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English Medium Instruction and the Functions of Students' Use of L1

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ABSTRACT

With the popularity of translanguaging recently, the use of L1 in EFL setting has been the center of many studies again. This current study takes the topic from a functional perspective and looks at the use of L1 at an English-medium university in Turkey from a functional interactional point of view. The data is taken from recorded classroom data, further triangulated by focus group meetings. Two groups of students, namely control and experimental, were recorded during pair work and their L1 uses were analyzed based on students' proficiency levels and the functions L1 instances served. The findings suggest that students resort to their mother tongue during interactive class tasks mainly for task-related issues and social purposes. Furthermore, results also demonstrate that weaker students tend to refer to their native linguistic resources more to make sense of the task and achieve the task, whereas stronger students use their L1 more for social interaction purposes.

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The introduction of EMI (English Medium Instruction) in countries whose native language is not English has reignited the long-running debate about the use of L1 (First Language) in classes delivered in English. The context where the teacher or instructor shares the same language with almost all the students, yet tries to deliver the content of the course in a language that some students struggle with, seems for many to reflect a non-authentic use of language for communicative purposes.

Universities aim to equip students with many skills and field-specific knowledge to guide them through their career, and at the same time, to develop transferrable skills that can be used in many areas and transferred to other languages including students' L1, promoting a bilingual rather than a monolingual competency. However, restricting the medium of instruction to "English-only" not only limits the chances of skills transferability but also the linguistic advantages of using the native language resources.

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2. Literature Review

The use of L1 dates back to the well-known but now heavily criticized ‘Grammar Translation Method’ (GTM). As the definitions of language use, language learning, and language teaching changed, new teaching methodologies have also developed in line with these changes. In turn, all these have been criticized on various grounds. It is tragic to see that the GTM is referred to only in association with L1 use, but this seemed to be the most prominent feature differentiating GTM from many others. Especially with the rise of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLT), the use of L1 lost its value, whether for English for General Purposes (EGP), English for Academic Purposes (EAP) or English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

Even though the CLT Approach is far from meeting the needs of all educational settings around the world, it has been adopted by most countries, at least in appearance. Littlewood (2007) highlights this method’s incompatibility with local learning cultures as issues in ‘classroom management, avoidance of English, minimal demands on language competence, incompatibility with public assessment demands and conflict with educational values and traditions’ (Littlewood, 2007: 244). One of the major consequences of this maladaptation was, of course, the deemphasis or even prohibition of students’ native language(s).

Here, it is important to make a distinction between ESL settings (English as a Second Language) and EFL settings (English as a Foreign Language). The former embraces all communicative needs in the most authentic way as learners need to learn the language to survive in a community. Whatever is learned in the classroom has a direct relation to life outside, with rich opportunities to practice (Phoenu & Sengsri, 2021). Furthermore, students usually do not share the same native language in ESL circumstances, so are forced to use the target language to communicate, even with their peers (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Yet, students in EFL settings are faced with a pseudo-communicative environment in which English is limited to the classroom and is quite artificial in the sense that they use the target language with those with whom they share a common language. This is among the factors giving rise to the reconsideration of the use of mother tongue in language classes (García & Li, 2014; Sembiante 2016).

2.1. Use of L1 in the EMI Context

Many studies highlight the role of the English medium in attracting international students and bringing prestige among other universities. It is also considered an indispensable part of internationalization as a knowledge of English is one of the main skills needed to function abroad (Boonsuk & Ambele, 2021). This view is shared both by the majority of teachers and students as a motivation for adopting an English medium teaching learning environment at tertiary level (Jensen, & Thøgersen, 2011; Bozdoğan & Karlıdağ, 2013).

Despite this strong motivation for a positive stand towards EMI, there are also concerns over the effectiveness of students’ learning. Not surprisingly, the most outstanding concern regards students’ – and sometimes even teachers’ – lack of English language proficiency. Başıbek, et al. (2014), and Kirkgöz, (2009) refer to the inadequate proficiency level of students in Turkey, especially in terms of lexis. Not only in Turkey but many other European and non-European countries have similar student profiles, as expressed by their instructors (Kim, & Shin, 2014; Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra 2011). Students often have a negative opinion about their own linguistic capabilities and clearly state that the use of English has a negative impact on their understanding of the content (Islam, 2013; Cho, 2012). Finally, Macaro et al. (2018) question the effectiveness of English-only instruction in terms of language improvement and content knowledge comprehension. After a detailed literature review, they conclude that although there is evidence on language improvement, evidence on content acquisition is inconclusive because of lack of reliable data.

In addition to these inconclusive results, 'English only' environments also contradict the fundamental values of translanguaging and how the knowledge of one (or more) language(s) can be used as a linguistic advantage to facilitate the other (Canagarajah, 2011). Phyak (2018) emphasizes that students' access to their mother tongue has great impact on students' task engagement. More opportunities to check their understanding of the task and use their L1 as a linguistic resource makes students more engaged, especially in interactive class activities.

The educational value of L2 linguistic input and exposure to the target language can neither be denied nor questioned. Yet, the reason behind the ban on students' native language in the classroom needs to be questioned and further explored (Slimani, 1992). Many studies have focused on the functions of students' use of their native language, i.e. how they benefit. It is clear that resorting to L1 is not simply an indication of limited target language competency but fulfills additional roles in the language classroom.

Sah (2017) studied Nepalese students and teachers in an EFL context. The results demonstrated that both teachers and students had positive attitudes towards the use of their mother tongue, but were against its overuse. The main reasons for resorting to L1 were improving comprehensibility, explanation regarding vocabulary and grammar, and maintaining classroom interaction. Similarly, many studies have revealed that "judicious" use of L1 promotes interaction flow and task achievement (Swain and Lapkin, 2000; McMillan and Rivers, 2011), rather than being merely a sign of laziness (Saito, 2014). Thus, the main perspective has shifted from the debate over whether L1 should be used or not, to the functions it fulfills in interactive classroom task.

