

The Use of Turkish in English Preparatory Schools: Where is the Balance?

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ABSTRACT The present study examines Turkish instructors' perception with regard to the role of native language (L1) in language classes. It aims to discover whether these instructors advocate L1 support, and if so, what classroom functions they are likely to use L1 for. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected through an open-ended questionnaire and a five-point Likert questionnaire respectively. Forty-six volunteer language instructors teaching in an English Preparatory school in Istanbul answered the first questionnaire. Twenty-two of these instructors completed the second questionnaire. Several findings merit consideration. First, there was an obvious clash between the school policy, which favored the exclusive use of English, and the beliefs of the majority of the instructors, which favored L1 support. Second, some classroom functions were found to be more prone to L1 use than the others. Third, a considerable number of language instructors used L1 as a compensatory device to deal with the students of low proficiency and motivation. Fourth, an excessive L1 use by some instructors had negative impact on the teaching of the instructors who had strict attitudes towards mother tongue support. The findings underscore the need for applying a more balanced approach to L1 use.