University of Cyprus Department of English Studies

ENG765: MA in TESOL

# The use of the L1 in Second Language Learning in English Institutes of 

## Cyprus

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#### Abstract

This research seeks to investigate whether the L1 should be used in an EFL classroom or if only the L2 is helpful. The study involved two classrooms from an English institute in Cyprus in B1 level according to CEFR. One classroom acquired the role of the experimental group while the other, the control group. The whole experiment lasted 3 lessons as well as the time before and after, for the pre-test and the post-test. At the same time, the classrooms' teachers took part in a structured interview to find out what their opinion is regarding the use of the L1 in the classroom. Quantitative data was collected from the two classrooms and analysed in order to find out which method helped the students score better. The results indicated that while the group using the L1 showed more improvement from the pre-test to the post-test, the group using the L 2 had higher scores in the post -test. This is important since it is evidence that both the L1 does not hinder language learning and that L 2 only helps students improve their language.


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## 1. Introduction

The use of the L1 in second language learning is a controversial subject that language teachers as well as linguists cannot agree on. On the one hand, there are the supporters of the 'monolingual approach' (Pennycook, 1994) who claim that the only way for language learners to fully acquire a language is by using the L2 exclusively and that the use of the L1 can undermine the language learning process. Due to this belief, there have been incorporated guidelines to lessen the use of the L1 in L2 learning in curricula and policies in Europe and Asia (Littlewood and Yu, 2011). On the other hand, there are advocates of the 'bilingual approach' (Kafes, 2011) that support the idea that the L1 is a vital tool in L2 language learning. They support that if the L1 is used wisely in the L2 classroom it can help students develop their linguistic performance (Littlewood and Yu, 2011). In addition, the beliefs of teachers vary as well. There are some teachers who think that the L1 can be beneficial in the classroom while others are strongly against the idea of using the mother tongue with the students since it does not give them enough opportunities to use the target language. Their attitudes seem to depend on their learning experience as well as the learning proficiency of the students. Researchers have tried to prove which approach is true for a long time and with different languages. At the same time, there is not enough information on which method is more effective in Cyprus. More specifically there is not enough information which method is used and which is more beneficial in the context of private English institutes, where students go to learn the language outside of school hours. Inspired by the L1 vs L2 debate in previous research (Tsagari and Georgiou, 2016; Bruen and Kelly, 2017; de la Fuente and Goldenberg, 2022), this study seeks to explore which approach is most helpful in the context of Cyprus where the L2 is English and the L1 is Cypriot-Greek.

### 1.2. Glossary

EFL: The term stands for English as a Foreign Language. It is the study or learning of English by speakers whose native language is not English in countries where the official or most used language is not English (Si, 2019). Similar to this is FL which stands for Foreign Language.

L1: it stands for the first language someone acquires as a child, also known as the mother tongue (Nordquist, 2020).

L2: The term refers to the second language someone speaks or is in the process of learning (Nordquist, 2020).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): It is an approach whose goal is to make learners improve their communicative competence by making them discuss different topics that might have nothing to do with language learning (bvorel, 2021). For example the teacher might start a discussion about preserving the environment which even if it has nothing to do with language learning, helps students use the new language without thinking about it.

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): is a scale used to describe the learners' language ability (Alderson, 2007). The scale starts from A1 which stands for beginners and goes up to C 2 which means that they are as fluent as a native.

### 1.3. Problem Statement

Many students in Cyprus get to experience a double system where in public school, in the morning the English teacher instructs them mostly using the L1, which is Greek and then in the English private institute, in the afternoon the teacher does not allow the use of the mother tongue. This might confuse the students as they do not understand why there is a difference in teaching methods between teachers. At the same time, novice teachers also get confused since they are taught by some
that it is acceptable to use the first language in class while others tell them that they should only speak the second language with the students. Therefore, there seems to be an ambiguity as to which method is more beneficial. This confusion though does not exist only in Cyprus but worldwide with teachers supporting either the $\mathrm{L} 1+\mathrm{L} 2$ method or the L 2 only system.

In many countries, there are language teachers who have different opinions on which method is more beneficial to the students. This means that students worldwide are being taught either by different methods each (L1+L2 or L2 only) or they are being instructed in both methods like in the context of Cyprus. The reason for that is that every teacher has a different opinion based on their own past learning experience or what is imposed on them by the school or institution they work for. This causes students to not know which method to follow and get confused, especially if they are being taught by different teachers, using different methods. Due to the reasons above, a study was conducted to examine the effect of the L1 in an EFL classroom and compare it with a classroom only speaking the second language.

### 1.4. Rationale

Nowadays, even though good marks and high education do not always mean success, people, especially educators or researchers try to find which methods and systems help the students progress. At the same time, parents are also concerned with their child's performance at school, believing that it will lead them to better career options and life (Hoover-Dempsey \& Sandler, 1995). Additionally, teachers keep trying to find the method that is more beneficial for their students. Moreover, in language learning, the question of which language system was more beneficial has always existed by novice as well as more experienced teachers. In different periods of time, research has supported either the L2 only system or the one using the mother tongue as a
scaffolding tool. However, even now in the 21st century, there is no certain answer to teachers on which method helps the students more and gets better results.

In the past, the L2 only method was supported more by both linguists and educators, with the L1 being a forbidden tool that was not allowed in the FL classroom. In later years, educators started using the mother tongue more in order to make the students feel more confident and relaxed. This has created an ambiguity as to which method is better with some teachers using one method and some others the other. When looking at the research, most studies look at the opinion of the teachers and the learners. However, this can be biased from personal experience and convenience. There need to be more studies focused on which method helps the students learn more and to get more accurate results. To achieve that, researchers should not be as focused on the beliefs of students and teachers but on the scores of tests that show which method has helped them improve more.

### 1.5. Purpose of the study

The study investigates the effect of the L1+L2 and the effect of an L2 only system in two EFL classrooms of a private English institute in Cyprus. More specifically, the study aims to determine if vocabulary is learnt better with the assistance of the mother tongue in the lesson or with its absence by testing two EFL classrooms of B1+ level, in which one has to use an L2 only system while the other has to use the mother tongue as well. The aim is to find out if there is a difference in the results of the two systems. To achieve this, the study uses mixed methods to examine the effects, meaning both qualitative and quantitative data was gathered in the form of interviews and post-tests and pre-tests. The results of the study will contribute in the more effective teaching of new vocabulary to language students. Moreover, it will be an addition to the small in number existing research on the teaching styles of Cyprus.

### 1.6. Significance of the study

Even in earlier years there was a confusion as to what should be the role of the mother tongue in the classroom, if it was even allowed. The opinion of language teachers as well as researchers seems to change throughout history with the mother tongue from being the most important tool in language learning, to being something forbidden and thought to hinder the learners' process. However, more recent research shows that the use of the L1 can be actually useful when learning a second language. According to Zulfikar (2019), the use of the mother tongue in the classroom is something that cannot be avoided. It should be noted that adding the mother tongue in the L2 classroom does not mean that it is the only language used and that there is minimal use of the L 2 . The L 1 should be used to manage the class, instruct or explain difficult concepts. Although, due to new methods such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the L1 was disregarded. CLT uses a learner centred approach where students, using the second language, discuss other topics, something that helps them participate more actively in the learning process (Svensk 2020, p. 4). Consequently, teachers started teaching using only the L2 thinking that "the target language system is learned through the process of struggling to communicate" (Brown, 1994, p. 45). The mother tongue was barely used, if at all, and at times being forbidden. The idea is that just like students learn their mother tongue by just listening to the language and having to use it, they can learn a second language the same way. These methods have created a long time debate between teachers as well as researchers about the use of the mother tongue in the L2 classroom. While some believe that the L1 should be completely banned from the classroom throughout the lesson, others do not think that it affects the learning process negatively. Therefore, there is an ambiguity as to which opinion is right, with novice teachers, parents and learners not sure which one is actually correct.

