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**The use of L1 in FL classrooms: analyzing
advantages and disadvantages**

Marta Valderrama Rotella

Tutora: Sonja Mujcinovic

Departamento de Filología Inglesa

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Abstract

The use of the First Language (L1) in the Foreign Language (FL) classroom has been a matter of debate, particularly in the last few decades. This dissertation is primarily concerned with providing a detailed description of the different advantages and disadvantages that the use of including the L1 in the FL classroom can offer to the learners. In order to do so, a thorough exploration of the different methodologies developed throughout history and their approach in relation to the use of the L1 has been carried out. Finally, a study regarding the students' perspectives on the use of L1 Spanish in EFL (English as Foreign Language) teaching has been conducted in order to observe how it affects the students' learning process, motivation, and confidence.

Key words: L1 Spanish in EFL teaching, language preference, EFL classroom, Secondary Education, teaching methodologies

Resumen

El uso de la L1 en el aula de Lengua Extranjera (LE) ha sido objeto de debate, especialmente en las últimas décadas. El objetivo principal de esta disertación es ofrecer una descripción detallada de las diferentes ventajas e inconvenientes que el uso de la L1 en el aula de LE puede ofrecer a los alumnos. Para ello, se ha llevado a cabo una exploración exhaustiva de las diferentes metodologías desarrolladas a lo largo de la historia y su enfoque en relación con el uso de la L1. Por último, se ha llevado a cabo un estudio sobre las perspectivas de los estudiantes acerca del uso de la L1 de español en la enseñanza del inglés como LE con el fin de observar cómo afecta al proceso de aprendizaje, la motivación y la confianza de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: L1 español en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera, preferencia de idioma, aula de inglés como lengua extranjera, Educación Secundaria, metodologías de enseñanza.

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1. Introduction

In the context of Foreign Language Teaching (FLT), the issue of whether to use the First Language (L1) in the Foreign Language (FL) classroom has been a matter of debate for decades. From early grammar-focused techniques to contemporary communicative approaches, the importance of the L1 has changed and elicited different viewpoints among educators and researchers. Some researchers, such as Purnama et al. (2022) and Shin et al. (2019), consider the L1 as a useful tool in FL, while others like Krashen (1982) and Hall & Cook (2012) see it as a drawback in their learning process.

Until the 19th century, the methodologies used in FLT made use of the L1 most of the time. Nevertheless, this tendency changed radically to the exclusive use of the FL in the classroom. More recent methodologies have advocated for a more communicative approach, which favors the increase of input in the FL and usually avoids the use of the L1. By placing current techniques within their historical continuum, this dissertation elucidates the different attitudes that revolve around this topic.

This dissertation explores the landscape of the L1 use in the FL classroom by researching the historical background, examining the advantages and disadvantages, and analyzing the student attitudes towards the use of the L1 in their FL classroom. By thoroughly analyzing this issue, the aim of this dissertation is to shed light on how the use of the L1 can affect the process of learning a FL.

Moreover, this study seeks to add to the ongoing discussion on the use of the L1 in the FL classroom, offering a broad perspective on its consequences and potential. Through a detailed analysis of the historical background and the theoretical and empirical data, the aim is to foster a more comprehensive approach towards teaching FL in the education field in order to enhance pedagogical efficacy. To do so, the benefits and drawbacks associated with the incorporation of the L1 in FLT are explored focusing not only on the potential of the L1 to enhance comprehension, but also on the ways that the use of the L1 can impact the attitude of the learner towards the FL in terms of motivation, self-confidence, and linguistic development. Furthermore, it addresses issues regarding the potential drawbacks such as dependence on the L1.

A study with empirical evidence is carried out to examine student views and beliefs about using the L1 in the FL classroom. The data were gathered through surveys completed by students to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' perspectives on the importance of their L1 in their learning journey.

The results seem to indicate that there are no great differences in the opinions between the two groups analyzed, and both groups agree on the fact that the use of L1 can be beneficial, but it should be restricted. For instance, they accept the use of the L1 when dealing with more complex contents to enhance comprehension, to cover the needs of some students, and to explain grammar. Also, both groups agree that the input should mainly be provided in the FL. The results show that, as Shin et al. (2019) claimed, the L1 should be used more with students with lower proficiency levels.

This dissertation is divided into five sections. The first section deals with the historical overview of the use of the methodologies used in FLT including the advantages and disadvantages of the use of the L1 in FLT. Then, the second section describes the methodology of the study that was carried out in order to know the perceptions of the students regarding the use of the L1 in their FL classroom. The third section deals with the analysis and discussion of the results obtained. The fourth section includes the conclusions, and the final section includes the references that have been used throughout this dissertation.

2. Theoretical background

This chapter provides a thorough analysis of the use of the L1 in the FL classroom. The first section deals with the methodologies that have been used throughout history in FLT. In the second and third section, the different advantages and disadvantages that can be encountered when incorporating the use of the L1 in FLT are explored. And, lastly, in the fourth section, a balanced implementation of both the L1 and the FL in the classroom is proposed.

2.1. Methodologies used in SLT throughout history

When exploring the different ways in which FLs have been taught throughout the course of history, it can be observed that the different methodologies evolved to cover the needs of society. Until the 19th century, different methodologies were based on the L1 use for the most part when teaching the FL. Nevertheless, this tendency has changed into a more radical one that defends the exclusive use of the FL in the classroom.

English started being taught in England towards the end of the Middle Ages when the Tudor dynasty started to rule the country. At this time, the different kings belonging to this dynasty started to impose the English language as the only official language, and, finally, Henry V made it the official language of the country (Howatt, 2004). From this moment onwards, different teaching methodologies started being developed and, therefore, new methods emerged. However, one of the aspects that has changed the most over the years is the use of the L1 in FLT.

The first method designed was the Grammar-Translation method, and it was used for teaching Greek and Latin. According to Benati (2018), the origins of this method trace back to the early 1500s when Latin was the “lingua franca” in Europe. At the time, Latin and Greek were the languages used by the educated elite and it was the language that was used for education, philosophy, business and religion. Therefore, the Grammar-Translation method was created so that uneducated people could have access to education, philosophy, business and religion. Since these languages were used only in the written form, this method prioritized grammar rules and translation exercises. The main aim of this method was to encourage the comprehension of literary texts and to achieve grammatical accuracy, and, for this reason, it kept the learners from improving their oral proficiency and communicative competence. Later, when English started being taught,

the Grammar-Translation method was used to present the different rules and vocabulary through texts. After students had memorized these, they had to translate texts into the FL. Although it is true that this method offered a systematic approach to grammar, it was based on memorization of grammar rules and translation, and it did not provide an authentic use of the language. Therefore, since the main focus of this method was grammar and translation, both the L1 and the FL were used only in the written form (Benati, 2018).

When immigration from Europe to America took place in the 20th century, there was a great language diversity in society, which caused a change in the teaching of English, because there were many students in the classrooms who did not share the same L1. For this reason, teachers needed to make use of the FL exclusively, which caused the elimination of the L1 from the classroom (Skidmore, 1917). In this context, the next method that was developed was the Direct Method. It focused on the association of meaning in the target language by using realia, pictures, actions, etc. completely eliding the L1, which enabled students to communicate in the FL, mainly using everyday language. When using this method, students learned how to understand the FL by receiving a great amount of input. This is because both instruction and classroom activities were carried out using the target language, and, therefore, they were able to understand and speak it. When implementing this method students learned the language through conversations in the target language. Thus, this method helped them acquire more fluency over accuracy (Mart, 2013).

During the Second World War, at the beginning of the 40s, the Audiolingual Method started to be developed. It was used during the war to make sure that soldiers had sufficient fluency to infiltrate and go unnoticed on the territory of the enemy. The focus of this method was the mechanical repetition of both the interventions of the teacher and the recordings played in class without any use of the L1. The goal of this method was to use language in a communicative way, and to encourage students to learn new vocabulary and grammatical structures through “imitation, repetition, and drill” (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). By repeating after the teacher or the recording, students are supposed to learn the target language and to be able to speak it ignoring grammatical correctness and accuracy and focusing on fluency. Also, specific information about culture was not provided, but it was given through the dialogue and the interventions of the teacher (Rashid & Islam, 2020).