This study aims at foregrounding the functional aspect of L1 use. To do this, students' classroom language use is considered from an interactional perspective. For EFL learners, the classroom is the environment in which they use the target language to both interact and to learn at the same time. Therefore, in this study, students enrolled at an English medium university are the focus. It is believed that the conversational analysis of their use of L1 during pair work will shed light on the functional use of L1, and the extent to which their task achievement is affected. This study is important in the sense that it is not merely focusing on the amount of L1 use, but also highlights the functions with respect to students' level of English proficiency

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) Does the use of L1 have an impact on task engagement and task achievement?
- 2) Is there any difference between weak, average and strong students' use of L1 with respect to the; amount of L1 and, functions of L1?

3. Methodology

3.1. Context of The Study

The study was carried out in an English-medium university in Turkey. After having completed a foundation year in general English, students are admitted to their faculties where they follow their departmental courses in English.

The data was taken from a 4th year English for Career Development course, designed to equip the students with the necessary skills and knowledge needed in professional life. The course simulates the entire job application process, from finding a job advertisement in English, writing a CV, filling out a job application form, becoming familiar with cover letters to being interviewed for a job. After these stages, the course then focuses on the skills and knowledge needed following a job interview: following up and handling job offers and rejection. The course focuses on transferrable skills, the medium of instruction is English, but the content knowledge to be acquired and skills practiced can be transferred to the native language. The

learning outcomes can be listed as exhibiting an understanding of typical information found in job advertisements, writing a personalized CV, completing a job application form, demonstrating basic knowledge of the parts of and content found in a cover letter, exhibiting basic knowledge of the stages of a standard job interview, utilizing various interview strategies during a job interview related to answering common interview questions effectively and using body language effectively during a job interview.

For the analysis, a 3-hour lesson was video recorded and the pair work sections were transcribed and analysis was made of the following:

- a) how long students were engaged in the task, i.e., task engagement
- b) how well students achieved the task, i.e., task achievement
- c) how many times and for which functions students resorted to L1 (weak students-average students-strong students)

In week 6 of the course, students were given a task of writing responses to open-ended application form questions. Students were given the questions below to prepare responses through a discussion with their partner in about four minutes.

- 1) Why is it important to manage your time well? Think about your professional and academic past and give an example of when you did this.
- 2) Why do you think you are the best candidate for this position?

3.1. Participants

Two groups were randomly assigned as Control (Section-41) and Experimental Group (Section-3), all consisting of 4th year students enrolled at different faculties of the university. As the study was carried out in an English medium university, all students had passed the English Proficiency exam at the start of their undergraduate studies. The students are classified according to the grades achieved in this exam: as weak (score 65-68), average (scores 76-79) and strong (93-96). After students were classified according to their proficiency level, these were double-checked with their previous year ENG 310 Effective Speaking Skills overall course grade. Students whose proficiency score was between 65-68 and received DD or DC in this speaking course were labelled “weak”. Students whose proficiency score was between 76-79 and received CC, CB or BB in this speaking course were labelled “average”. Students whose proficiency score was between 92-96 and received AA or BA in this speaking course were labelled “strong”. The students were paired up with others of various levels to see whether (lack of) linguistic competence has a direct impact on L1 use. Table 1 shows the details of each group.

Table 1.
The participants of the study

	Experimental Group	
	n	n
Female	8	12
Male	15	10
Faculties		
Engineering	10	4
Science and Literature	1	6
Business	3	2
Communication	9	
Fine Arts		6
Culinary Arts		4
TOTAL	23	22

3.1.2. Control group

In the control group, the monolingual classroom rules were observed, with minimal tolerance for the use of Turkish during the entire lesson. The target language was used for class discussions, pair/group work, questions to the teacher and interactions between/among students. The teacher neither spoke Turkish during the whole lesson nor responded to questions unless asked in English. The control group reflected an English-only environment in all its entirety. The 3-hour lesson was video-recorded, and analysis conducted of selected pairs, listed below:

During pair work, students were paired up in the following pattern:

Pair-1: 1 WK (weak) + 1 AV (average)

Pair-2: 1 ST (strong) + 1 WK

Pair-3: 1 ST + 1 ST

Pair 4: 1 WK + 1 WK

Pair-5: 1 AV + 1 AV

Pair-6: 1 ST + 1 AV

3.1.3. Experimental group

In the experimental group, the same pattern of pairing was followed, but the teacher did not prevent students from using Turkish. The teacher, again, refused to answer questions asked in Turkish, but minimally intervened during student-student interaction. The 3-hour lesson subject to analysis was video-recorded.

3.2. Data Collection

3.2.1. Video recordings of lessons

As part of the institution's policy and with student consent, all classrooms are equipped with two fixed cameras and lessons are video recorded. The lessons that were recorded in week 6 were analysed with respect to the pairing as described above. The conversation analysis considered the following: a) student engagement/disengagement, b) task achievement, and c) frequency and functions of L1. For use of L1, only student-student interaction was taken into the data scope.

3.2.2. Focus group meetings

Two focus group meetings were held at the end of the semester, one for each group, each represented by five volunteer students. In both meetings, there were representatives from weak, strong and average student profile. The purpose of the focus group meeting was to elicit students' attitudes towards the use of Turkish during student-student interactions. Furthermore, it aimed at triangulating data from the recorded video analysis in terms of the functions of the use of L1. The main questions guiding the focus meeting were:

- 1) Do you use Turkish during pair/group work? Why?
- 2) How do you feel when you are not allowed to use Turkish?