In the present more and more language teachers use the mother tongue as a scaffolding tool.
However, there are still teachers who support that the only language used in an L2 classroom should
be the L2 itself. Therefore, because there is a need for teachers to know whether the mother tongue is beneficial in the L2 classroom, there is a significant need to answer this question.

### 1.7. Summary

This study is done on 10 students in B1+ in a private English institute in Cyprus. The aim of this study is to identify whether an L2 only system or an L1+L2 system helps students improve more in an EFL classroom.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. History of the use of L1 in the classroom

Throughout history, the belief of which approach is more beneficial to the students has been changing. Up until the $19^{\text {th }}$ century, language teachers would use the Grammar Translation Method. This method derived from teaching students Greek and Latin in the $16^{\text {th }}$ century. Students would learn the grammatical rules of the second language and apply them by using drills and by translating the meaning of sentences into and out of the L2 (Cook 2010). However, the method would use manufactured translation from the L1 to teach the L2 grammar and it focused on the development of reading literature and general intellectual development leaving little to no place for speaking, listening or any activities that generally develop communication (Cook 2010). In addition, its supporters believed that it is possible for students to fully acquire the L2 by fixed translation of words and phrases from the L1 to L2 and vice versa. However, by learning fixed translations, the
learners were not as confident when expressing themselves or doing anything other than reading and writing.

Due to these disadvantages, in the late $19^{\text {th }}$ century and beginning of $20^{\text {th }}$ century, the Reform Movement was created in response to the dissatisfaction of the Grammar Translation Method. One of the Reform Movement's advocate, Wilhelm Viëtor, was strongly against this method, emphasising that it avoided speaking, which could be considered one of the most important skills when using a language since communication was the most common reason for learning a new language (Bruen and Kelly 2017, pp. 368-369). As a result of the Reform Movement and its arguments against the Grammar Translation Method actually helping students learn a new language and be able to use it freely, the Direct Method was developed. The Direct Method became very popular in the 1900s and continues to influence language teaching nowadays. In contrast to the Grammar Translation Method's idea that language learners learn the L2 through the translation to L1, in the Direct Method, language learners learn through the L2 directly, similar to the first language acquisition (Krashen, 1988). In other words, this method is trying to imitate the conditions that children have during the acquisition of their first language. To achieve that, any use of the students' L1 is discouraged and all the interactions of the teacher and the students must be in the L2 in order to have more opportunities to learn the L2. The use of the L1 in the classroom ranged from completely forbidden to thinking that its use is 'last refuge for the incompetent' (Koch 1947, p. 271). Therefore, all use of the mother tongue in the L2 classroom was forbidden with both students and teacher only speaking the second language for the whole duration of the lesson.

The Direct Method soon evolved to Audiolingualism (a method in which learning is achieved by repeating drills and basic patterns (Richards and Rodgers 2014, p. 50)) and by the middle of the $20^{\text {th }}$ century, the emphasis of the teaching a second language switched from written language to spoken. However, the idea that children can learn just by natural exposure to the L 2 was challenged by

Chomsky who believed there must be an innate language acquisition device (Chomsky 1965 cited in Machida 2011, p. 741). Then other approaches started emerging which emphasised meaningful input and a naturalistic approach. Approaches such as the Natural Approach (based on the idea of a naturalistic language acquisition (Richards and Rodgers 2014, p. 178)), Suggestopedia (the idea that by using positive suggestion, students would become more receptive Richards and Rodgers 2014, p. 100)) and the Silent Way (method in which the teacher is silent and encourages the learner to have a more active role in language learning (Richards and Rodgers 2014, p. 81)) were developed. Consequently, the instruction of linguistic forms or any use of the L1 were frowned upon in teaching. The second language was the only one existing in the L2 classroom and the mother tongue was pushed to the side. The teachers would instruct, manage the class and make conversation only in the L2.

Nowadays, the mother tongue has emerged in the classroom with the view on it changing once again with researchers re-evaluating the use of the L1 in SL/FL classrooms. More and more teachers now use the mother tongue to help students understand concepts or to manage the class, with its use being accepted by others. According to them, by using the L1, the teachers form a bond with the students who might feel more confident to participate. At the same time, there is a number of researchers who have looked at the use of the L1 and the L2 in when teaching a second language, with different languages and contexts and found that the mother tongue does not affect the students' acquisition (Cook, 2001; de la Fuente \& Goldenberg, 2022; Tsagari \& Georgiou, 2016). According to Widdowson (2003, p. 149), 'our students come to class with one language (at least) and our task is to get them to acquire another one'. He explains that it is hard for students to 'switch-off' their L1. Soon, linguists began to doubt the idea that the use of L1 in the classroom could hinder the learning process of the L2.

Due to this, nowadays there are two opposing views of teaching, those who support the use of the L2 exclusively in the FL classroom and those who believe that the L1 can be helpful to L2 learners.

### 2.2. Advantages of L1

The supporters of the L1 use believe that teachers should use the mother tongue in order to strengthen both the receptive (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing). According to Cook (2001), there are four benefits in the inclusion of the L1 in the FL classroom: a) to explain words or expressions that are not easy to understand or explain, b) to clarify, c) to create bonds with the students and cater to their needs, d) giving the students the opportunity to use both L1 and L2 with ease. When students do not know how to express themselves in the L2, they need to have the option to use the mother tongue. Otherwise, they might not speak up at all due to fear or worry of embarrassment, resulting in them not understanding something or not participating in class. The first language needs to be an option for students when they cannot say what they want in the second language. Additionally, a theory to support the use of the L1 is Vygotsky's cognitive and sociocultural theory which states that the students' L1 can be a tool that provides them with vital scaffolding support (van Lie, 1995). That means that not using the mother tongue might hinder the connection of the new words to prior knowledge which helps the students learn better. Furthermore, one's mother tongue is said to be closely connected to their identity, their personality (Hopkins 1988, p. 18). Therefore, if the L2 learners feel that they are pressured to ignore their L1 they might feel like their identity is threatened which will consequently affect their learning process negatively. Moreover, according to Svensk (2020), by using the first language, students do not need to spend too much effort on understanding the task but can focus more on the exercise.

The mother tongue is also considered to be a sociolinguistic tool in the L2 classroom. It promotes discussion between students and exchange of ideas or help each other (Svensk 2020 p. 4). The first language also helps students engage in conversation when they work together in a task (Zulfikar 2019, p. 45). Students learn to communicate and collaborate with each other when working on a language task by exchanging ideas and strategies on how to approach an exercise. Learning to communicate and work with their classmates is very important since it creates a bond between them that might not have been there if they felt restricted by having to only use the second language to talk to one another. Lastly, according to Cook (2001, p. 412), there cannot be an 'L2 monolingual situation' since at some point every teacher needs to use the mother tongue for some reason such as to explain something, to manage the students' behaviour or just to tell a joke to lighten the atmosphere. This means that the L1 should be used in the EFL classroom to help the students both in pedagogical, psychological and social perspectives.