These methods are considered to be the traditional methods for foreign language teaching. Recently, new methods with different foci have been created to fulfil current requirements in FLT. Nowadays, teaching methods aim for the exchange of meaning and for using language in a real-life situation away from memorizing grammatical structures (Richards and Rogers, 2014). This intention of using language in a more natural and realistic way is what motivates the shift from FLT to incorporating the Communicative Approach (CA) or Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the classroom. Following the premises of FLT, the focus is on the oral and communicative competence, where all four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are also integrated. The communicative approach focuses on fluency over accuracy, where the classroom becomes a safe place for students to use the target language without being afraid of making mistakes. Also, this approach encourages students to learn grammar without having to memorize grammar rules. Instead, students learn in an inductive way. In other words, they learn the rules without a specific explanation but through discovery (Littlewood, 1981). According to CLT, in order to learn a FL, it is important not only to know the linguistic features, but it is also important to understand the social implications of such language. In fact, Hymes (1966) claimed that grammatical competence alone is not enough to use language in a given cultural context, so the communicative situation in which the language is supposed to be used becomes relevant in the process of teaching a language. The current Spanish law of education (LOMLOE) (Ley Orgánica 3/2020, de 29 de diciembre, por la que se modifica la Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación, *Diario Oficial de la Unión Europea*, 2020) claims that the CA is essential for FL teaching. Moreover, it also defends the exclusive use of the target language in the classroom, leaving aside the use of the L1.

Other methodologies, which are considered alternative, are worth mentioning. These are the Suggestopedia Method and the Total Physical Response (TPR) which emerged as well in the 20th century and are still present in FL teaching. Nonetheless, they are not as used as the CA.

Suggestopedia is a method in which teachers provide students with both vocabulary and grammatical conventions in an indirect way including them in a dialogue or any other sort of script in the target language without using the L1. During this process, the students listen to the teacher's pronunciation of this text to then perform that script focusing on

the correctness of the pronunciation. Thanks to this script, students are able to learn new vocabulary and grammar without having to use the L1 (Bancroft, 1999).

TPR is a method developed in 1969 that imitates the way children acquire their L1 associating action with meaning. Children acquire listening skills before they acquire speaking skills, and once their listening comprehension develops, they are able to produce some utterances (Asher, 2003). For this reason, TPR follows the same structure by initially focusing on the assimilation of meaning through body movements and then seamlessly transitioning to language production while using body movements as well. It is a methodology that uses commands in the FL alongside gestures to teach vocabulary and grammar structures. In the first stage, the teacher starts by introducing words or expressions saying them out loud while mimicking them, while the students are expected just to listen. Then, in the second stage, the teacher does the same thing, and the students are expected just to mimic the teacher without uttering any of the new words introduced. During the third stage, the teacher says the words and students mimic the gestures by themselves without the aid of the teacher. And lastly, in the fourth stage, the teacher tells some students to ask another classmate to repeat some of the gestures. This way, the students have to demonstrate knowledge by formulating the questions correctly and making the corresponding gestures (Asher, 1969).

The previously mentioned methodologies have undergone significant development and evolution throughout history. These days, due to the increasing interest in learning new languages, numerous researchers have engaged in the study of what are the most useful tools and methods in FLT. Nowadays, the methods that have emerged are the CA, as it was mentioned above, the Task-Based Approach (TBA) and the Project-Based Learning (PBL).

TBA emerged at the end of the 20th century from the CA (Sánchez, 2004). This approach focuses on the development of tasks in the FL in the classroom. According to Nunan (1989:10), a task is “a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language, while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form”. This approach is interesting in terms of the use of language in the sense that the FL is used by the learner for a communicative purpose in order to complete the task (Willis, 1996).

Similarly, according to Aristidou (2020:1), the Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a “student-centered pedagogical approach with which students supposedly gain knowledge on a certain subject through projects. These projects usually relate to real-world problems and the students work on them in groups”. This can raise their interest in the projects, which can encourage them to participate more using the FL, since they could see the usefulness of it in their daily lives (Blumenfeld et al., 1991).

The previously mentioned methods are both related to the CA, which is the most widely used and accepted approach nowadays. It helps students develop a communicative competence and learn vocabulary and grammar in context (Littlewood, 1981). The aim of this approach is to let them develop language fluency through communication in the FL rather than by receiving instruction on the use of language itself, which is what the current Spanish Education Law (LOMLOE) claims.

In recent years, research in language teaching methods has also evolved around the concept of translanguaging (Cummins, 2019, Cenoz & Gorter, 2020, García & Wei, 2014). Translanguaging is being acknowledged as a balanced and persuasive approach in FLT, which integrates students' whole linguistic repertoires to enhance the learning process. This method challenges the usual monolingual approach and encourages multilingualism as a resource in the EFL classroom. Research by Cummins (2019) highlights the benefits and applications of translanguaging pedagogy, considering it a dialogue between two points: hypothesis and practice. He highlights that this approach allows educators to influence the students' L1 to facilitate understanding and engagement in the process of learning a new language. By doing so, translanguaging not only helps learning the target dialect, but it also certifies and takes into account the students' L1s, which promotes an inclusive environment (Cummins, 2019).

Moreover, Cenoz & Gorter (2020) support the effectiveness of translanguaging by providing empirical evidence. The study shows how implementing translanguaging can improve the students' understanding and participation in EFL classrooms. They argue that utilizing students' L1 strategically can reduce the cognitive load and make education more approachable, and therefore, enhance the learning process and academic performance (Cummins, 2019).

In addition to these benefits, García & Wei (2014) define translanguaging as a dynamic practice that shows the natural language use of multilingual individuals. This approach aligns with the idea that language learning should be similar to language acquisition (Cook, 2001), where different languages interact rather than being sectionalized. This perspective not only contributes to language learning but also to developing metalinguistic awareness that is important for cognitive development.

Cummins (2019) claims that a meaningful advantage of translanguaging is its potential to create a more supportive learning environment. Teachers noticed that translanguaging helped build a positive environment in the classroom and it encouraged active participation by the students. By recognizing and using students' linguistic backgrounds, teachers can promote a sense of belonging and boost the confidence of their students, which is essential for the effectiveness of the learning process.

Furthermore, the study by Cenoz & Gorter (2020) investigates the pedagogical potential of translanguaging, emphasizing its role in promoting deeper understanding and critical thinking. The authors specify that translanguaging encourages students to draw connections between different languages and cultures, which improves their cognitive elasticity and intercultural competence. This approach not only benefits language learning but it also prepares students for a globalized society where multilingualism is an advantage.

In conclusion, translanguaging shows a balanced and holistic approach to language teaching. It accepts the complexities of multilingualism and influences it as a strength rather than as a challenge. By combining students' complete linguistic repertoires into the learning process, translanguaging pedagogy fosters a more inclusive and engaging learning environment. This method not only helps language learning but also supports the overall cognitive and social development of students so that they can adapt to a multilingual society.

The continuous benefits of translanguaging still need to be further valued and researched, being it a considerably new approach. Thus, one of the ongoing debates on this matter remains being the extent to which the use of the L1 of the students should be incorporated into the classroom or if only the target language should be used. In order to

provide an answer, this dissertation focuses on an in-depth examination of both the advantages and disadvantages of the incorporation of the L1 in the classroom.

2.2. Advantages of integrating the L1 in EFL classrooms

The use of the learner's L1 in EFL classrooms continues to be a matter of debate. The reason why this issue is questioned is because some researchers (e.g., Asher, 2003 and Cook, 2001) believe that learning a FL should resemble the L1 acquisition process where no other language but the target language is used. However, others (e.g., Hall & Cook, 2012 and Adwani & Shrivastava, 2017) think that the use of the L1 in the classroom can enhance the performance and engagement of the learner by providing them with the basis to acquire a new language, which is very much linked to the advantages of the use of the L1, which are described below.

The first advantage is related to the fact that the L1 serves as a cognitive and linguistic support, especially in the earlier stages of the learning process. Following Cummins (1981, 1991) Cognitive Interdependence Hypothesis, the increases in the capacity for cognitive activity in the L1 can enhance the same capacity in the FL. Therefore, those learners who have developed more cognitive skills through the use of their L1 before beginning the acquisition of the FL will develop the ability to manifest those skills in the FL more rapidly than those who have not. This is because the student can take advantage of their background knowledge in their L1 to understand and comprehend certain grammatical structures or vocabulary in the FL (Cook, 2001). In other words, structures are transferred from the L1 into the FL, when learners use their L1 as a foundation to decode the message that they received in the target language (Hall and Cook, 2012). Transfer or Cross-Linguistic Influence (CLI) always takes place when two or more languages are in contact. More precisely, it is the influence that results from those aspects that are similar and different between the target language and a language that has been previously acquired (in the case of L2 acquisition or FLL) (Odlin, 1989:27). Therefore, Cook (2001:1) believes that the students' linguistic background knowledge should be taken into account, because they have "more mature minds" and that, consequently, the FL students should not be treated equally as those acquiring their L1. This is because their L1 is present inevitably and it can be exploited by instructors to help them relate new knowledge with aspects that are familiar to them (Hall and Cook, 2012). Similarly, Adwani & Shrivastava (2017) believe that students should use their L1 to learn a FL so that they can construct knowledge by relating the new information they are receiving in the input to some aspects of the L1 that they already know. This means that, if there is a feature of the L1 that is slightly similar to a feature of the FL, the process of acquiring

that feature in the FL will be accelerated, which is why it is suggested that it should be considered in the learning process (Hall and Cook, 2012).