3.3. Data analysis

The pair work of the video recorded lesson was analysed with respect to the following:

- a) Task Engagement: The time each pair spent on the task was identified. If any of the students spent more than one minute off task, it was labelled as “task disengagement”.
- b) Task Achievement: Students’ books were checked for their answers and the number of acceptable bullet points was noted down (students were instructed to write a minimum of three for each question). Efforts with the minimum of three acceptable bullet points for each question were considered as “task achieved”, those with minimum three bullet points in one question but not the other were considered “partially achieved”, and those with less than three for each were considered “task not achieved”.
- c) Use of L1: Following the principles of Conversation Analysis (CA), all instances of L1 use were transcribed and analysed in terms of their frequency and function. As CA is defined as talk in interaction, the interactional pattern and context has been used when identifying the functional aspect of L1 instances. During the transcription, students were referred to by the assigned codes. In the transcript, (...) is used for inaudible utterance, [xxx] is used for translations (see Appendix-A).

Finally, a comparison was made between strong, average, and weak students’ task engagements, task achievements and use of L1, for the control and experimental groups.

Focus group Meeting: The two meetings were held with a total of 10 students, five in each meeting. The meeting with the control group lasted 47 minutes, and with experimental group 42 minutes. To minimize misunderstandings, both meetings were conducted in Turkish. The analysis of the meetings centred around two questions: 1) Do you use Turkish during pair/group work? Why?; and 2) How do you feel when you are not allowed to use Turkish? The purpose of the focus group sessions was to unveil students’ feelings about (not) being allowed to use L1 during their pair work interactions, and the reasons for resorting to L1. Both meetings were audio-recorded. Finally, student responses were categorised under the central themes mentioned during the meeting.

4. Results

The pair work section of the video recorded lessons was analysed based on three principles: task engagement, task achievement and use of L1.

4.1. Task Engagement

The students were given 4 minutes to talk about their possible answers to two open-ended questions. Table-2 shows the times each pair spent on the given task, and whether they stopped doing the task at any point, i.e., task detachment.

Table-2.
Task Times and Student Detachment

	Control group		Experimental Group	
	Time	Detachment	Time	Detachment
Pair-1	1.58	WK1	3.15	
Pair-2	3.01		2.55	WK2
Pair-3	2.37		3.56	
Pair-4	1.01	WK3, WK4	2.55	
Pair-5	2.54		3.02	
Pair-6	3.12		3.32	
AVERAGE	2.27		3.02	

4.1.1. Pair-1

4.1.1.1. Control group

General Flow: WK1 + 1 AV1: (1.58 mins): The AV initiated the task and asked WK in Turkish what they should be writing about. T (teacher) warned them about using English, there was a silence of 10-11 seconds. AV1 started noting down his own answer in his book. WK1 looked at his phone for a while. When WK1 saw the T approaching, he asked AV1 how to answer the second question. AV1 responded in English. WK1 noted down three-four words in his book. Both students showed minimal engagement in the task, although AV 1 made some effort to work individually. AV1 made several attempts to involve WK1, who either gave inaudible replies (but probably in Turkish) or did not respond at all. When the teacher was monitoring their work, both attempted to talk, but AV1 dominated.

Task Engagement: Students were active for 1.58 minutes of the given 4 minutes. AV-1 was more on task than WK-1. WK-1 was detached from the task (looking at his phone)

4.1.1.2. Experimental group

General Flow: WK1 + 1 AV1: (3.15 mins): The WK1 initiated the task and asked AV1 in Turkish whether he understood the task. AV1 (a little unsure) explained in Turkish. Both students reread the questions and started noting down answers. At two different stages of the pair work, WK1 asked another pair (not his partner) the meaning of some English words. Twice, AV1 approached the teacher to check his responses. After working individually, students started comparing their answers. Both seemed to be engaged in the task for most of the time, communicating mainly in English.

Task Engagement: Students were active for 3.15 minutes. Both students were on task, even though WK1 needed support from AV1 quite often. No task detachment

4.1.2. Pair-2

4.1.2.1. Control group

General Flow: ST1 + WK2 (3.01 mins): ST initiated the task. WK2 replied in English, then noted down his own answer. ST1 corrected WK2's answer and asked the first question. WK2 tried to answer but left response incomplete, and ST1 answered for him after eliciting his response in Turkish. WK2 looked at the teacher (T was looking at him), and wrote his answers in Turkish, which ST1 translated into English. WK2 asked ST1 'and you?', so ST1 gave his own response to both questions in English. WK2 tried to copy S1's answer into his own notebook.

Task Engagement: Students were active for 3.01 minutes. Both students were on task, even though WK2 was highly reliant on ST1 when formulating answers. There was very little detachment from the task and limited periods of silence throughout the activity.

4.1.2.2. Experimental group

General Flow: ST1 + WK2 (2.55 mins): ST1 initiated the task. WK2 showed very little interest. ST1 worked alone for a while. Prompted by the teacher, WK2 asked ST1 in Turkish to explain the task, and to help him. ST1 insisted on speaking English throughout. WK2 copied most of the answers from ST1. He frequently used his phone (ostensibly to look up words).

Task Engagement: Students were active for 2.55 minutes. ST1 was on task for the entire time and rejected talking in Turkish. WK2 was detached from the task.

4.1.3. Pair-3

4.1.3.1. Control group

General Flow: ST2 + ST3 (2.37 mins): Both students started together, then ST3 left the floor to ST2. Meanwhile ST2 answered a question in English from WK4, from the other pair. In Turkish, ST2 made a joke and continued to give his ideas about the response in English. ST3 intervened twice with feedback on his response. ST2 asked ST3 about his opinion. While ST3 was responding, ST2 took notes. Both started talking in Turkish about an upcoming exam while waiting for the others to finish.