### 2.3. Advantages of L2 only

The use of only the L2 in an FL classroom is claimed to be beneficial by its supporters since it provides the learners with more opportunities to listen to and speak the second language. The L2 only system is the method where the second language is the only language accepted in the classroom during lessons. It is a common feature in numerous teaching methods since they derive from the Direct Method (Svensk 2020, p. 3). The supporters of this state that if the teachers keep using the L1 as well the students do not feel the need to practice the L 2 which would mean that the level of their English acquisition would not be adequate (Auerbach, 1993). Therefore, the use of L1 in an FL classroom can be harmful to the learning process. The reason for this is because teachers
are considered the primary source of the L 2 which means that they should speak it as much as possible to provide the learners with opportunities to be exposed to the second language. At the same time, by translating the words to them, the teachers make the students accustomed to not having to think in English since there is someone who will translate for them. There are numerous ways for teachers to use the second language to instruct without translating such as using technology like videos and pictures, realia or hand gestures. Teachers can get creative by making up games where the students have to only speak the L2 where they practice the second language and have fun at the same time.

This goes according to Krashen's (1988) 'input hypothesis' students learn the L2 better when they get the most of the L 2 input since by using the mother tongue the quantity of the L 2 will lessen, thus, the opportunities to practice the L2 will lessen as well. The L2 should be used without the interference of the mother tongue that might make students prefer to use it instead of the language they are learning. It is easy for students to get used to speaking their first language and just let the teacher explain everything. While this might not be so bad when doing listening or a grammar task, speaking, which is a very important skill in language is learning, is not practiced. Students do not have the chance to develop the ability to speak in the L2 without having to pause and use their L1. Furthermore, while some might argue that during the first years of learning, the L1 can be beneficial since the students are not yet able to only use the L2, as they become more and more experienced the use of the mother tongue should be lessened and give way to only the L2 in order to become accustomed to an environment where the native language is not an option. This will get them used to reality where even if the students find it hard they cannot switch back to the L1 if they want to since the other speaker might only speak the second language. Therefore, the "only English" ideology also prepares them for communication with speakers of the L2 in reality. Additionally, they develop confidence using the second language. They learn to not feel self-conscious or
embarrassed when speaking the L2. The students accept that even if they do make mistakes in the classroom, it is alright because the goal is to learn to communicate and the mistakes will be corrected.

### 2.4. L1/L2 in the Greek and Cypriot setting

In Cyprus, due to its history as well as globalisation, English has become a requirement in order to find employment, to advance academically or just to live everyday life. This means that it is important to keep researching how to help English learners develop their language skills better and more efficiently. However, in the context of Cyprus and Greece, the use of the L1 in the classroom is a topic that has not been researched enough. In Greece and Cyprus, L1 is Greek and the L2 that we are interested in this study is English.

Giannikas (2011) worked with public and primary schools and found out that teachers were reluctant to use the L2 and mostly used the L1 for instruction, social needs and explanation of grammar, with L2 only existing in the course book corrections and games. Likewise, Vassiliou (2010), conducted a study in a public primary school and discovered that teachers would use the L1 to instruct grammar, classroom management and to explain difficult concepts. The teachers explained that they believed it is impossible to teach an EFL classroom by only speaking in the L2 and admitted that the level and age of students was an important factor. In another study by Copland \& Neokleous (2010), it was stated that English teachers in Cyprus use the L1 quite a lot in the classroom although they usually under-report the amount of mother tongue they use. Therefore, they do not have a balance between the mother tongue and the second language when teaching. Lastly, in a research by Tsagari and Diakou (2015) they examined secondary school students' and teachers' opinions and attitudes towards the use of the L1 and the L2 in two public schools in

Cyprus. They concluded that students prefer to use the L1 in the class as it makes them more comfortable and assisted them when they could not understand difficult concepts. On the other hand, the teachers' opinions were divided.

### 2.5. English institutes in Cyprus

In Cyprus, in addition to the education they receive in public schools in the morning, students also receive education in private English institutes, also known by the locals as 'frontistiria' (Lamprianou \& Lamprianou, 2013; Tsagari \& Georgiou, 2016). These are extra courses that usually take place during the afternoon and provide students with supplementary education in English for different ages. There are private institutes for a plethora of subjects like maths, physics or languages such as English. In the English institutes, they do not usually follow the curriculum used in public schools but mostly teach and prepare students for the high stakes exams of English such as IELTs or GCSEs. There are various English institutes in Cyprus and it is uncommon for students to not go to them. The reasons for their popularity are that they receive further instruction on the language and that in contrast to public schools, the groups are small (usually up to 10 students per group) which benefits the students since the teacher can give them more attention which consequently means that they receive more support. However, since they are private organisations, each one follows their own teaching methods. Some English institutes might support the use of the L2 only method, while others feel more comfortable using the L1 in their teaching. According to Tsagari \& Georgiou (2016), even though there are many English institutes in Cyprus, there is not enough information about the teaching methods used. What little is known from the literature is that they mostly use more traditional methods such as Grammar Translation Method and that they usually end up using the L 1 for instruction.

### 2.6. Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a huge part of language learning. The richer someone's vocabulary, the easier it is for them to use the language and express themselves in various ways. It is what allows people to express ideas and thoughts accordingly. Therefore, teachers focus a lot on it when teaching a language. This is the focus of the present study, using it to check the students' understanding with the two methods, L1 and L2 only. But what is vocabulary? According to McArthur et al. (2018), it is a list of words used by someone on a certain subject or for a specific purpose. There is a huge number of words in each language. In English, there are 54,000 word families making vocabulary a very important thing to learn and develop (Schmitt \& Schmitt, 2020). For a non-native speaker to understand something said or written, it is suggested that they must know $95 \%$ of the words in it, which if it is calculated, language learners must know approximately 7,000 words (Nation 2006 in Schmitt \& Schmitt, 2020). Vocabulary is important for all the skills, from understanding words you listen or read, to producing them in an oral or written form.

### 2.6.1 Teaching vocabulary

The teaching of the vocabulary was not always as important as the teaching of grammatical rules, writing and reading which have been considered essential by teachers as well as scholars from the past (Richards, 1976). However, nowadays there is a lot more attention given to it. Students are being taught a large number of words, synonyms and antonyms in order to be able to use them when speaking or writing. They learn a variety of words for the same meaning to be able to express themselves better. Due to this newfound attention to the vocabulary, scholars have been trying to find which methods were best to teach it in order for students to actually learn it. It is important to keep in mind that while words can be separate, they cannot exist alone (Richards, 1976). The
opinions on the teaching of vocabulary have been controversial with some supporting that there should be direct translation to the mother tongue while others believe that the meaning of the words should be elicited by the students in order to remember them better and not have to think about the translation when using the words later.

### 2.6.2. Testing Vocabulary

There are various ways to test whether the students have learnt the vocabulary words they have been taught. First of all, the teacher should decide whether the assessment is receptive or productive.

Receptive vocabulary assessment is when students do not have to produce language, either spoken or written (Waring, 1999). There are usually options and the students have to select the right one or put the given words in the correct place. Some examples of receptive vocabulary assessment are multiple choice exercises, to put the words in the correct sentence or definition. This type of exercises are mostly used to check that students can recognise the words' meaning and differentiate it from others. Teachers mostly use receptive vocabulary tests either before actually teaching the new vocabulary to check whether some of the words are already known by the students or during the first stages of teaching it to help them practice while the new information is still fresh and not enough used in order to use it more practically.