However, the interference that can occur between the two languages can be both negative or positive: it can either favor the process of learning the language or it can delay it, which depends on how different or similar the two languages in contact are. This is why the interference depends on the L1 and the FL of the students (Meyer, 2008). Despite the potential drawbacks of the negative CLI, supporters of the use of the L1 in the classroom like Hall & Cook (2012) argue that positive CLI and the advantages of using the L1 in EFL outweigh the disadvantages.

Another advantage is that the use of the L1 in the classroom can help students to clarify messages when needed, which contributes positively to the negotiation of meaning. When students face complex challenges or concepts, they often turn to the L1 for clarification and to express their ideas and questions (Macaro, 2001). Although the ultimate goal for students is to comprehend the contents and express themselves in the target language, the L1 serves as a resource for explaining certain features that can be challenging in the FL like complex grammatical structures, cultural information or any other aspect that is related to the language (Cook, 2008). Thanks to these clarifications the students can reach further understanding. Moreover, they also create a supportive learning environment in which students feel confident to participate in classroom activities and conversations, especially for the low proficiency learners.

In relation to the previous one, the next advantage has to do with the fact that the L1 can create a supportive learning environment in the classroom. Krashen (1982:31) proposed the Affective Filter Hypothesis (AFH), which is a theory that explores the role of the emotional and affective variables in the process of acquiring a new language; in other words, “how affective factors relate to the second language acquisition process.” As expressed by Cook (2001), the EFL classroom can seem as a very threatening place, which harms the learning process. What Krashen argues is that students perform better, and the process of acquisition is more successful when students are relaxed and free of anxiety. That is, when their affective filter is low.

The AFH explains, as represented in figure 1, how it is possible to receive a great amount of input and still not be able to use it completely and adequately in the acquisition

process because of the barrier created by the high affective filter. An example of the AFH in practice can be seen in the following scenario. Students are very anxious about speaking in front of their peers in the FL. Even though they have a decent understanding of the FL and know how to use grammar and vocabulary, they struggle to take part in class speaking activities due to their anxiety as they are afraid of being judged because of the mistakes they might make. In this context, the affective filter of the students is high and functions as a barrier to the acquisition of the language. Their fear does not allow them to practice speaking or receive feedback on their performance, which is essential for learning. Consequently, even though they have the necessary linguistic knowledge to communicate effectively, their fear or anxiety keeps them from participating actively and, therefore, keeps them from improving their competence. However, if this anxiety is reduced thanks to a supportive learning environment, their affective filter will lower, and it will allow them to engage in the acquisition process.

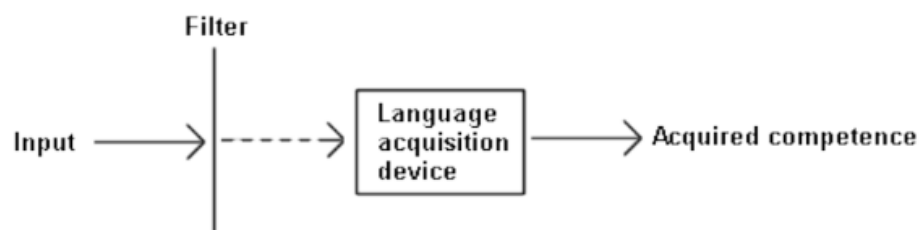


Figure 1. The Affective Filter Hypothesis illustrated (Krashen, 1982:32).

The affective filter works as a barrier that can influence the process of acquiring a new language either positively or negatively. If the affective filter is high due to lack of confidence, lack of motivation, anxiety, or other factors, it can hinder the input from getting to the student and therefore the acquisition process can be harmed. When the affective filter is low, the students are more receptive and willing to learn, their confidence boosts, and their relationship with the teacher improves, which favors the acquisition process (Meyer, 2008). Therefore, if the students are motivated, they do not feel overwhelmed by the target language and they have confidence in their performance, their affective filter will be low and therefore the acquisition process will be felicitous.

In addition, when the contents are explained in the FL, some students might not understand it correctly and some aspects might be learned wrongly (Purnama et al., 2022).

On some occasions, it is important to set the basis of the contents in the L1. This is related to another advantage, which is that the use of the L1 can help the students to work autonomously with new content without making certain mistakes.

In relation to the study of grammar, Cook (2001) claims that grammar should be explained when it appears in some class content. So, when students must learn the grammar, they have already seen it in practice in the FL and they can then move on to learning how it works using the L1 if necessary. The use of the L1 in this case can also contribute to the emergence of a positive feeling towards the FL, building a better relationship with both the learning process and the teacher, which makes the affective filter lower.

However, on some occasions, the extensive use of the FL in the class can cause stress in students due to lack of understanding. Researchers like Krashen (1982) have selected some factors that are directly related to the success of the acquisition process, which are motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. This kind of situation is what makes the student's affective filter rise (Cook, 2001). The affective filter is what determines the relationship between the student and the process of acquisition, because even if they understand the input they are receiving, it will not reach the part of the brain that is in charge of the acquisition process (Krashen 1982). For this reason, the use of the L1 is considered to be a useful tool to avoid this kind of situation in the FL classroom.

Moreover, another advantage is that the L1 can be used efficiently in the classroom to give instructions to students, especially if the intention of the teacher is that students participate in the activity (Atkinson, 1987). When students need to complete a certain task, it is important that they know what they need to do, otherwise they will not be able to complete it correctly. Therefore, the L1 together with the FL can serve as a tool to make sure that students know what they are being asked for and to ensure the success of the activity without feeling lost (Purnama et al., 2022). However, some authors, such as Atkinson (1987) and Shin et al. (2019) believe that the use of the L1 should depend on the proficiency level of the students. As the proficiency level increases, the use of the L1 in the classroom should decrease. This is because the L1 should be used as a tool to make sure students understand the instructions, so that they do not feel overwhelmed and frustrated towards the FL and so that the affective filter does not rise. Nonetheless, if the

students have a sufficiently high level of proficiency to understand the instructions, the FL should be used.

Another advantage of using the L1 in the classroom is to build a better relationship between the teacher and the students. For some students who are not so proficient in the FL hearing the teacher speak in the FL can make them feel like the teacher is a distant figure (Cook, 2001). In these cases, to make sure the students see the teacher as a reachable and trustworthy person, the L1 can work as a bridge to connect both the students and the teacher. This can create a more relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere in the classroom where students feel comfortable and safe, which will make the affective filter lower and therefore the students will pay more attention in class and the acquisition process will be improved as well (Cook, 2001). According to Purnama et al. (2022:1832) “to transmit the information effectively, it is necessary for the teachers and students to establish strong communication.” To do so, the teacher can use the L1 when showing interest in the concerns of the students, to motivate them, to talk about certain topics of interest of the students, etc. This can have a very positive effect on the students, because they can see the teacher as a relatable person who successfully learned the FL, which can therefore motivate the students in their learning development.

In addition, allowing the students to use the L1 in the classroom can also help them reduce stress. For example, in contexts where they need to express their opinions and ideas it can be beneficial for the acquisition process (Atkinson, 1987). It will lower the affective filter in the sense that students will not feel pressured to speak in the FL and therefore the classroom will be a safe place. Also, it is beneficial to let students ask teachers questions in their L1. If they are too embarrassed and concerned about the mistakes they might make when formulating these questions, they might never ask them because of fear. Thus, if no questions are asked, no doubts are solved, and the output can result in incomplete acquisition and thereby more errors in the future (Hall & Cook, 2012). In fact, Hall & Cook (2012) claim that the use of the L1 can help students process the FLs cognitive demand, which will lead them to success in challenging tasks in the FL. All in all, the aim is to make students comfortable in the classroom, so that they feel confident and safe, which will help lower the affective filter and therefore enhance the acquisition process.

Another advantage of introducing the L1 in the classroom is related to translation. Hall & Cook (2012) and Atkinson (1987) believe that translating can sometimes be very effective in the learning process. In fact, Atkinson (1987) claims that translation can be useful to help students spot mistakes in their use of the FL. This also helps to establish comparisons between certain aspects of the language that differ between the L1 and the FL. Even though translation is generally not considered useful enough in the process of acquisition, Atkinson (1987) and Hall & Cook (2012) believe that translation activities complement other techniques used in the process.