Task Engagement: Students were active for 2.37 minutes. Both students were on task until the task was completed. Students were active less than 4 minutes, but this seemed to be because they finished the task earlier than expected.

4.1.3.2. Experimental group

General Flow: ST2 + ST3 (3.56 mins): Both students started together, each with a different question. They made a lot of jokes in Turkish related to their responses. Twice they asked each other the meaning of a word to each other in Turkish. Towards the end, ST3 shared his own job interview experience in Turkish. They compared their responses to both questions.

Task Engagement: Students were active for 3.56 minutes. Both students were on task until it was completed, using the entire time allotted, with slight humorous deviations.

4.1.4. Pair 4

4.1.4.1. Control group

General Flow: WK3 + WK4: (1.01 mins): WK3 asked WK4 to explain the task in Turkish. Again, in Turkish, WK4 asked the same question to ST2 who was working with another student. For a while, both looked at the two questions, T asked them whether they had any questions. WK4 tried to respond in Turkish, but when the T prompted him to use English, he said 'no teacher' and both remained silent after this.

Task Engagement: Students were quite inactive during the limited time they were on task. Both students had trouble comprehending the two questions given. Based on the limited time spent on the pair work, both seemed to be detached from the task.

4.1.4.2. Experimental group

General Flow: WK3 + WK4: (2.55 mins): WK3 started to translate the questions into Turkish and WK4 took notes. They asked other pairs in the class for clarification about the questions, and also for the meaning of some words. With frequent code-mixing, they worked on the answers to the two questions. Task Engagement: Students made efforts to do the task despite difficulties in expressing themselves. Both sought ways to formulate their responses. No task detachment.

4.1.5. Pair 5

4.1.5.1. Control group

General Flow: AV2 + AV3 (2.54 mins): AV2 told AV3 (in Turkish) that he had already done the task before class. AV3 looked at the teacher, and then asked AV2 to tell her what he wrote. AV3 asked for some clarifications and AV2 answered. Both were silent for 5-6 seconds, while making notes. Then AV3 talked about her opinion to the second questions. They gave each other feedback. Then both made further notes on the second question.

Task Engagement: Both students were active for most of the time and on task. Yet, they were more involved in writing, despite being instructed to respond orally, and make notes only as a reminder of the points they discussed. There was very little instance of L1 use.

4.1.5.2. Experimental group

General Flow: AV2 + AV3 (3.02 mins): AV2 checked that she had understood the questions correctly, and then students started talking about potential answers. After each question they made and compared notes and then carried on. For most of the time, the students were active.

Task Engagement: There was high student involvement throughout the task. Twice, they referred to other pairs for confirmation of their ideas.

4.1.6. Pair 6

4.1.6.1. Control group

General Flow: ST4 + AV4 (3.12 mins): AV4 asked ST4 how they could best answer the question. ST4 talked about her own ideas, while AV4 asked some clarification questions. Then AV4 talked about his response and made two jokes about his response (in Turkish). Both made some notes, AV4 asked the meaning of two more words and ST4 responded.

Task Engagement: For most of the time, both students were active, although ST4 was sometimes dominant. There was some silence when making notes. Most of the conversation was in English. None of the students showed complete detachment from task.

4.1.6.2. Experimental group

General Flow: ST4 + AV4 (3.32 mins): AV4 started by explaining her ideas about both questions and asked about some English words. ST4 discussed his own answers while making some notes. After a short digression about a Turkish TV series, they carried on with the task. AV4 asked ST4 to check his written responses. ST4 made some explanations in Turkish.

Task Engagement: Both students were active and on task. Despite a short deviation, they were fully engaged. The conversation was mostly English. Neither showed complete detachment from task.

Overall, three students in the control group (all weak students) and one weak student in the experimental group stopped doing the task at some point. In the control group, pair-4 exhibited the shortest task time, 1.01 minutes.

4.2. Task Achievement

Table 3 shows the Task Achievements of the students in each pair. The labelling is made as TA (Task Achieved), PA (Task Partially Achieved) and NA (Task not Achieved).

Table 3.

Task Achievement of Students

Student	Control Group			Experimental Group		
	TA	PA	NA	TA	PA	NA
WK1			+		+	
WK2			+			+
WK3			+		+	
WK4			+		+	
AV1		+		+		
AV2		+		+		
AV3	+			+		
AV4	+			+		
ST1	+			+		
ST2	+			+		
ST3	+			+		
ST4	+			+		
TOTAL	6	2	4	8	3	1

4.2.1. Pair-1

4.2.1.1. Control group

Task Achievement: The students' books showed that AV1 had three acceptable bullet points for question-1, two for question-2. WK1 had 1 bullet point for question-1, none for question-2. Thus, AV1 achieved task partially whereas WK1 did not achieve the task.

4.2.1.2. Experimental group

Task Achievement: The students' books showed that AV1 had three bullet points for question-1, three for question-2. WK1 had three for question-1, one for question-2. As a result, AV1 achieved the task whereas WK1 achieved the task partially.

4.2.2. Pair-2

4.2.2.1. Control group

Task Achievement: The students' books showed that ST1 had five acceptable bullet points for question-1 and four for question-2. WK1 had two for question-1 and two for question-2 (identical to ST1's responses). Thus, ST1 achieved the task but WK2 did not.

4.2.2.2. *Experimental group*

Task Achievement: The students' books showed that ST1 had five bullet points for question-1 and three for question-2. WK2 had one for question-1, and none for question-2. So, ST1 achieved the task, yet WK2 did not achieve it at all.