Productive vocabulary assessment is when students have to use the vocabulary in a more active way (Waring, 1999). Students usually have to produce either written or spoken language to show that they have learnt it and can use it more freely. Examples of productive vocabulary assessment can be to write sentences or paragraphs using the new words and changing the new words' form. Teachers use productive vocabulary assessment after they have taught the new vocabulary and have given the
students enough opportunities to practice it, to check whether they can use it in essays or conversations.

### 2.7. Research questions

In these examples above, we see that in Cyprus there is a bigger dependence on the L1 as well as a hesitance to use the L2 that much. There seems to exist a belief that students cannot learn if the instruction is only in the L2. However, most of the studies in Cyprus are interested in what the teachers do in class or what the teachers' and students' opinion of the use of the L1 in class are. This study seeks to find out, not just their opinion, but also to test if the use of the L1 assists in language learning or not. The goal is to answer two questions:

1. What are the teachers' opinions on the use the $\mathrm{L} 1 / \mathrm{L} 2$ in the classroom?
2. Apart from what they believe is helpful, are students getting better or worse scores in a classroom that exclusively uses the L2 in comparison to one that uses the L1 as well?

To answer these two questions, the study is going to use a mixed method research design in order to validate and compare the findings through the use of other data sources. That means that instead of just exploring the teachers' opinion on the subject (by conducting structured interviews), there is also going to be a comparison of scores between two classes, one using the L2 exclusively and one using both L1 and L2. The hypothesis of this study is that the group of students using an L2 only method are going to show more improvement than the group using the mother tongue as well.

### 2.8. Summary

To summarise the literature review, the role of the mother tongue has been questioned by language teachers for centuries. Researchers have created numerous methods that apply either the $\mathrm{L} 1+\mathrm{L} 2$ method or the L2 only system. However, even after all this time, there is still not a certain answer on whether the L2 should be used exclusively in the classroom or whether the first language can have a beneficial role. Finding the most helpful method is what is going to help the students acquire the second language better and become fluent in it.

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Materials

The materials used in this experiment were a pre-test of the vocabulary to check if there is preexisting knowledge of the words, a post-test of the same vocabulary to test whether the students learnt the words and structured interview questions for the teachers of the groups.

### 3.1.1. Pre-tests

The pre-tests were created using the vocabulary given by their coursebook, after studying and analysing the exercises provided in it. The exercises are focused on the students' knowledge of the meaning of the words instead of their use. Since it is expected that they do not yet know most of them, the answers are provided to them either in the form of a multiple choice or matching the words with the correct definition.

### 3.1.2. Post-tests

The post-tests were also created by analysing the coursebook as well as taking in consideration the students' level, which is B1+. The exercises here are focused on the students both knowing the meaning of words and how to use them. This was achieved by creating exercises that asked students to write sentences that showed the meaning of words and by asking them to write a paragraph.

### 3.2. Participants

The study was conducted with 10 students ( 7 female and 3 male) and two teachers (both female). The students were studying in the 2023 spring term in a private English institute in Cyprus. The age of the student participants is 12 or 13 years old. The students' proficiency level was intermediate, that is B1+ according to CEFR. The students' proficiency level was determined according to the institute's curriculum. The participants are separated in two classes. The first class, which consisted of 5 students (2 female and 3 male) was called L2 Group. The second class, which consisted of 5 students ( 5 female and 0 male) was called Ll Group. Participation in the study was optional. The students were informed about the study and its purpose, and they also received a consent form with details about the procedure. Those who decided to participate committed to take two tests, one at the beginning and one at the end of the study as well as participate in two lessons with their teacher on a specific unit. Students who did not want to sign up for the study still participated in the lessons since it was part of their curriculum but did not take the two tests and were not included in the study. Additionally, there were also students who agreed to participate in the study and completed the pre-test but did not attend either the next lesson, where some of the vocabulary was taught or were absent the day of the post-test. These students were also excluded since their scores would not be valid.

### 3.3. Procedure

The study was conducted over the course of two weeks and took overall three lessons. The L2 Group was taught completely in English. The students in the L2 Group were instructed prior that during that lesson they could only use the L2 (English) with the teacher and their classmates. The teacher was instructed to use only the L2 throughout the lesson. If the students slipped up or did not know what to say in English, the teacher would ask them again or help them express their ideas without either of them using the mother tongue.

The L1 Group was taught using the assistance of the L1. The students in the L1 Group were told that they were allowed to use the L1 (Greek) when speaking to the teacher or their classmates. The teacher also used the mother tongue to teach the new vocabulary in English by translating them in the L1. Compliance with the condition for each group was monitored through classroom observations.

In order to test their knowledge of the vocabulary before the lessons, a pre-test was administered to the students. The test was receptive, which as explained before, means that it tested the students' ability to match the vocabulary words with the correct definition (see Appendix A). The unit that they were taught was about technology. 10 vocabulary words were chosen from the unit and tested which are server, technophobe, crashed, experiment, podcast, hardware, webcam, satellite dish, software and broadcast. After the pre-test, the teachers proceeded with the instruction of the unit according to the conditions that they had to follow. The order of the unit was one lesson for the reading, one for the grammar and two for the vocabulary. The lesson for reading was included since it contained the teaching of new vocabulary that was added to the tests that they were given. The lesson on grammar on the other hand was excluded from the study since the study was not
interested in their understanding of grammar. Therefore, the order of the lessons that were included is as follows in Figure 1.


Figure 1: The order of the lessons

Once the third lesson was completed, the students had to take another test, also known as post-test (see Appendix B) to check if they learnt the new vocabulary words. In contrast to the pre-test, the post-test was productive, which as explained before means that they were asked to write sentences as well as a paragraph with the vocabulary words.

### 3.3.1. Lesson 1

In the first lesson, the students had to first brainstorm vocabulary about the unit's topic, which was technology. The coursebook used for the lessons was National Geographic's Close-up for B1+ by Jeremy Bay. Then, they were introduced to the reading text and proceeded to read it and answer comprehension questions about it (see Appendix C). In this text, some of the vocabulary words that were being examined in this study were introduced such as satellite dish and broadcast. The students in the L1 Group were given a direct translation to Greek and saw it in use in the text. The students in the L2 Group also saw the words being examined in the reading text and were also given definitions in English that were then discussed.

### 3.3.2. Lesson 2

In the second lesson, students started the lesson by doing a few exercises to remind them of the new vocabulary from the previous lesson, each group according to the factor they had to follow. After that, they were introduced to some new vocabulary through exercises (see Appendix D). In the L1 Group, students had to complete the exercises after being given the translation to Greek for each word. Then they proceeded to do the exercises with a partner while using the L1. However, the students in the L2 Group had to try to figure out the meaning of the words by doing the first exercise which was to match the words with the right meaning. After they had completed the exercise, the teacher gave them some more examples in English or showed them pictures before allowing them to do the rest of the exercises to practice the new vocabulary. They were also given additional exercises on these words from their workbook.