In the case of translanguaging, it brings many benefits to the process of learning a new language, enhancing understanding and student involvement. According to Cummins (2019), it allows teachers to use student's entire linguistic repertoire combining theory and practice to promote a more inclusive and supportive educational setting. García & Wei (2014) emphasize that translanguaging takes into account how languages are naturally used and that it enhances metalinguistic awareness. Moreover, Cenoz & Gorter (2020) indicate that the use of translanguaging can improve understanding and involvement in the EFL classroom by decreasing the cognitive load. They also highlight that implementing translanguaging in the classroom favors greater comprehension and critical thinking, improving cognitive flexibility and cross-cultural competence in learners. Overall, translanguaging presents advantages that contribute to increasing the effectiveness of the language learning process.

Regarding advantages of the use of the L1 in the EFL classroom, it is important to take into account that it should be used as a tool to enhance FL acquisition, but it should never replace it (Atkinson, 1987). Authors like Atkinson (1987), Cummins (1981, 1991), Cook (2001), Hall & Cook (2012), García & Wei (2014), Adwani & Shrivastava (2017), Cummins (2019), and Cenoz & Gorter (2020) are in favor of the introduction of the L1 in the classroom for certain purposes. Nevertheless, they are aware that the target language should be in first position in the class, while the L1 serves as secondary role that helps students in their acquisition process. Moreover, Shin et al. (2019) claim that the L1 should be used with students with lower levels of proficiency in the FL and the amount of L1 used in the class should decrease as the proficiency increases. This is because if the FL students have no knowledge of the FL, they might feel overwhelmed with an extensive use of the FL. Therefore, a balanced use of both the L1 and the FL reduces the levels of anxiety and stress and makes the affective filter lower as well.

To sum up, although the use of the L1 in the classroom should not be exclusive, it is necessary that teachers consider it in order to make the most of its pedagogical potential. In spite of the presence of the advantages that were just mentioned, the different disadvantages that may arise when using the L1 in an FL classroom are important to take into account. These will be dealt with in the following section.

2.3. Disadvantages of integrating the L1 in the EFL classrooms

Although Atkinson (1987), Cummins (1991), Cook (2001), Hall & Cook (2012), and Adwani & Shrivastava (2017), among others defend the benefits of using the L1 in FL classrooms, there are arguments against its usage as well. One of the authors who has theorized about this subject is Krashen (1981, 1982, 1985). He believes that the use of the L1 in the classroom should be almost non-existent. In order to prove this idea, he developed five different hypotheses. For the purpose of this section, we will explore two of these hypotheses: the Input Hypothesis (IH) (Krashen, 1982) and the Natural Order Hypothesis (NOH) (Krashen, 1985).

The IH (Krashen, 1982) focuses on the input that the students receive. Krashen called “I” the level of proficiency that a student has in the FL, and the hypothesis claims that students are able to acquire a language when they receive an input that is slightly higher than their level of proficiency, which is represented as “I+1”. This input is what makes the students acquire the language, because they are not only using the language knowledge to decode that message, but they are also making use of the context or other pragmatic information to understand its meaning. This hypothesis could be considered the first disadvantage in the sense that it supports the idea that students do not need the L1 to become proficient in a target language, because the more input they receive, the faster they improve their competence in the FL. This IH is also related to the idea that the learning of a new language should be as similar as possible to the acquisition of a language in a natural context (Cook, 2001). This means that the process should include exposure to the language in a way that is similar to how the L1 is acquired rather than through instruction only. Moreover, Turnbull (2001) claims that it is essential for teachers to use the FL in the classroom as much as they can. Also, teachers should provide students with the necessary input. This has a great impact on the development of the FL for students, and also because, for some students, their FL classroom might be the only moment when they have exposure to that language.

Another disadvantage is that the amount of input that the students receive diminishes because of the use of the L1. Hall & Cook (2012) claim that introducing everyday life aspects and relatable situations into the classroom would be interesting for students to see how language is used in different contexts in the FL. This will not only improve their proficiency level in the target language, but it will also motivate them, since

they will be using topics that are interesting and applicable in real life. Also, by having conversations about their interests and daily situations, students will not only receive a great amount of input in the language, but they will also see the language as a useful tool for everyday communication, which will contribute to lowering the affective filter and achieving comprehension of the language (Turnbull, 2001). Cook (2001) claims that using TPR is a good methodological approach to guide students if the verbal input is slightly above their proficiency level. Also, Krashen (1985) claims that visual support can be of much help to understand the “I+1” input and it can also help teachers to avoid the use of the L1.

The NOH (Krashen, 1985) is also related to the complete rejection of the use of the L1 in the classroom even when introducing concepts that are new for the students. This hypothesis is based on the replication of the L1 acquisition process that takes place naturally and follows a specific developmental order. Thus, a specific explanation of grammatical rules is not necessary, since the acquisition is natural and unconscious. If the learning of a FL takes place in the same way as the acquisition of the L1, then the use of the L1 is not necessary, because the learning will take place progressively. In other words, the learning of the FL is similar to how a child acquires their L1. For any given language, there are some grammatical structures that tend to be acquired earlier than others, and it seems to be the same regardless of the L1 of the person involved. Having said this, Krashen believes that grammatical sequencing in the classroom should be rejected if the objective is full acquisition.

The reduced use of the FL in the classroom can affect the student’s motivation as well, and this can be seen as another disadvantage. Sometimes, teachers do not use the FL, either because they feel tired when they use it for long periods of time or because they are not proficient enough to do so (Izquierdo et al., 2016). If this is the case, Izquierdo et al. (2016) suggest that teachers need more extensive training so that they can use the language in different contexts. The lack of training of teachers is considered a disadvantage, because when students feel like teachers do not want to use the FL, it makes them lose motivation. If they see that the teachers do not make the effort, they most likely will do the same and not use the FL (Atkinson, 1987). If students are not used to hearing the FL very often, when they do, this will make them stop paying attention in class (Turnbull, 2001). It is important that teachers try to avoid these situations because, as mentioned previously, the FL class might be the only time some students are exposed to

the FL. Therefore, teachers should try to make the most of the class session and provide students with as much FL input as possible.

As was also previously mentioned, CLI can be beneficial in some cases, but it has its drawbacks as well. The negative interference caused by CLI can make students mistakenly apply certain rules of the L1 into the FL, so they make mistakes in the FL. To put a solution to this problem in the classroom, the IH by Krashen (1982) suggests that teachers should provide students with as much input as they can, so that the proficiency of the student increases and, therefore, the negative CLI decreases.

All in all, the extensive use of the L1 in the classroom might make students feel like they are not proficient enough in the FL and that they do not understand it, which will decrease their motivation, rise their stress and anxiety, and therefore the affective filter will rise as well. For this reason, the authors revised above claim that students should be exposed to as much FL as possible and that the L1 should be avoided so that both their proficiency level and their confidence grows.

2.4. A balanced approach between the use of the L1 and the FL

Previous chapters (2.2 & 2.3) have dealt with different aspects that argue in some cases in favor and others against the use of the L1 in the classroom to facilitate the learning of a FL. Since no consensus is reached, a balanced use of the L1 in the FL classroom can be a felicitous option.

In order to apply a balanced approach in the classroom, several steps can be followed. First, it is crucial that students are exposed to as much input in the FL as possible. To make sure that no students feel lost with the use of the FL, a classroom atmosphere that is adapted to the proficiency levels of the students seems to be salient (Atkinson, 1987). In order to achieve this atmosphere, teachers need to make sure that the support (for example visual aids (Krashen, 1985)) used in the L1 is not excessive or too limited in a way that it facilitates comprehension while still enhancing the proficiency in the FL. What is more, translanguaging practices contribute to creating a supporting and inclusive environment by facilitating the process of language learning through the use of the L1 (Cook, 2001, Hall & Cook, 2012 and Adwani & Shrivastava, 2017, Cummins, 2019).

Moreover, in order to avoid stress, anxiety or demotivation, the L1 can be used for clarification in certain occasions. Nevertheless, it should be adapted to students' proficiency level and its use should decrease as the proficiency increases. Similarly, the L1 can be used by students to ask questions when needed. If students have tried to express their questions in the FL unsuccessfully, it can be beneficial to allow them to use the L1, so that they do not give up (Macaro, 2000). This dynamic will create a supportive environment in which students feel confident and motivated to engage in conversations in the FL (Cook, 2008). When students feel supported, they are empowered to use the FL, even if they make mistakes.