4.2.3. *Pair 3*

4.2.3.1. *Control group*

Task Achievement: The students' books showed that ST2 had six bullet points for question-1, and five for question-2. ST3 had five for each question. Thus, both ST2 and ST3 achieved the task.

4.2.3.2. *Experimental group*

Task Achievement: The students' books showed that ST2 had five bullet points for each question. ST3 had five for question 1 and three for question 2. Similarly, both ST2 and ST3 achieved the task.

4.2.4. *Pair 4*

4.2.4.1. *Control group*

Task Achievement: The students' books showed that WK3 had no bullet points for either question. WK4 had one for question 1, which was in Turkish. Therefore, neither WK3 nor WK4 achieved the task.

4.2.4.2. *Experimental group*

Task Achievement: The students' books showed that WK3 had two bullet points for question 1, one in Turkish one in English. WK4 had one for question 1, and two for question 2. So, both WK3 and WK4 achieved the task partially.

4.2.5. *Pair 5*

4.2.5.1. *Control group*

Task Achievement: The students' books showed that AV2 had three bullet points for each question the question 1. AV3 had two for question 1, and three for question 2. As a result, AV2 achieved the task partially and AV3 achieved it completely.

4.2.5.2. *Experimental group*

Task Achievement: The students' books showed that AV2 had five bullet points for question 1 and four for question 2. AV3 had three for each question. So, both students achieved the task as required.

4.2.6. Pair 6

4.2.6.1. Control group

Task Achievement: The students' books showed that ST4 had four bullet points for question 1 and three for question 2. AV4 had three for each question. So, both ST4 and AV4 achieved the task.

4.2.6.2. Experimental group

Task Achievement: The students' books showed that ST4 had five bullet points for question 1 and four for question 2. AV3 had six for question 1 and 5 for question 2. Likewise, both students achieved the task in this group, too.

In control group, six out of 12 students fully achieved the task, two students showed partial achievement, and four students failed the task completely. Those unable to achieve the task were the four weaker students who participated in the study. Among average ones, two achieved the task completely, and two partially. All students labelled as "strong" managed to fulfil the requirements of the given task. In the experimental group, eight out of 12 students fully achieved the task, three showed partial achievement and one failed the task. Among weaker students, three achieved the task partially, whereas one was unable to complete it.

4.3. Use of L1

In both groups, there were instances of L1 use during pair work. Students in the control group used their native language during the lesson, despite being prohibited. All instances of L1 use were labelled according to their functions, which are categorized as Task-Related Purposes, Social Purposes and Arbitrary use (see Appendix-A). Task-related functions included instances of language elicitation (either asking or responding), comprehension checking (either asking or responding), task clarification, and feedback on task. Social purposes included, humour, personal talk and warning. Arbitrary use included use of L1 instances that do not serve any of the functions above, and are incidental responses formed in Turkish.

The following utterances are examples of task related functions:

- a) Language Elicitation: "Gammazlamam ne demek?-[How do we say "gammazlamam"?] (when trying to find the English equivalent for a word)
- b) Comprehension Check: "Adam kötü bir şey mi yapmış?"-[Did the guy do something wrong?] (When trying to comprehend the context set in the task)
- c) Task Clarification: "Ne yapıyoruz?"-[What are we doing?] (when eliciting task details)
- d) Feedback on task: "yapamıyorum ben bunu"-[I can't do this] (when about to give up on task)

The following are examples of L1 use for social purposes:

- a) Humour: "Düşünsene patrona git öğren diyormuşum" (laughing)-[Can you imagine telling the boss, go and learn it properly]. (when making a joke about a response)
- b) Personal Talk: "Mesaj attım bir bak"-[I sent you a message. Check it]
- c) Warning: "Oğlum ingilizce konuşacağız"-[We should be talking in English] (when highlighting the class rules)

Arbitrary Use example is as follows:

- a) Incidental Response: "Hoca geliyor mu? Söylesene"-[Is the teacher coming? Tell me]. (when checking on the teacher)

Table 4 demonstrates the distribution of L1 instances of the control group with respect to their functions.

Table 4.

Functions of L1 use: Control Group

Function	Weak Students	Average Students	Strong Students	Total
Task related				14
Language Elicitation		2		
Comprehension Check	1			
Task Clarification	4	2		
Feedback on Task	1	3	1	
Social				8
Humour		1	1	
Personal Talk	2		3	
Warning			1	
Arbitrary Use				1
Incidental Response	1			
TOTAL	9	8	6	23

In the control group, 23 instances of L1 use were identified: nine by weak students, eight by average students, and six by strong students. Of these 23, 14 were task related, eight served social purposes, and one was an incidental response in Turkish. Of the nine L1 instances by weak students, six were task related, whereas only two served social purposes. Similarly, seven out of eight L1 use instances by average students were related to the set task. Strong students, however, used their mother tongue mainly for social purposes (five out of six), with only one task-related L1 use.

Table 5 shows the L1 use instances of the Experimental group with the functions they serve.

Table 5.

Functions of L1 use: Experimental Group

Function	Weak Students	Average Students	Strong Students	Total
Task related				24
Language Elicitation	6	3	2	
Comprehension Check	2			
Task Clarification	7	1		
Feedback on Task	2		1	
Social				12
Humour	1	1	3	
Personal Talk	2	3	1	
Warning			1	

Arbitrary Use	Incidental Response	--	--	-	-
TOTAL		20	8	8	36

In the experimental group, 36 instances of L1 use were identified: 20 by weak students, eight by average students, and eight by strong students. Out of these 36, 24 were task related and 12 served social purposes. Of the 20 L1 instances by weak students, 17 were task related, whereas only three served social purposes. Average students demonstrated a more balanced use of L1 with four task-related and four social purpose instances. Strong students used their mother tongue mainly for social purposes (five out of eight), with three task-related L1 uses.