### 3.3.3. Lesson 3

In the third and last lesson, the students first discussed the exercises they had for homework and the two teachers answered any question regarding the vocabulary in their assigned language system (L1 and L2). Once this was done, the students had to complete a series of the last portion of exercises (see Appendix E). Just like in the previous lesson, the L1 Group were given the translations of the words while the L2 Group were given the opportunity to work on the first exercise and figure out the meaning of the words. It should be noted that in all three lessons the materials the students used introduced more words than the ones examined in the study. However, the 10 vocabulary words being studied were chosen after the researcher had a discussion with the teacher about words that, even if they were introduced in this unit, have come across in the past. Therefore, in the pages of the
book the exercises contain more vocabulary than just these 10 words. At the end of the lesson, the L2 Group teacher separated the students into two teams and gave each a whiteboard. The students had to play a game of picturesque where they had to draw words from the vocabulary they learnt and their classmates had to guess them.

### 3.4. Interview Questions

The interview of the teachers consisted of 5 questions (see Appendix F) with the goal to elicit the teachers' opinion on the use of the L1 in the classroom and whether they find its role beneficial. At the same time, the interview seeks to find out their beliefs on the L2 in the EFL classroom and how much it should be used. The reason for the interview was to find out if the teachers of the two groups that are being examined actually use the L1 and if they do, how much. The two teachers were both interviewed alone, after the lessons were done by the researcher. The interview was structured, which means that the interviewer only asked the questions that were pre-written for this purpose without asking further questions based on the answers of the participants. The reason for this was to keep the interview equal for both teachers as well as time restriction on the participants' part. Lastly, the interview questions were taken from Tsagari \& Georgiou (2016). The decision to take the interview questions was because the subject of the previous study was similar to this one, in the same location and context (this being the private English institute) and they were similar to what this study wants to find out.

### 3.5. Marking criteria

Once the pre-tests and the post-tests were collected, they had to be marked accordingly. In the pretest, the marking was straightforward since it was either a multiple choice or an exercise to match
the words with their definition. In other words, there was only one correct answer. In the post-test, the marking depended on the correct use of the vocabulary words, therefore, grammar mistakes were not taken into consideration. At the same time, since students were instructed to write sentences or a paragraph that showed the words' meaning, sentences that failed to do that were marked as wrong because it could be argued that the students had not actually learnt the words' meaning. Examples of sentences that were marked as wrong are these:

1. Our teacher taught us what a broadcast is last lesson.
2. A lot of people don't know what a broadcast is.

In these examples, even though they are complete sentences, it is obvious that the students did not know the meaning of the word broadcast. Therefore, even if it could be argued that they are correctly written, full sentences, they were marked as wrong.

Additionally, in the second exercise of the post-test, students had to write a paragraph using the words that were given to them in the instructions. However, some students wrote separated sentences as in the first exercise. These sentences were marked as correct, as long as they showed the meaning of the words and made sense. This decision was taken since the goal of this study is to check if the students learnt the words and not if they can follow the instructions.
3.6. Data analysis

As mentioned above, the data collected by the pre-tests and post-tests were analysed by using quantitative methods. The marks of the participants were compared using a two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test in Microsoft Excel. The significance level was set at $\mathrm{p}=.05$. Therefore, to
implement the quantitative part, the results of the two tests were taken from both the L1 and the L2 Groups and compared using the two-way ANOVA test.

At the same time, an unpaired $t$-test of unequal variance was conducted between the pre-tests and post-tests in order to find out whether one group made a better improvement than the other. The reason for doing the unequal variance $t$-test was because it was expected that the L2 Group would have better results than the L1 Group.

After that, the qualitative data was collected in the form of the structured interviews of the teachers. The interviews can be really interesting since through them we can learn different things. As Patton (2002, p. 4) states interviews can get direct quotes from people regarding their expertise, beliefs and experience. The answers were analysed and compared to each other in order to check for differences and similarities.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Teachers' opinion on the use of L1/L2

The first question aimed to explore the opinion of the two teachers that teach the groups that have been used for this study in order to check their beliefs as well as see how this might have affected the groups. As mentioned above, the teachers had to answer five questions about their opinion in the use of the mother tongue and the second language in the classroom. The questionnaire that was used for this purpose was taken by Tsagari and Georgiou (2016, p. 126). At the beginning, both teachers seemed to be strictly against the use of the mother tongue in class. What was surprising though, was that it was observed that while the teachers had many similarities in their answers, there were still some differences in the use of the two languages. The questions as well as a summary of the two teachers' answers can be seen below.

Do you use English only in your EFL classes?

In this question, both teachers seem to agree that in younger levels it is unavoidable to not use the mother tongue since they do not have the skills to communicate and understand the second language yet. However, it is emphasised by both of them that in older levels such as the B1+, which is being studied at the moment, English should be the only language spoken by both the teacher and the students. They mention that B1+ is considered high enough for the students to be able to communicate with each other as well as the teacher only in English and understand almost everything.

What are some of the constraints you face when you try to use English only?

The two teachers seem to both be in agreement that it can be challenging teaching a new grammatical structure when using English only. However, one of the teachers also mentions that this can be a struggle when teaching new vocabulary as well. Especially when it is concepts that cannot be shown from a picture or with realia. If the students fail to understand from the definition they are given or from examples, then the mother tongue, which is a last resort to her, can be used. She also mentions that this is mostly the case with the younger levels that have a limited understanding of the L2 rather than a general problem with all the levels.

Do you think it is significant or essential to use Greek in English classes?

The two teachers do not think it is important to use the L1 in the L2 classroom. In contrast, they believe Greek should only be used for younger levels. One of the teachers also adds that if the
curriculum allows it, they should explain new concepts in other ways even to young students. She suggested that students learn effectively when using illustrations or realia. According to her, the students get very excited, especially when bringing real life objects in class to show them, which makes the learning process even easier. Furthermore, they both mention that while with younger learners it is accepted to use the mother tongue often, as the students grow older the use of Greek should be minimised.

## Do you think that exposure to students' mother tongue deprives students of valuable input?

In this question, the beliefs of the two teachers slightly differ. One teacher believes that the use of the mother tongue does not deprive the students of valuable input, that it can be helpful when trying to explain complicated concepts or grammar structures. She admits that there are words that cannot be explained if the students do not understand the definition or the examples given. However, the other teacher thinks that Greek should only be used when it is completely necessary and only for specific purposes when there is no other option or the students keep not understanding, otherwise it becomes an obstacle in L2 learning since the students learn to need the translation to understand.

When do you use Greek in class and why?

Both teachers said that they mostly use Greek when teaching younger learners that have a limited vocabulary and understanding of English. One teacher mentioned that with younger learners, the mother tongue is used quite a lot, to instruct or to explain words since they do not have a vast enough vocabulary to always get an explanation in English. With older students she states that she only uses it for management reasons such as the students being naughty. However, the other teacher mentions that if it is possible she does not use Greek even with the younger levels. She tries to use
other methods to make the young students understand such as videos, pictures, realia or activities. On the other hand, the second teacher explains that she sometimes uses Greek with older students when there is no other option.

### 4.2. The scores of the L1 Group

Both the pre-test and the post-test of the L1 Group were gathered and marked by the researcher and then the scores were transferred in an Excel file. In Table 1 below, there can be seen the scores of the L1 Group's students in the pre-test and the post-test.