In conclusion, the integration of the L1 in FL classes offers different advantages that favor the process of language learning, encourages students to engage in meaningful communication in the FL, and build a safe and supporting learning atmosphere. By taking into account the linguistic, cognitive, social, and personal benefits of the use of the L1 in the classroom, teachers can create a learning environment where the different needs and backgrounds of the students are taken into account. Also, it is essential to grasp a balanced

approach that makes the most of the qualities of both the L1 and the FL to optimize the language acquisition process.

3. Methodology

This chapter deals with the methodology which describes four different issues: i) the development of the questionnaire, ii) the participants; iii) the compilation of data, and iv) the analysis of the data.

3.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire used to elicit data was divided into five sections. In the first section, the information regarding students' language background was gathered. The questions asked were related to the amount of time they have been studying EFL, their proficiency level etc. (even though the students' proficiency level was based on self-assessment, it was approved by their teacher and compared to the grades that they have obtained throughout the course). The second section of the questionnaire was related to how the students thought that the EFL classes in terms of language use should be organized. They were given three options to choose from: using English all the time, using Spanish all the time, or using both languages at the same time. In sections three and four, students were asked to rate the questions on a Likert scale from 1 to 4, being 1 "never" and 4 "always." Questions in section three were related to how the students felt towards the use of the L1 Spanish in the classroom. In other words, these questions were formulated to find out if students generally feel comfortable with the lack of use of L1 or if they prefer to use it on certain occasions. In section four, the aim was to find out if the teachers use L1 Spanish and, if so, what might be the reasons why. Lastly, section five was designed as an open question, where students were given the opportunity to share their opinion or add any further comments.

3.2. Participants

The questionnaire was distributed to students belonging to two different classes of E.S.O. This acronym corresponds to the stage of "Compulsory Secondary Education", in Spanish "Educación Secundaria Obligatoria" (E.S.O.), which is divided into four different grades. The first group is made up of 16 students who are in first grade of E.S.O., therefore they are 12 and 13 years old. It is important to point out that, as it was observed in the classroom, these students have, generally speaking, a very good understanding of

the English. In fact, in the first section of the questionnaire, 50% of the students that were surveyed claimed that their English level is high. On the other hand, the second group is formed by 19 students who are in second grade of E.S.O., so they are 13 and 14 years old. These students have a lower level than the previous group. In fact, in this case, only 15.8% of the students claim their level to be high.

In the first section of the questionnaire students were also asked about the time of exposure to English. The results indicate that both groups of participants have been studying EFL for about 9 years.

The questionnaire was carried out to these two groups separately, because they belonged to different classes and therefore the dynamics of their classroom were different. In fact, it was observed that Spanish was used more in the second grade class, and, for the purpose of this study, it was interesting to see if this had any effect on the students.

3.3. Compilation of data

The second section corresponds to the compilation of the data extracted from the questionnaire. The questionnaire contained 25 questions and it was carried out through Google Forms. It took students approximately 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire and the investigator was present at all times to solve any questions they might have. Students were asked to complete the questionnaire anonymously using their computer in class. Each student was assigned a code and, therefore, their names were never revealed. The responses were stored in an Excel spreadsheet to facilitate the analysis of the results.

3.4. Analysis of the results

The third section of the study is dedicated to the analysis of the results. This implies a quantitative analysis of the data followed by a qualitative explanation. To carry out the quantitative analysis, the means of the responses from 1 to 4 were calculated. For the first section, the mean of years that both groups have been studying English was calculated. In sections three and four, since the responses were obtained through a Likert scale from 1 to 4, the mean was calculated as well in order to analyze the results properly. However, since the question in section two was a multiple-choice question, it was analyzed as a qualitative response.

4. Analysis of the results and discussion

Chapter two deals with theoretical notions regarding the use of the L1 in FL classes and the ideal conditions under which learning a FL should take place. In this chapter, the students' perspective towards the use of the L1 in the FL classes and the situation in their classroom are described based on the data obtained.

In the second section of the questionnaire students were asked about their preferences for languages used in the classroom. Figure 2 shows the results obtained by both groups to question 1. In the first group, “using only English” was the most selected option with a 56.25% of the responses. Whereas 43.75% of the students selected that both languages should be used in class. In the case of the second group, using both languages received 78.9% of the answers, while the option referring to only using English in class received 21.1% of the answers. When it comes to the use of only Spanish, none of the groups considered this as an option, since no participants selected this option.

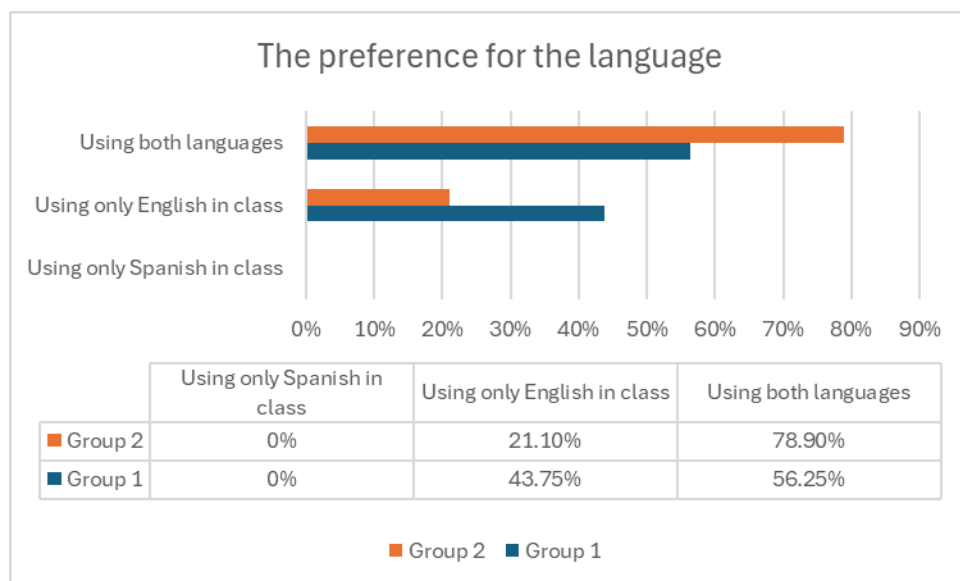


Figure 2. The preference for the language use.

Thus, these results show the difference between these two groups. On the one hand, students belonging to group 1 mostly prefer to use only English in class. This can be related to the fact that, as it was observed, the amount of Spanish used by the teacher of group 1 is scarce, therefore the students are already used to using English all the time.

On the other hand, students from group 2 are used to using both English and Spanish on a daily basis, which is why the majority of the class claims to prefer the use of both languages. The preference for using both languages in group 2 aligns with the premises of translanguaging (Cummins, 2019, Cenoz & Gorter, 2020, García & Wei, 2014), since it advocates for the use of both languages.

In sections 2, 3 and 4, the questions of the survey were all presented with a Likert scale from 1 to 4 for students to choose what number fits their answer best, 1 being the answer that represents “never” and 4 the number that represents “always”.

In the second section, in question 2, the students were asked if the use of Spanish in classes facilitated their understanding of the class contents. Figure 3 shows the responses to this question.

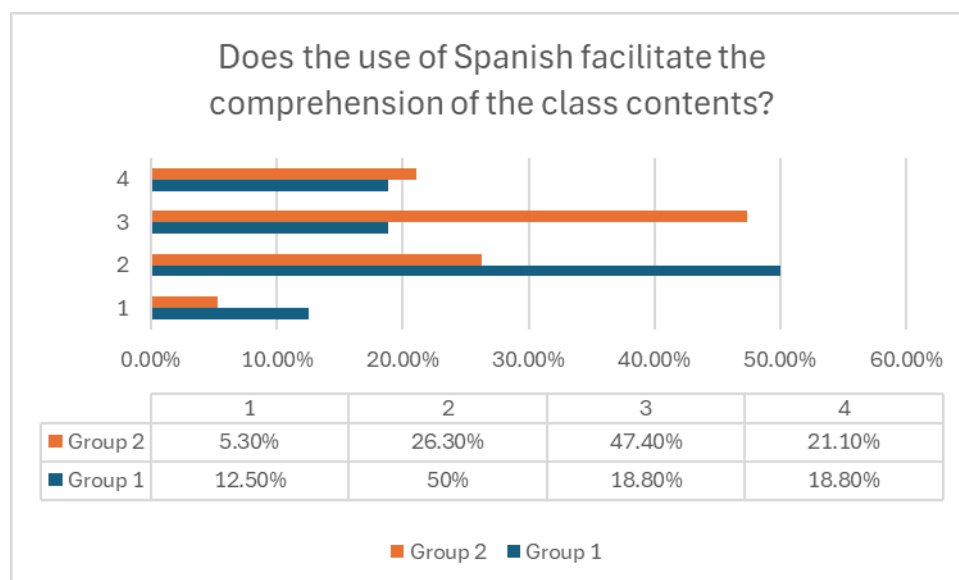


Figure 3. Does the use of Spanish facilitate the comprehension?