4.3.1. Focus group meetings

Control group: Five students were invited to the focus group, which lasted 47 minutes: two weak students (WK1 and WK4), two average (AV2 and AV4) and one strong student (ST4). The meeting was semi-structured, and students were invited to talk about reasons of the use of L1 during pair work, and their views on the issue.

The following main themes were generated from the meeting: a) Artificial language use, b) task related issues, and c) social purposes.

4.3.1.2. Artificial language use

One of the most prominent themes emerging from the focus group meeting was the artificial nature of target language use. This was mentioned by nine out of the total of 10 students, irrespective of their level of English. The following are examples highlighting the artificial nature of using the target language only (translated from Turkish to English).

"In our heads we do it-I think in Turkish and acting as if I don't is weird."

"It's funny. He knows Turkish, I know Turkish. Why English?"

"It feels embarrassing, like trying to prove something."

"If there is someone who doesn't know Turkish, then fine. But with a Turkish friend...?"

"In class, my brain goes Turkish, but when I talk to a tourist, for example, it doesn't."

4.3.1.3. Task related issues

The second main theme concerned task-related issues, either difficulties in understanding the requirements of the task, or the lack of linguistic resources to do the task. This issue was mentioned by all, except for two strong and one average student (n=7). The following are example utterances emphasizing task related issues.

"When I do not know what to do, I can't do anything".

"When teachers insist on English, I just don't want to do it. In Turkish, I would do the same thing much better".

"I usually ask the meaning of words. Or I check whether I got it right".

"The worst is you ask your friend, and he doesn't know it either".

"I need to make sure I am on the right track".

4.3.1.4. Social purposes

The final main theme arising from the focus group meeting was social interaction. Six out of 10 students mentioned the importance of social interaction as a reason for using their mother tongue. It is interesting that the majority of these students were the stronger ones. Some sample utterances for social interaction are listed below.

“Sometimes, we finish early, and I want to gossip. Why in English?”

“When I want to say something, not related to the lesson, it just comes out in Turkish”.

“When I sit next to a close friend, I talk more in Turkish. If it’s someone I do not know well, I just do the task as should be.”

“Trying to socialize in English is meaningless”.

The main themes highlighted during the focus group meeting of both groups reflect the results of the pair-work analysis, and are in accordance with the L1 functions identified.

5. Discussion

This study aimed to answer two research questions: a) does the use of L1 have an impact on task engagement and task achievement?, and b) is there any difference between weak, average and strong students’ use of L1 with respect to the amount and functions of L1?

The average time spent actively on task is 2.27 minutes for the control group and 3.02 for the experimental group. Looking at active task engagement, experimental group students were involved for longer. Regarding task achievement, in the control group, six students achieved the task, two demonstrated partial achievement and four students failed the task. None of the weaker students fully accomplished the task, whereas all strong and two average students completed the task as required. In the experimental group, eight out of 12 students fully achieved the task. Three students demonstrated partial achievement, and only one student failed to meet expectations. Among the weaker student group, three students were able to achieve the task partially, whereas one failed. All students in the average and strong group were able to meet the requirements.

In terms of students’ use of L1, the control group has a higher number of instances (36) when compared to the experimental group, with 23 L1 instances. In both groups, the L1 was used more often for task-related functions than for social or arbitrary use. Similarly, L1 was used more often by weaker students than by average or strong students. Focus group meeting results confirmed the observed L1 functions: seven out of ten students mentioned task-related needs as major reasons for resorting to L1. In fact, the literature on the use of L1 strongly supports these findings. Swain and Lapkin (2000) conducted a similar study with pairs of students in the French context and found that L1 was used to carry on the task, clarify vocabulary and grammar, and achieve interpersonal interaction. Similarly, Tian and Jiang (2021) studied Chinese EFL learners in pair work setting and analyzed the amount and functions of L1 use with respect to students’ proficiency level. They concluded that it was the weaker students who relied on L1 more than the others. Moreover, the functions of L1 use centered around facilitating interaction and task completion.

Additional themes of the focus group meeting highlighted the “artificial” nature of L1 use in a monolingual classroom (n=9). Both groups emphasized feeling uncomfortable using the target language, especially when the focus was outside the scope of the task. In both groups, the majority of students (n=6) highlighted the value of L1 use for social purposes, which is again in line with the transcribed pair-work L1 functions.

In the control group, the prohibition of L1 explains the fewer L1 instances transcribed. This group, especially the weaker students, were less successful in accomplishing the task, and three of the students gave up completely. Considering that most of the L1 uses, in both groups, were task-related, it can be

assumed that given the flexibility of using L1 for task clarifications or linguistic support, fewer students would give up, leading to a higher rate of task completion, which was the case with the experimental group. Especially, pair 4 (WK3-WK4) in the control group is one good example of how students can give up if task details are unclear. With this pair, students had task-related questions which they wanted to ask in their mother tongue, but were not allowed to do so. Consequently, both students stopped doing the task at some point and were detached. Yet, in the corresponding experimental group, students got the chance to receive clarifications from their peers in Turkish and continued their attempts.