Table 1. L1 Group's scores

| Student | Pre-test | Post-test |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 1 | 3 | 7 |
| 2 | 5 | 6 |
| 3 | 6 | 7 |
| 4 | 7 | 7 |
| 5 | 7 | 8 |

As it can be observed above, almost all the students improved from the pre-test to the post-test with Student 4 being the only exception by remaining the same. Students 2,3 and 5 seem to improve slightly since they only get one point higher in the post-test. Student 1 though seems to have the biggest improvement out of the whole group since they managed get 4 points higher in the post-test when compared with the pre-test. This is commendable since it is evidence that a student who had almost no knowledge of the vocabulary according to the score they got from the pre-test, actually
managed to get a good mark in the pre-test, showing that they actually understood and learnt the new words. In the scores of the L1 Group we can see that with the exception of Student 4, there is improvement.

### 4.3. The scores of the L2 Group

In the same fashion with the L1 Group, the L2 Group's pre-tests and post-tests were also accumulated and marked before being transferred to an Excel file. The scores of the L2 Group in the pre-test and the post-test can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2. L2 Group's scores.

| Student | Pre-test | Post-test |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 7 | 9 | 10 |
| 8 | 8 | 9 |
| 9 | 7 | 9 |
| 10 | 9 | 8 |

In Table 2 it can be observed that all students managed to get high scores in the pre-tests. Students 6, 7 and 8 got one point higher in the post-test, with Student 7 actually managing to get full marks. This however is not so significant since Student 7 got 9 in the pre-test. On the other hand, Student 10 got 1 point less in the post-test. This suggests that while they knew the meaning of most of the words, they could not actively use all of them, which was the point of the post-test. Therefore, even
though the scores of the L2 Group are higher, we do not see the improvement that there is in the L1 Group.

### 4.4. The comparison between the pre-tests.

To answer the second question, several steps were taken. Firstly, the pre-tests of the two groups were compared on their own to check how each group performed in the tests before any actions were taken. By looking at the Descriptive Statistics, we can see how each group performed in the pre-test as a group.

Table 3. The comparison of the pre-tests' scores.

| Group | N | Sum | Mean | SD |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| L1 Group | 5 | 28 | 5,6 | 1,67 |
| L2 Group | 5 | 40 | 8 | 1 |

As shown in Table 3, there is a difference between the pre-test scores of the L1 Group (Mean=5,6; $\mathrm{SD}=1,67$ ) and the L2 Group (Mean=8; $\mathrm{SD}=1$ ) with the latter scoring better than the former. This might suggest that the L2 Group is stronger than the L1 Group in English. However, this does not affect the study since we are going to check how much each group improved and therefore, the higher score of one group does not necessarily affect the other.
4.5. The comparison between the post-tests.

At the same time the scores of the post -test were also compared to check how the two groups performed after the lessons, when they were supposed to have learnt the vocabulary. In the Descriptive Statistics below, we can see whether the two groups improved in the post-test.

Table 4. The comparison of the post-tests' scores.

| Group | N | Sum | Mean | SD |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| L1 Group | 5 | 35 | 7 | 0,71 |
| L2 Group | 5 | 44 | 8,8 | 0,84 |

In Table 4, it is shown that there is still a difference between the scores of the two groups with the L2 Group (Mean=8,8) again scoring better than the L1 Group (Mean=7). These scores suggest that the L2 Group again scored better than the L1 Group and that it is stronger.
4.6. The comparison between the pre-tests and the post-tests.

The results so far show that the L2 Group is stronger than the L1 Group since it has scored higher in both the pre-test and the post-test. However, as shown in Table 3, if you compare the Mean scores of the two groups in both tests, it can be seen that whereas the L2 Group has a higher Mean score,
the L1 Group has made a more significant improvement from the pre-test (Mean=5,6; SD=1,67) to the post-test (Mean=7; $\mathrm{SD}=1,67$ ).

Graph 1. The comparison between the pre-tests and the post-tests scores.


Table 3 indicates that while the L2 Group has better scores, the L1 Group has made a better progress, which is more important since we are seeking to find out which method helps students learn a language better.

### 4.7. ANOVA test.

The second question seeks to find out whether the use of only the L2 in the classroom can help the students obtain better scores. According to the two-way ANOVA test that was performed to compare their pre-test and their post-test, there was no significant difference.

Table 5. The comparison of the pre-tests and the post-tests.


In Table 5 we can see there are not significant differences between the L1 Group's post-test ( $M=7$; $\mathrm{SD}=0,71)$ and L 2 Group's $(\mathrm{M}=8,8 ; \mathrm{SD}=0,84)$. In a similar fashion, the ANOVA test and the unpaired $t$-tests indicated that the difference between the L1 Group $(\mathrm{t}(5)=2,57 ; \mathrm{p}>0,05)$ and the L2 Group $(\mathrm{t}(5)=2,31 ; \mathrm{p}>0,05)$ is not significant Just like the table above, it demonstrates that the p value in both groups is bigger than the significance level (.05). In other words, the scores of the L2 group are not more significant than the scores of the L1 Group. On the other hand, the unpaired ttest shows again that the L1 Group had more improvement from the pre-test to the post-test than the post-test. This indicates that while there is not a significant difference between the scores of the pretests and the post-tests, when compared with each other, there is a difference when comparing the improvement of each group separately.

### 4.8. Observations

During the lessons, the researcher was present to make sure that the assigned type of instruction was maintained throughout the study. This seemed beneficial for the study since it could be observed how the students handled the type of instruction. In the L1 Group, it was obvious from the beginning that the teacher usually never allowed the use of the mother tongue in class. Therefore, the students as well as the teacher were a little awkward at the start, with the teacher or the students
forgetting and using English at some points. However, this did not affect the results since the researcher would remind them if it was needed and the lessons would proceed accordingly. While the teacher did not seem pleased that they had to use Greek so much in class, the students were overjoyed. They seemed to be more confident and would participate or ask questions more often.

In the L2 Group, the teacher seemed pleased that they should only use the L2, a feeling that the students did not seem to share. It was observed that the students would struggle to find the rigt words to communicate or they would forget and use the mother tongue when speaking up or when doing pair work. This suggests that they were not used to being taught in a completely L2 only system. Again, the researcher would remind them that they should not use the first language which means the evidence was not affected by them forgetting. The teacher would prod them to participate in English and would not accept the answer if it was given in Greek, helping them express what they wanted to say only in the L2. Even though, the students struggled a little in the beginning, It could not be said that they could not participate in the lesson or understand what was being said. After some period of getting used to this system, they were able to only speak English during the lessons in the study period.

It was observed that in contrast to the answers in the questionnaire, the teacher in the L2 only Group would use English enough that the students found it a bit hard at the beginning to only speak in the second language. On the other hand, the teacher in the L1 Group seemed to be truthful in the fact that she barely, if at all, use the mother tongue. This is important since sometimes teachers do not answer completely honest in the questionnaires and usually downplay their use of the mother tongue in class (Copland \& Neokleous, 2010)

## 5. Discussion

The aim of the current study was to find out whether the L2 should be the only language used in an EFL classroom in the context of a private English institute in Cyprus or if the mother tongue is beneficial in the teaching of a second language. In addition, it looked at the opinion of the two Cypriot teachers who teach at the English institute. The findings of the first question show that whereas both English teachers support the use of the L2 only in class for older students, such as the B1 classes used for this study, they both admitted that they sometimes have to use the L1 when necessary. This is very interesting since even before the interview it was known that they both strongly supported the use of the L2 only method in class. However, it can be seen that at some point they also use the mother tongue as a scaffolding tool with younger or with older students. It is also observed that each teacher has a different idea on when it is necessary to use the L1. For example, for one teacher it is necessary to use it with younger students who are not yet capable of only communicating in English as well as with younger students when they do not understand in English. However, the other teacher seems to prefer to find ways to show the students the meaning of a word or phrase without using Greek even with younger students. Therefore, while they both expressed their preference for L2 only, they have different views on when it is deemed necessary to apply the L1. This shows that even teachers who are in favour of the L2 only method, sometimes find it necessary to use the mother tongue in order to support the students better. At the same time, each teacher has a different opinion on how much the L1 has to be used even in younger levels that might not be able to communicate only in English.