As shown in figure 3, in group 1, 50% of the students marked the number two, meaning that, generally, Spanish does not necessarily facilitate their comprehension. The mean of the responses to this question is 2.44, which shows that, although it is not always strictly necessary, the students belonging to this class sometimes require the use of the L1 in order to better comprehend the contents.

Group 2 shows similarities in their opinions. As shown in figure 3, in this question, the most selected number was 3, which was selected by 47.4% of the group. The results

shown in figure 3 for group 2 are a mean of 2.88. This answer was selected by 68.5% (i.e., the sum of answers 3 and 4) of the participants, which indicates that for more than half of the participants in this group, the use of Spanish facilitates their understanding.

If group 1 and group 2 are compared, it can be observed that in both cases, they do not reject the use of L1 Spanish when they need to comprehend the content. However, since only 37.6% of the students selected 3 and 4, group 1 seems to require it somewhat less than group 2.

These results can be justified considering the proficiency of the students. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, group 1 has a higher understanding of the FL, whereas the proficiency of group 2 is lower. For this reason, the students belonging to group 2 can take advantage of the L1 as a cognitive linguistic support, which can contribute to their comprehension (Cummins, 1991). Similarly, this result is in line with translanguaging pedagogy, because it provides students with additional cognitive support, according to Cenoz & Gorter (2017). Moreover, Spanish is used more in group 2 because, as Shin et al. (2019) claimed, the L1 should be used more with students with lower proficiency.

To further explain the results obtained above, students were asked specific questions related to the students' point of view towards the use of Spanish in class. In questions 3 and 4 and 10-18 students belonging to both groups were asked about how they felt towards the use of Spanish in class in terms of how it affected their confidence, their motivation to participate in class and to keep learning the language, and their learning process. These questions can be found in appendix 1.

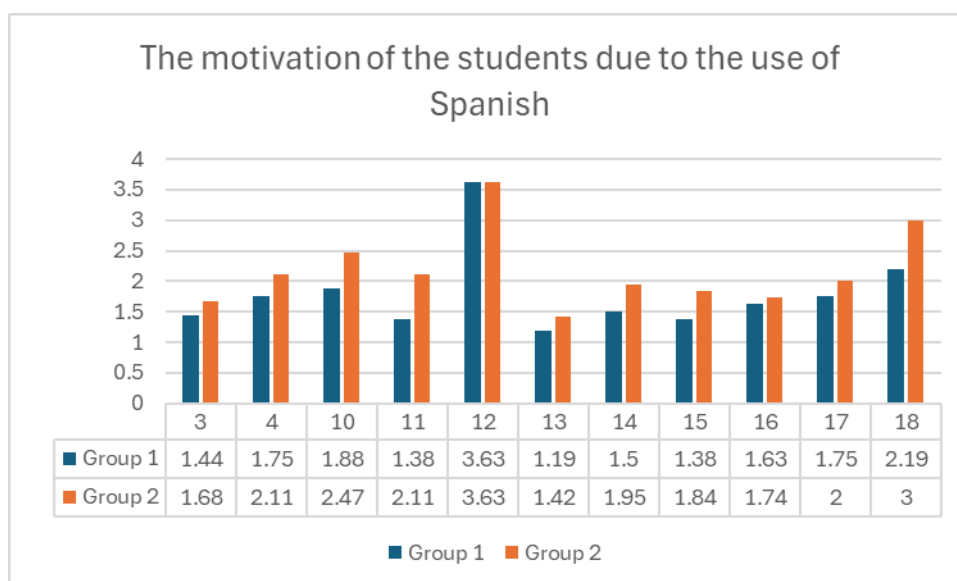


Figure 4. The motivation of the students

As shown in figure 4, what the answers provided to these questions seem to indicate is that even though the results show that both groups generally do not require the use of Spanish in the class, some students belonging to group 2 seem to rely on Spanish in order not to feel lost and follow the class, to feel motivated to keep learning, and to participate actively in class. The means obtained show that there are differences between the two groups, which indicates that generally, in group 1, the students have a higher proficiency and do not need the use of Spanish in class in order to be confident to participate, to feel motivated, and to understand the content.

Similarly, in the case of group 2, the results in figure 4 indicate that, even though students claim generally not to feel lost in class, Spanish might contribute to their motivation and their confidence on specific occasions, probably when the content is more challenging. These results are in line with Macaro (2001), whose study showed that students turn to the L1 when they deal with complex concepts, which contributes to comprehension and the negotiation of meaning. Moreover, this can be explained if it is taken into account that, as it was observed, the teacher of this group uses both English and Spanish in class. For this reason, students could rely on the clarifications in their L1 (i.e., Spanish) in order to understand the explanations in EFL. What is more, Cummins (2019), Cenoz & Gorter (2020), and García & Wei (2014) claim that, following the premises of translanguaging, clarifications in Spanish can create a supportive environment for students in which they feel more confident to participate actively in the

classroom. This can be interpreted in terms of the AFH proposed by Krashen (1982:31). In fact, these statements are in line with what two of the students belonging to group 2 added in question 25 (an open question). They mentioned that the use of Spanish helps them understand English better, and that it could also contribute to promote class participation, since they feel more supported.

In questions 14 and 15 students were asked if they thought that the use of Spanish helped them learn faster and if it benefits their learning process respectively. As can be seen in figure 4, in group 1 the mean for question 14 is 1.5, while in group 2 the mean is 1.95. These results suggest that most of the students of both groups generally do not consider Spanish as a tool to enhance their learning process, although in group 2, some students might consider it useful. Similarly, for question 15, the mean is 1.38 for group 1 and 1.84 for group 2. These results imply that almost half of the participants of this group do not consider Spanish useful to learn faster, although some might require it when learning new and complex contents. The results to these two questions can be interpreted considering that students might acknowledge that the use of Spanish does not accelerate their learning process if it is used excessively, but some might require it on some occasions. For example, it could be used in order to make sure that the contents are understood and not learned incorrectly and to enhance comprehension (Purnama et al., 2022). This interpretation is supported by the claim provided by one of the students of group 2 in question 25 (an open question). Here, they claimed that if Spanish is used too much, they could get confused when using English, and that therefore, it should be used only when it is necessary.

Furthermore, in question 18, the students were asked if they thought that a combination of both languages would benefit their learning process. As shown in figure 4, in this question, we can appreciate a clear difference between both groups. In the first group, the mean is 2.19, which means that more than half of the class does not think that the use of both languages could be beneficial for them. This result might be, once again, due to their proficiency level. Since they are considered advanced learners, some students in this group believe that using both languages might be, in fact, negative for their learning process. This result is in line with what one student claimed in question 19, where they could add any further comments. In this question, one student claims that using English all the time enhances their learning process and it also helps them get used to using the language. Similarly, this result is also supported by what one student added in question

25. This student claimed that English should be used most of the time so that students can improve their pronunciation and their confidence. In contrast, the mean for group 2 is 3, which shows that most of the class agrees that mixing English and Spanish could enhance their learning process. This could be justified with the fact that, as it was observed, group 2 is used to using some Spanish in their classroom and, even though some claim not to feel lost when Spanish is not used, others rely on clarifications in order to follow along (Purnama et al., 2022).

From questions 5 to 9, students were asked if they thought that the use of Spanish should be limited to certain occasions such as to the explanation of some activities (question 5), to the explanation of grammar (question 6), if it should not be limited or if it should be used all the time (question 7), if it should be limited to the needs of some students (question 8), or if it should be limited to the explanation of complex exercises (question 9) (for the exact questions asked, see appendix 1).