The focus group meeting findings also emphasize the need for the use of L1, especially when the task is unclear or students need to check or elicit language needed to fulfil the task. Phyak (2018) refers to students' detachment as "silence" and proposes translanguaging", i.e. the meaningful integration of L1, to break this silence and draw students back to the task. Supporting these findings, Storch and Sato (2019), when unfolding the relationship between the use of L1 and task clarification in the Australian setting, foreground that the mother tongue is one of the main clarification strategies during task-based interaction. In the experimental group, on the other hand, the use of L1 was neither banned nor encouraged, and students did much better on the assigned task, with a longer task-time and more successful task-achievement. All except one were able to complete the task, if necessary, by eliciting information in their mother tongue from other students. It is interesting that in control group, too, most instances of L1 were task-related, in line with the findings of Cummins (2006) and Hornberger (2010), who suggest that the use of L1 promotes task-engagement and participation. Furthermore, based on the literature review carried out by Savran-Çelik and Aydın (2018), the use of L1 does not only help with meaning clarification during tasks but also encourages learners to cooperate with each other, which is in line with the current findings.

With respect to using L1 in class for social purposes, in both groups, it was at a moderate level. It is worth highlighting that stronger students tended to use it more frequently for social purposes. Especially, pairs 3 (ST2, ST3), in both experimental and control groups switched to L1 for social purposes in seven out of nine instances. An explanation that emerged in the focus group meetings was that using the target language for social purpose was "meaningless". Thus, both findings support each other in terms of using L1 for this purpose. Related literature also supports the importance of L1 for social use, which backs up the findings of this current study. For example, Ma (2019), in a study conducted in the Chinese educational setting concludes that the use of L1, both by teachers and students, is key to establishing social relationships. One major outcome of the focus group meetings was the perception of English-only as "artificial language use". There were two reasons given. The first was related to cognition. Students stressed that cognitively, they were thinking in their native language, but were not allowed to verbalise this. Second, English-only classrooms denied them their shared language, with which they could communicate without problems. So, it should be acceptable to ask for clarifications and explanations where these were outside the task specific conversation (Anton & DiCamillar, 1999).

As a result, the findings show that L1 helps students, especially weaker ones, accomplish the task by allowing collaboration with peers. This shows, rather than student laziness, a genuine attempt to make sense of the task and elicit the language needed. The proficiency level of the students is one of the main factors affecting the amount and the function of L1 use in English medium context. Overall, the results of this study, in terms of the functions of L1 use, both by weak, average, and strong students, is in line with the findings of similar studies. As also highlighted by Turnbull and Dailey-O'Cain (2009) "Optimal first language use in communicative and immersion second and foreign language classrooms recognizes the benefits of the learner's first language as a cognitive and meta-cognitive tool, as a strategic organizer, and as a scaffold for language development (p.183)." Yet, the importance of the social function of the use of L1 in an EMI setting is less frequently discussed in literature. The flexibility to use L1 brings about advantages like enhancing the affective dimension of learning by boosting sense of security, reducing anxiety,

increasing self-esteem, creating a ‘social and cognitive’ space for learners and reducing potential barriers (Ma, 2019). Similar views have also been highlighted by the participants during the focus group meetings.

6. Conclusion

The debate on the use of L1 under EMI conditions has been debated for many years, and most probably will continue to be so. The shift from English-only to adopting a more flexible stand towards controlled use of L1 is an issue that needs further exploration.

The results of this study show that the use of L1 should not necessarily be considered as a threat to foreign language development, especially in EFL settings. Rather, it can be used to the advantage of both students and teachers to prevent students from “falling silent”, and perhaps withdrawing totally from the task. Yet, we should be cautious about the amount of L1 and its functions. Studies on translanguaging (Garcia, 2009; Canagarajah, 2011) show the need for a pedagogical basis for determining structured and meaningful functions for L1 use in language classrooms. Therefore, the results of this study form a preliminary basis for understanding students’ needs to use their mother tongue; however, a bridge needs to be made to underlying pedagogies.

Finally, English-medium instruction at tertiary level in EFL settings is a challenging educational context, both for teachers and for students. It creates an artificial context for language use, and disadvantages to those students without a certain level of English proficiency. The need for support from students’ existing language repertoire should be considered as an enrichment of resources available, rather than a barrier to learning.

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APPENDIX
Instances of L1 Use during Pairwork

Pair-1

Control Group

Student	L1 Use	English Translation	Function of L1
WK1	Sen dün derse geldin mi?	[Were you at school yesterday?]	Social: Personal talk
WK1	Hangi sayfadayız?	[which page are we on?]	Task related: Task clarification
WK1	Hoca geliyor mu?... Söylesene...	[Is the teacher coming?...tell me...]	Arbitrary: Accidental reaction
WK1	Şarj aletin var mı?	[Do you have charger?]	Social: Personal talk
MD1	Bak... hayır hayır onu yazamazsın	[Look...no, no you cannot write that]	Task related: Feedback on task
MD1	Bir şey söylesene	[Come on. Tell something]	Task related: task clarification

Experimental Group

Student	L1 Use	English Translation	Function of L1
WK1	Sen ne yapacağımızı anladın mı?	[Do you know what we are supposed to do?]	Task related: Task clarification
WK1	Fenerbahçe maçını izledin mi?	[Did you watch the Fenerbahçe match?]	Social: personal talk
WK1	Gammazlamam ne demek	[How do we say "gammazlamam"?)	Task related: language elicitation
WK1	Hoca bunlara puan verecek mi?	[Will the teacher score these?]	Task related: Task clarification
WK1	Doğrudan siz haksızsınız desem olmuyor mu?	[Can't I just say you are wrong?]	Task related: Language elicitation
MD1	Kaç dakika kaldı?	[How much time do we have left?]	Task related: Task clarification
MD1	Yok ya izlemedim?	[No I didn't watch it] (as a response to question)	Social: Personal talk
MD1	Yok o yanlış. Öyle denmez.	[That's wrong. You cannot say it like that]	Task related: Language elicitation
MD1	Come on. Saçmalama.	[Come on. Don't be funny]	Social: Personal talk