As for the second question, it was first evident that the students in the L1 Group all improved, with one student showing a tremendous improvement, which is evidence that while they had almost no knowledge of the meaning of the words in the new vocabulary, they were able to learn it and apply them in sentences or a paragraph. On the other hand, the L2 Group might have scored higher but
there was also a student who got a lower mark in the post-test. This is evidence that even if they know the meaning of the words in the new vocabulary, they cannot use all of them in a more active way such as in sentences. This could be evidence that even if the student heard the new vocabulary used by the teacher in the second language, they still needed more practice, either written or oral to be able to produce these words correctly

In addition, the findings indicated that the application of the L1 does not hinder the score of students. At the same time, the L2 only does not seem to have affected the students in a more positive way than the group using the L1 as well. Furthermore, while the findings do not indicate a significant difference between the two tests, it was observed that the L1 Group has made a better improvement than the L2 Group from the pre-test to the post-test. It could be argued that even if the L2 Group had a higher score than the L1 Group in the post-test, the L1 Group improved more, which is the wanted outcome. Accordingly, it could be suggested that only using the L2 might not bring better results and the use of the L1 in the classroom should be readdressed (Yüzlü \& Atay, 2020). Additionally, the use of the L1 as a tool for scaffolding and as a way to connect with the students has also been named 'Language Acquisition Support System and it is suggested that the L1 is commonly used in EFL (Bruner, 1983; Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, it is evident that the L1 does not affect language learning negatively as Pennycook (1994) mentions.

Furthermore, during the lessons of the two groups, it was observed that the L2 Group struggled to maintain the L2 only rule throughout the lesson. Although they had a vast vocabulary, some students found it difficult to have whole discussions with the teacher or their peers in the L2. This anxiety could have affected their performance in class and consequently in the post-tests. This confirms Widdowson's (2003, p. 149) statement that students cannot just 'switch off' their L1. According to Svensk (2020, p. 4), the use of the mother tongue in the L2 classroom reduces students' anxiety as well as 'affective filters', both factors that hinder the L2 learning process. This
is evidence that the L1 not only does not affect the learning of a second language negatively, it actually helps it. Further proof of this is the fact that the L1 Group showed more improvement from the pre-test to the post-test even if they still scored lower than the L2 Group. In contrast, the students in the L1 Group seemed to be more at ease since they were not pressured to only speak in the L2 (which was the normal in that class). They were more confident during the lessons and were not afraid to participate which consequently improved their performance in the post-test when compared to the pre-test. However, we must also take into account the strengths and weaknesses of the students. If the students in the L2 Group did not feel ready to only speak in the second language, it is understandable that they were not comfortable with it. Something similar can be observed in Bruen \& Kelly's (2014) study where students were interviewed about their beliefs on the L1 and the L2 usage in class. As it was expected, the more advanced students could recognise the importance of the second language in the classroom and preferred to use it more, whereas, the students in lower levels preferred to have a bigger amount of the mother tongue in class since they did not feel ready for an L2 only system yet. In the same fashion, the students in this study might have not felt as confident using the L2 only system which might have affected their performance and improvement from the pre-test to the post-test. It does not necessarily mean that EFL classes using mostly the second language always have less improvement than classes using the mother tongue.

Furthermore, the ideology that the L1 should not be used in the classroom might come from teachers who exaggerate their use of the mother tongue and there is barely any use of the second language in the EFL classroom. This overuse is actually not beneficial to the students since there is no chance to practice the L2 at any point. Unfortunately, this stance makes the teachers who support the use of the L2 only strengthen their opposition to the L1 use in the EFL classroom since they see that the mother tongue is overused. The teachers should find a balance between the L1 and the L2 in order to help the students more.

Therefore, the hypothesis of the study is null since while the students of the L2 Group got higher scores, the L1 Group showed more improvement from the pre-test to the post-test.

### 5.2 Implications of this study

This study showed how helpful the L1 and the L2 can be in the private English institutes, also known as 'frontistiria' in Cyprus. More specifically, the study's goal was not just to show the opinion of teachers regarding the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom but to also get evidence on whether one is more beneficial than the other. The data was collected both from the structured interviews of the teachers as well as the scores from the pre-tests and post-tests of the students in the two groups before and after the lessons of the vocabulary on technology. Just like in previous research on this subject (Copland \& Neokleous, 2010; de la Fuente \& Goldenberg, 2022; Tsagari \& Georgiou, 2016) it was evident that even though the private English institute was mostly against the use of the L1, both teachers used it at some point and was actually really important in scaffolding. In addition the teachers' beliefs from the interview showed that while they were both in favour of the L2, they both used the mother tongue at some point. This coincides with Macaro (2005) who states that the mother tongue in the classroom is something disappointing and unpleasant but at the same time really important. While the findings of the study were not significant, when the tests were compared, it was indicated that the group using the L1 had a better improvement. Therefore, the mother tongue is shown to have been more beneficial in understanding and learning the new vocabulary. This could be because the students had the opportunity to understand difficult meanings of words and be able to communicate with the teacher more easily (Tsagari \& Georgiou, 2016).

The findings of the present study show that there should be a lot more critical focus on the use of the L1 and the L2 in the EFL classroom, especially in Cyprus where there is not enough information on which methods are used and which are more useful. According to Macaro (2001), it is the teachers' responsibility to find the more beneficial pedagogical approaches and apply them in the classroom. To be able to do that, as mentioned above, teachers need to find the right amount of L1 and L2 are needed in the classroom in order to cover the students' needs. Each level and each class has different needs when it comes to the use of the L1 and the L2. In some classes, the mother tongue may be needed a lot if the students do not feel confident enough yet to use the second language that much. In other classes, the L1 might not be needed that much, if at all, if the students have a vast knowledge of the language and can communicate more efficiently in it. In addition, teachers should be given guidance on how much L1 needs to be used in an EFL classroom, especially those working in the private sector such as the English institutes in Cyprus. On the one hand, novice teachers might rely on it a lot more than they should, if they do not feel confident or do not have enough experience yet to understand the needs of a class. On the other hand, older teachers might not know how much it should be used, especially if they are against the idea of using the mother tongue at all. Moreover, teachers need to become aware of the benefits of the mother tongue in the classroom as many, in particular those in private English institutes believe that the L1 should be completely forbidden during class. To do that, teacher training and seminars should be offered to novice as well as experienced teachers to allow them to understand the use of the mother tongue in the classroom.

### 5.3. Limitations

However, the present study is subject to several limitations. Firstly, it is acknowledged that the sample of participants is small, with only five students in each classroom which might not give enough evidence. The reason for that is because some students did not sign the consent form or did
not attend all the lessons and were consequently excluded from the study. In the same fashion, the fact that the scores are taken from only one English institute cannot represent the whole population of Cyprus. Therefore, it is suggested that the subject should be investigated further with a bigger sample of participants.

