. So, it would be advisable for researchers to conduct more research about the use of L1 in elementary school and high school in order to know for what specific purposes teachers will use it in the classroom.

Furthermore, few studies have focused on investigating perceptions of teachers and students about using the first language in the EFL classroom. For that reason, it is recommended to make further research about perceptions because it would help teachers and students to decide if they should or should not make use of it.

This paper identified the lack of studies in the Latin American context. It represents a research gap since most of the studies analyzed were conducted in the Asian continent,



and only one study was conducted in South America. Therefore, it will be important to conduct further research on this topic in Latin America because it will give teachers references on how to teach EFL using L1 in the Latin American context.

Finally, the main disadvantage identified about the use of L1 in the EFL classroom was its overuse. Therefore, it should be considered for further research because of the need to know how to make judicious use of it either for teachers and students.



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