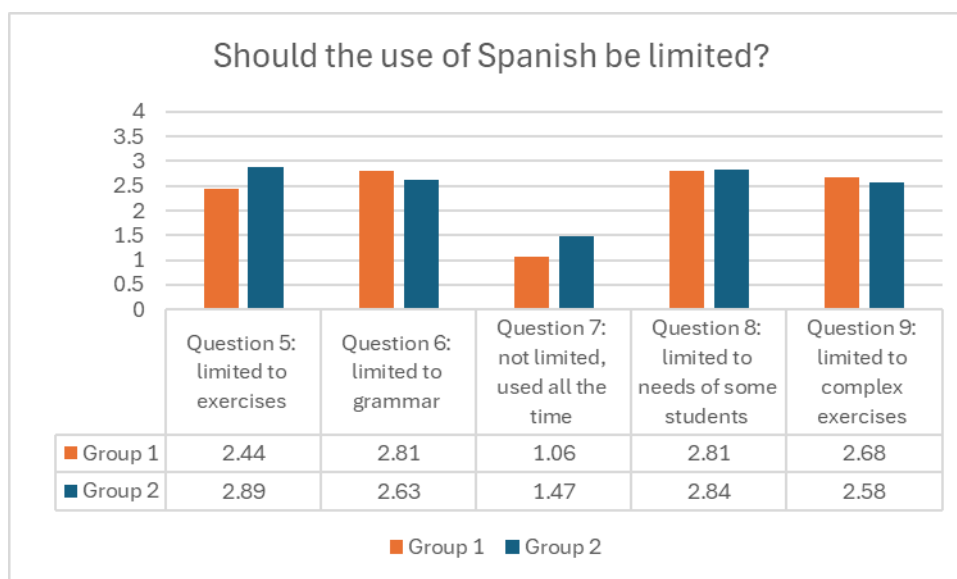


Figure 5. Should Spanish be limited?

As can be seen in figure 5, the question with the lowest mean is question 7, which is 1.06 for group 1 and 1.47 for group 2. This shows that participants from both groups generally agree that Spanish should in fact be limited and not used all the time. These results are related to the Krashen's (1982) IH, in the sense that the students are aware of the importance of receiving input in the FL to become proficient in the language.

The highest means are in question 8, which are 2.81 for group 1 and 2.84 for group 2. These results show that both groups consider important that Spanish is used depending on the needs of the students. For group 1, this result indicates that for these students, the situation proposed in question 8 is when Spanish should be used the most. This result aligns with what students belonging to group 1 claimed in question 19. Regarding this issue, we can highlight one response that said that the use of Spanish does not benefit them, but they think that it should be used sometimes with those students who do not feel so comfortable with the use of English in class. Similarly, in group 2, one student claimed that Spanish should be used more so that those students who have a hard time with English can understand the explanations in class and improve their competence, which also supports this result.

However, in the case of group 2, the highest mean is in question 5, which is 2.89, as can be seen in figure 5. This indicates that students belonging to group 2 require Spanish the most in order to complete the exercises.

Both groups showed that Spanish could also be considered when explaining grammar, which is question 6. In the case of group 1, the mean is the same as in question 8 (2.81), which indicates that, for this group, Spanish is the most useful both to cover the needs of some students and for explaining grammar. For group 2, the mean of this question is 2.63, which shows that more than half of the class considers the use of Spanish for explanation of grammar important. Lastly, in question 9, the mean is 2.68 for group 1 and 2.58 for group 2, which shows that both groups consider important the use of Spanish for the explanation of complex exercises. These results show that, even though both groups agree that Spanish should not be used excessively, there are certain occasions in which it could be useful for clarification, especially when contents are more complex (grammar and difficult exercises) and when some students require it.

In the fourth section, students are asked five questions related to the reality of their classroom. As can be seen in figure 6, most of the questions show similar results for both groups. However, these results do not correspond with what the participants from group 2 have previously answered regarding the use of the L1 in the classroom. Similarly, the results do not seem to match with what was observed in the description of the groups and their exposure to the L1 classroom. These results can be justified considering that, even though group 2 uses Spanish more than group 1, they can be more used to those dynamics

and therefore they do not find it odd when Spanish is used and, thus, they do not think that Spanish is used excessively. In fact, students' perceptions on the combination of L1 Spanish and EFL in the classroom align with translanguaging practices (García & Wei, 2014).

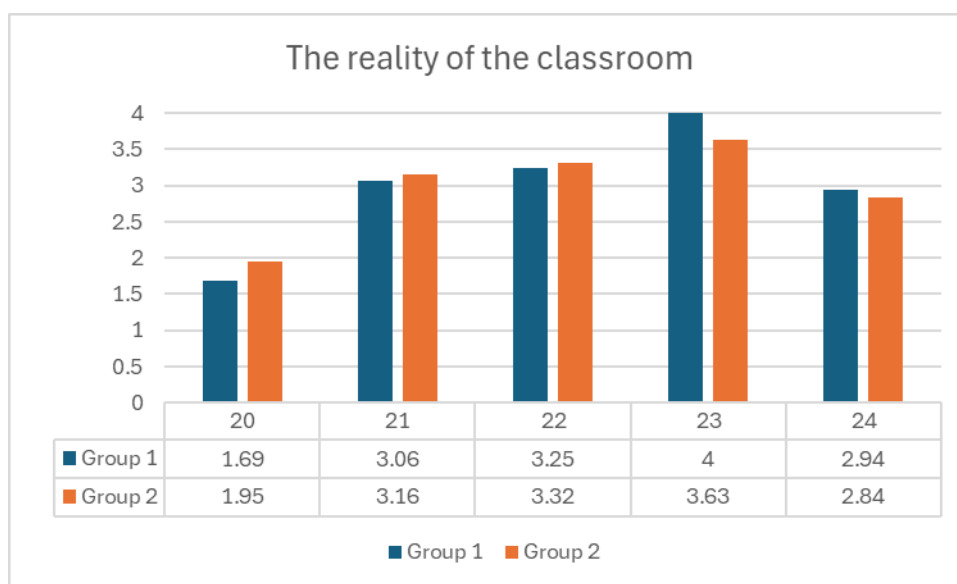


Figure 6. The reality of the classroom

However, there are some questions in this section that show differences between the two groups. In question 20, students were asked if their teacher uses mostly Spanish in the classroom. As shown in figure 6, in group 1, the mean is 1.69, which shows that most participants agree that their teacher does not use mostly Spanish in class. This result corresponds with the fact that, as it was observed, this group's English teacher barely uses Spanish in class, only in very specific occasions (e.g., making some announcements). In fact, this result is supported by one of the responses given by one of the students of group 1 in question 25, who claimed that they use Spanish only when it is necessary and that English is used most of the time in the class, which they think enhances their oral production. In group 2, the answers are more diverse. The mean of this question is 1.95, which implies that most of the participants agree that the teacher does not use mostly Spanish in class, but some acknowledge that their teacher does use Spanish sometimes. These results are in line with the premises of Shin et al. (2019), who claim that the L1 should be used with students with lower proficiency levels. According to Shin et al. (2019), lower proficiency students often struggle with following instructions and learning

new concepts in the FL. Therefore, the L1 can enhance the learning outcomes. Similarly, by using the L1 teachers can reduce the cognitive overload of the students. This practice can help them focus on the learning of new concepts instead of struggling with understanding the instructions in the FL. Moreover, this can help increase the confidence of the students. When students are allowed to use the L1, they might feel more comfortable in the classroom, which can lower their anxiety.

Also, in question 23, students were asked if they think it is important that the teacher uses English in a fluent and accurate way. As it can be seen in figure 6, in the case of group 1, 100% of the students selected 4, which shows that they all agree on the importance of the competence of the teacher. On the other hand, in group 2 the answers differ slightly. The mean for this question is 3.63, which shows that most of the class agrees with group 1. The difference in these results show that, even though the mean of group 2 is slightly lower than the mean of group 1, both groups agree that the teacher should be competent and proficient in the language.

5. Relevance with Sustainable Development Goals

The Royal Decree (RD) 822/2021 establishes the organization of university education in Spain and aligns degrees with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the 2030 Agenda. Specifically, Article 4 of RD 822/2021 highlights the need for university education to promote the values of sustainability, gender equality, and respect for cultural diversity, among others.

This dissertation related to some of the SDG. First, it is related to SDG 4, which is quality education. This study addresses pedagogical strategies that can improve the quality of education. By highlighting how L1 can facilitate understanding of complex concepts and reduce student anxiety, this work contributes to creating a more inclusive and effective learning environment. Similarly, the thoughtful integration of the L1 can help students develop a deeper understanding of the different grammatical structures and vocabulary of the FL, which helps them enhance their communicative competence.

Moreover, this dissertation also contributes to reducing inequalities, which is SDG 10. It can contribute to the integration of more inclusive pedagogical practices by taking into account the role of the L1 in FLT. Specifically, this SDG is relevant for students from diverse backgrounds, who might feel more supported and included if their native language is considered. Similarly, this dissertation relates to SDG 5, which is gender equality. By exploring how the L1 can be used to support students with different proficiency levels, this study has the potential of reducing educational barriers for all students, including those related to gender, by providing equal access to understanding.

Furthermore, this study can contribute to promoting intercultural awareness, which is related to SDG 16. By considering the use of L1 in the FL classroom, this research can also provide greater understanding and respect for cultural differences, promoting a peaceful and just learning environment.

Lastly, this dissertation also relates to SDG 17, which is “partnership to achieve the goals”. This study can foster collaboration among teachers and educators to develop more effective and inclusive FLT strategies, thus contributing to a more sustainable education.