Pair 2

Control Group

Student	L1 Use	English Translation	Function of L1
WK2	Ne demek o?	[What does that mean?]	Task related: Comprehension check
WK2	Çok zor bu.	[That's too difficult]	Task related: Feedback on task
ST1	Hadi yaparsın, "appointment"ı kullan	[Come on you can do it. Use the word "appointment"]	Task related: Feedback on task

Experimental Group

Student	L1 Use	English Translation	Function of L1
WK2	Ne yapıyoruz şimdi?	[What are we doing now?]	Task related: Task clarification
WK2	Yazacak mıyız?	[Will we write?]	Task related: Task clarification
WK2	Sen ne yazıyorsun, gösterebilirsen.	[What are you writing? Can you show me?]	Task related: Task clarification
WK2	Arkadaşlar bir şey anlayan var mı (to the whole class).	[Is there anyone who got it]	Task related: Task clarification
WK2	Yapamıyorum ben bunu.	[I can't do this]	Task related: Feedback on task
WK2	Mesaj attım bir bak.	[I sent you a message. Check it]	Social: Personal talk
WK2	Böyle bir şey mi yazdın sen de?	[Did you also write something like that?]	Task related: task clarification
ST1	Oğlum İngilizce konuşacağız	[We should be talking in English]	Social: Warning

Pair 3

Control Group

Student	L1 Use	English Translation	Function of L1
ST2	Bu cevapla beni kesin işe alırlar (laughing)	[With this answer, I will certainly be accepted to the job]	Social: Humour
ST2	-Yarınki sınav saat kaçtaydı?	[What time is the exam tomorrow?]	Social: Personal talk
ST3	on otuz	[ten thirty]	Social: Personal talk
ST2	Gene mi sabahtan yaaa!	[Again in the morning!]	Social: personal talk

Experimental Group

Student	L1 Use	English Translation	Function of L1
ST2	Kusursuz planamlama için ne deyebilirim?	[What can I use for "perfect planning"?)]	Task related: Language elicitation
ST3	Burda "illegal" mı demeliyim "unethical" mı?	[Which one shall I use here? Illegal or unethical?]	Task related: Language elicitation
ST2	Adamı gammazla gitsin. Ertesi günde biri seni gammazlasın. (laughing).	[Just report on the guy, and the next day, someone else reports on you]	Social: Humour
ST2	Düşünsene, patrona git öğren diyormuşsun. (laughing)	[Can you imagine telling the boss, go and learn it properly?]	Social: Humour
ST3	Denesek mi?	[Shall we try it]	Social: Humour

Pair 4

Control group

Student	L1 Use	English Translation	Function of L1
WK3	Ne yapıyoruz?	[What are we doing]	Task related: Task clarification
WK4	Ne yapacağız?	[What are we supposed to do?]	Task related: Task clarification
WK4	Bu soruda tam olarak ne diyor	[What is this question specifically asking for?]	Task related: Task clarification

Experimental Group

Student	L1 Use	English Translation	Function of L1
WK3	Arkadaşınla aynı yerde çalışırsan ne yaparsın demek istiyor galiba	[I think it asks what we would do if were to work in the same place with a friend]	Task related: Comprehension check
WK4	Adam kötü bir şey mi yapmış?	[Did the guy do something wrong]	Task related: comprehension check
WK4	Ne yapacağım, patrona söylerim	[What I would do is to tell the boss]	Task related: feedback on task
WK3	...“susmak” ne demek	[How do I say “to be silent”]	Task related: Language elicitation
WK4	“özel olarak” nasıl derim?	[How do I say “privately”?]	Task related: Language elicitation
WK3	“ima ederim” nasıl denir?	[How do I say “imply”?]	Task related: Language elicitation
WK3:	“O onun sorunu” nasıl denir?	[How do you say “It’s his problem?”]	Task related: Language elicitation
WK4:	Yakalanmasaydı abi bana ne? (laughing)	[Well he shouldn’t have got caught]	Social: Humour

Pair 5

Control Group

Student	L1 Use	English Translation	Function of L1
MD3	Ben bitirdim	[I finished]	Task related: Feedback on task
MD4	Bence bu olmaz	[I don’t think that works]	Task related: feedback on task

Experimental Group

There was no instance of L1 during the entire task period.

Pair 6

Control Group

Student	L1 Use	English Translation	Function of L1
MD4	Böyle desem olur değil mi?	[It's okay if I say it this way, right?]	Task related: Task clarification
MD4	Gerçekten böyle sorular sorarlarsa beni hiç bir yer almaz (laughing)	[If they really ask such questions, I won't be accepted anywhere]	Social: Humour
MD4	"sabırlı" ne demek?	[What does "patient" mean?]	Task related: Language elicitation
MD4	"sinirlenirdim" nasıl deriz?	[How do we say "I would get angry"]?	Task related: Language elicitation
ST4	Hoca geliyor. İngilizce konuş.	[Teacher is coming. Talk in English]	Social: Warning

Experimental Group

Student	L1 Use	English Translation	Function of L1
MD4	"hayal kırıklığı "neydi?	[What was "disappointment"?)	Task related: Language elicitation
MD4	"tepki göstermek" "react" mi?	[is "react" used as "react"]?	Task related: Language elicitation
MD4	Cukur'u izledin mi bu hafta? Abi Aliço adamım	[Did you watch Cukur this week? Aliço is my man]	Social: personal talk
ST4	Ben o diziyi sevemedim ya	[I couldn't get into that series]-	Social: Personal talk
MD4	Saçmalama. Süper	[Come on. It' super]	Social: Personal talk
ST4	Gayet güzel olmuş.	[Looks good]	Task related: Feedback on task