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Iranian EFL Teachers' (Non-)Strategic Use of L1 in L2 Instruction:

Investigation of Challenges and Influencing Factors.

MA. Thesis

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ABSTRACT

L1 use in L2 instruction has always been a challenge for classroom practitioners, ELT researchers and teacher educators, all over the world. In Iran, also, the use of L1 (Farsi) in L2 (English) instruction is a controversial issue due to some influencing factors that may have negative impacts on the target language usage in EFL classes. To uncover these factors, the present study investigated EFL teachers' knowledge and reasons about the (un)judicious use of L1 in L2 instruction. It also detected the factors which influenced the teachers' actual use of first language in foreign language contexts. That is, the factors that prohibited teachers from maximum use of target language making them resort to non-strategic use of L1 in L2 instruction were systematically investigated. In addition, this study explored the challenges of English use in EFL classes for Iranian EFL teachers. To this end, 100 English teachers, both males and females, at different high schools in Southern Khorasan province in Iran were asked to answer a questionnaire, originally developed by Mohebbi and Alavi (2014). Then, 30 teachers were purposefully selected to probe their views further through semi-structured interview and to observe their classrooms teaching. After the observation, the observed practitioners (15 teachers) were interviewed in which teachers commented on their use of L1 or target language (TL) and discussed the factors shaping their actual teaching practices. One semi-structured interview with a group of EFL teachers (35 teachers in all) was the last phase of data collection procedure. The collected data were analyzed by the frequency distributions of responses accompanied by percentages and content analysis. The results represented that a great majority of Iranian EFL teachers didn't know how to use Farsi strategically at the service of L2 learning. Besides, the findings highlighted that the teachers' reasons for their non- strategic use of L1, the challenges that the teachers faced while using TL in EFL classes, and the influencing factors that prohibited them using L1 strategically, were related to three sources as students, teachers, and context of teaching. It is expected that the findings will provide teachers, student–teachers, educational policy makers, and teacher educators with some implications. By having these challenges and influencing factors in mind, everyone who play a role in EFL teaching domain can think about the best way to use L1 or L2 judiciously and also they can apply the useful strategies to nullify the power of driving forces which push the teachers to overuse L1 in teaching process.

Keywords: Challenges and Influencing Factors, EFL Teachers, L2 Instruction, (Non-) Strategic Use of L1.