All in all, considering that this dissertation promotes effective and inclusive pedagogical practices, it contributes to offering a quality education that respects and values cultural diversity, favors gender equality, and reduces inequalities.

6. Conclusions

Analyzing data from students' perspectives on the use of L1 (Spanish) in EFL classes provides important insights into the factors that lead to language learning and how they affect the learning processes, motivation and confidence of the students. The preferences and opinions of the two groups of learners in the study reveal differences in their attitudes towards L1 use and the impact these attitudes have on their FL learning experiences.

The first results of the questionnaire show differences between the two groups in terms of language preferences in the classroom. More than half of group 1 prefers to use only English (56.25%), while the majority of group 2 prefers to use both languages (78.9%). These differences may be due to different teaching methods and students' English proficiency levels. Group 1 teachers reportedly use Spanish sparingly, which is consistent with students' preference to only receive input in English. This indicates that these students are more familiar with and may feel more comfortable in English immersion environments. On the other hand, group 2, which combines the two languages from time to time, shows some students' dependence on Spanish for a better understanding and comfort in the learning process.

When assessing whether the use of Spanish can improve the understanding of the course content, the results also show differences between the two groups. Group 1, with a mean response of 2.44, indicates a certain need for Spanish to aid understanding, while group 2 (mean 2.88) indicates greater reliance on L1 for understanding. This is consistent with Cummins' (1991) theory that learners with low FL proficiency benefit from using L1 as cognitive support. Shin et al. (2019) supports the use of L1 for low-proficiency students, confirming that it helps reduce cognitive stress and improve the effectiveness of the learning process by allowing students to focus on new material without having to deal with FL instructions.

In relation to the motivation and confidence of the students, figure 4 shows that although students do not need Spanish to be motivated or confident, group 2 has a greater need for L1 to avoid feelings of loss and maintain motivation. This means that Spanish provides a supportive environment, especially when dealing with more complex topics. This observation is in line with Macaro (2001), who found that L1 helps in understanding and selecting meaning when students encounter complex concepts. Krashen's (1982)

AFH also supports this, suggesting that a supportive environment and L1 use can sometimes reduce students' anxiety and improve their willingness to participate.

The answers to questions 14 and 15 showed that no group strongly believed that Spanish accelerated the learning process. However, Group 2 showed slightly higher perceptions of occasional use. This suggests that even if excessive reliance on L1 is not beneficial, strategic use of Spanish can avoid misunderstandings and ensure correct understanding, as supported by Purnama et al. (2022).

The answers to the questionnaire on specific aspects of the use of the L1 (questions 5-9) indicate that both groups agree to limit the use of Spanish and offer methods and explanations of high quality for the use of the Spanish language according to the students. It has been shown to provide complex exercises and grammar. These results show the importance of using L1 strategies to solve specific problems without compromising total immersion in the FL. They align, in fact, with Krashen's (1982) IH, which emphasizes the need for extensive exposure to the FL for the acquisition of the language.

The answers in the fourth section show the students' reflections on the reality of the classroom. Specifically, group 1 prefers to reduce the use of Spanish by teachers, while group 2 showed a more balanced approach. These differences are similar to the recommendations of Shin et al. (2019) on L1 use by low-proficiency students. Both groups also recognize the importance of teachers' English proficiency. This view highlights the important role of competent teachers who provide more effective authentic language models in language learning.

In summary, the results show that both groups of students are aware of the strategic benefits of using their L1, but their needs and preferences differ according to their level of proficiency and classroom experiences. Proficiency group 1 prefers an English-only environment, while group 2 benefits from a balanced use of both languages to promote understanding and motivation. These results highlight the importance of adapting language teaching to students' proficiency levels and suggest that flexible approaches that incorporate the use of L1 strategies can improve the overall learning experience. This idea is highly supported by the new tendencies in the translanguaging pedagogy.

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8. Appendix 1: Questionnaire.

Spanish version	English version
SECCIÓN 1	SECTION 1
¿Cuál es tu nivel de inglés?	What is your English level?
¿Cuánto tiempo llevas estudiando inglés?	How long have you been studying English for?
SECCIÓN 2	SECTION 2
1. ¿Cuál de estas opciones crees que es mejor? a. Hablar solo español en clase. b. Hablar solo inglés en clase. c. Utilizar ambos idiomas.	1. Which of these options do you think is best? a. Speak only Spanish in class. b. Speak only English in class. c. Using both languages.
SECCIÓN 3	SECTION 3
2. ¿Crees que el uso del español te facilita la comprensión de los contenidos de la clase de inglés?	2. Do you think the use of Spanish facilitates the comprehension of contents in the English class?
3. ¿Te sientes perdido si el español no se usa en clase?	3. Do you feel lost if Spanish is not used in class?
4. ¿Crees que el uso del español te motiva más a participar en clase?	4. Do you think the use of Spanish encourages you to participate more in class?
5. ¿Crees que el uso del español debería limitarse a la explicación de ejercicios en general?	5. Do you think that the use of Spanish should be limited to the explanation of exercises in general?
6. ¿Crees que el uso del español debería limitarse a la explicación de la gramática?	6. Do you think the use of Spanish should be limited to the explanation of grammar?
7. ¿Crees que el uso del español no debería limitarse, sino que habría que utilizarlo en todo momento?	7. Do you think the use of Spanish should not be limited and that it should, in fact, be used all the time?

8. ¿Crees que el uso del español debería limitarse a las necesidades de algunos alumnos en concreto?	8. Do you think the use of Spanish should be limited to the needs of certain students?
9. ¿Crees que el uso del español debería limitarse a la explicación de ejercicios complejos?	9. Do you think the use of Spanish should be limited to the explanation of complex exercises?
10. ¿El uso del español te motiva a seguir aprendiendo inglés porque te sientes con más confianza?	10. Does the use of Spanish encourage you to keep learning English because you feel more confident?
11. ¿El hecho de que el profesor utilice el español te anima a ti a usarlo también?	11. Does the fact that the teacher uses Spanish encourage you to use it as well?
12. ¿Te sientes cómodo cuando el profesor utiliza el inglés en clase?	12. Do you feel comfortable when the teacher uses English in class?
13. ¿Crees que el uso del inglés en clase afecta negativamente a tu motivación porque no eres capaz de seguir la clase?	13. Do you think that the use of English in class affects your motivation negatively because you cannot follow the class?
14. ¿Crees que el uso continuo del español en clase de inglés te ayuda a aprender más rápido?	14. Do you think that the continued use of Spanish helps you learn faster?
15. ¿Crees que el uso continuo del español beneficia tu aprendizaje?	15. Do you think the continued use of Spanish benefits your learning process?
16. ¿En ocasiones evitas participar en clase para no tener que hablar inglés delante de tus compañeros y de tu profesor?	16. Do you ever avoid participating in class so that you do not have to speak English in front of your classmates and teacher?
17. ¿Te preocupa cometer errores en inglés delante de tus compañeros y de tu profesor?	17. Are you afraid of making mistakes in English in front of your classmates and teacher?
18. ¿Crees que una combinación de ambos idiomas favorecería tu aprendizaje?	18. Do you think that a combination of both languages would benefit your learning process?

19. ¿Hay algo que quieras añadir sobre cómo te sientes en cuanto a este tema?	19. Is there anything you want to add about how you feel regarding this issue?
SECCIÓN 4	SECTION 4
20. ¿Tu profesor utiliza mayoritariamente el español en clase?	20. Does your teacher use mainly Spanish in class?
21. ¿Tu profesor utiliza el español solo para clarificar contenidos demasiado difíciles?	21. Does your teacher use Spanish only to clarify contents that are too difficult?
22. ¿Crees que la cantidad de español utilizado por parte de tu profesor en el aula se adapta al nivel general de la clase?	22. Do you think that the amount of Spanish used by your teacher in the classroom is adapted to the general competence of the class?
23. ¿Crees que es importante que el profesor utilice el inglés de manera fluida y apropiada?	23. Do you think it is important that the teacher uses English in a fluent and appropriate way?
24. ¿Dirías que tu profesor utiliza el español sobre todo con alumnos con menos nivel de inglés?	24. Do you think that the teacher uses Spanish mostly with those students with a lower competence?
SECCIÓN 5	SECTION 5
25. ¿Hay alguna cosa que quieras añadir o comentar sobre este tema?	25. Is there anything you want to add or comment on regarding this issue?

9. Appendix 2: Results spreadsheet

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wSiMYCaMxOipV1SnqHSV4SFX9kKllyYM/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=118148264572487141264&rtpof=true&sd=true>