Furthermore, while both teachers seemed more keen on using the L2 as much as possible, the students of the L2 Group seemed to have some difficulty not being able to use their L1 while the L1 Group seemed to be more used to only using the L2 which made it harder for them as well as the teacher to change that. However, since this was observed after the groups were decided and most of the study was done, there was nothing to do.

In addition, it could be suggested that the time period of the study was too short, with only three lessons on a specific vocabulary. In future research, the study could be for a longer time period such as one semester.

Lastly, the pre-tests proved that the two groups might not be equal since the L1 Group's mean score is $5,6 / 10$ and the L2 Group's is $8 / 10$. This means that since the L2 Group scored better, it is expected that they would score better in the post-test as well. Therefore, it is suggested that in future research the groups used must have more equal mean scores in order to compare them.

## 6. Conclusion

### 6.1. Findings

In conclusion, the present study investigated whether the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom in private English institutes in Cyprus might affect the learning process negatively. The findings indicated while that the L2 only system does bring good scores from learners, it is not
necessary in order for students to learn a vocabulary in an EFL classroom. In the evidence gathered in this study, it was shown that although there is not a significant difference between the results of the two groups, the L1 Group had a slightly more signifcant improvement than the L2 Group even if the scores of the L2 Group's pre-test were higher. Moreover, the students were observed to feel more confident when they could use the L1 instead of only having to use the L2 which it could be suggested caused them more anxiety. However, this does not mean that the use of the L2 should be minimised but that teachers should find ways to insert the mother tongue in the lessons in order to help the students feel more at ease. This study demonstrates that the L1 and the L2 can be used together, and both the teacher and the students feel more confident in the teaching and learning processes.

At the same time, it was observed that just exposure to the L2 is not enough for students to acquire the new vocabulary efficiently. As proved by the student in the L2 Group, learners need to practise the new words to actually learn its use and how to produce them themselves in sentences or paragraphs.

Additionally, while the teachers of the two groups seem to be in agreement that the L2 should be used as much as possible, it can be seen that even they have differences in their beliefs on when it is necessary to use Greek. On the one hand, one tries to use the second language mostly even with younger levels who might not have enough understanding of the L2 to comprehend everything using other ways such as illustrations. On the other hand, the other while still negative with the idea of using the mother tongue, still uses it when necessary even with older levels.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this in addition with the results from the students' tests is that the two methods can both help students develop their language skills. Therefore, they should be equally used by the language educators. This means that language teachers need to find a balance between the L1 and the L2 in order to help their students improve. This does not mean that there
should be excessive use of the mother tongue just like there should be opportunities for the students to use the L1 when they do not understand or need help when they cannot express their thoughts with the second language. By using them equally, the learners are going to benefit from the advantages that both languages have to offer.

In summary, the results of this experiment were not exactly consistent with the hypothesis which was that students using the L2 only method would improve more. This is not discouraging since it helps in the research of developing methods that improve language learning.

### 6.2. Recommendations

To further research the effect of the L1 and the L2 in an EFL classroom there are some recommendations. Firstly, it would be suggested that for future researchers, the research is conducted for a longer period of time and with multiple English institutes to see if there is a difference between schools. Additionally, in future research, the researchers could look at other aspects as well such as grammatical rules, something that was not taken into consideration in this study. Moreover, this study only focused on 13 year old kids in B1 level. In future research, it could also be explored how the mother tongue and a second language affect students of different levels or age. For example, young children or adults might respond differently to an L2 only system. In accordance students of a higher or lower level might have better or worse scores in a class instructed with the L1. Therefore, other contexts should also be examined. Lastly, other factors should also be taken into account. For example, it should be considered how much the students study at home. If the students of one group tend to only do the exercises they have for homework but the students of the other group also study the words in order to learn them, then the method used in class is not the only thing that helps them improve their vocabulary. These are some
recommendations that by implementing them there is going to be more evidence on which method is more beneficial to students.

## 7. Ethics committee approval

This study is part of The Linguistic-Cognitive Profile of Multilingual Populations in Cyprus programme which was granted approval from the bioethics committee. The bioethics approval can be found in Appendix H.

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## 9. Appendices

### 9.1. Appendix A: Pre-test

## Exercises on Vocabulary about Technology

Name:
A. Choose the correct meaning of the underlined word. There is only one correct answer.

1. The server is down, and we can't access our files.
a) A computer that is connected to other computers.
b) The motherboard of a computer.
c) The battery that is connected to the computer.
2. As a technophobe, she refused to buy a new computer.
a) A person who does not want to spend money on technology.
b) A person who does not like buying new things.
c) A person who is afraid of technology.
3. While they were working, the computer crashed.
a) The computer fell and broke.
b) The computer program stopped working.
c) The computer's screen went black.
4. The chemistry class had to design an experiment.
a) A presentation in front of people.
b) A scientific test to observe is effects.
c) A scientific research on a topic.
B. Match the words in the box with the right definition.
```
Podcast Hardware Webcam Satellite dish Software Broadcast
```

a) ............................... = The programs that make a computer work.
b) ............................... = A programme on TV or radio.
c) .............................. = A camera attached to the computer.
d) ................................ = The different parts of a computer.
e) .............................. = A radio programme on the internet that can be downloaded.
f) $\qquad$ = A bowl-shaped machine that sends and received signals.

### 9.2. Appendix B: Post-test

## Exercises on Vocabulary about Technology

Name: $\qquad$
A. Write sentences using the words below. You can use more than one word in each sentence.

Experiment Technophobe Webcam Podcast Broadcast
$\qquad$
$\qquad$
$\qquad$
B. Write a small paragraph using the words below.

Server Crashed Software Hardware Satellite dish
$\qquad$
$\qquad$
$\qquad$
$\qquad$
$\qquad$
$\qquad$

## 

1 Work in pairs. How many of these things have you done today / this week / in the past month?

- watched TV
- listened to the radio
- looked at a weather forecast
- used a map on your phone

2 Which piece of technology links the activities in Exercise 1? Discuss your ideas with your partner.

3 Read the article on page 103 quickly and check your ideas. Then complete the summary of the article with the correct words.
Satellites help us share $\qquad$ , learn more about the world and find out where we are. They can receive signals from one place and then's - these signals to other places on Earth. They can also take ${ }^{3} \mathrm{P}$ _-_ and collect ${ }^{~} \mathrm{~d}$ _-

4 Read the Exam Tip. Then match the article paragraphs (A-E) with the topics (1-5).

1 gives information about GPS satellites
2 introduces the three types of satellite
3 gives information about the size of satellites
4 gives information about photographic and scientific satellites
5 introduces the subject of the article
5 Now complete the Exam Task

Identifying topics
Identifying topic
Read the whole text first to get a general idea of the meaning
Then read each paragraph carefully. Try to identify the topic for each one. Look at the
Read the text again, looking forclues in the Read the text again, looking for clues in the
sentences before and after each gap. For example, look for
nouns and pronouns (satellites ... They ...) linking words (Some satellites ... However, time words (At first ... But then ...)

- Finally read the whole text again for sense, including the missing sentences.



## Exam TASK

Matching sentences to gaps.
Five sentences have been removed from the to For each question, choose the correct answer. There are three extra sentences which you do no need to use.
A These satellites go round the Earth once er twelve hours, constantly sending out signals
B These images can help us learn more about animal migration or give us important information about the environment.
C A satellite has to travel at more than 28,200 kilometres per hour to stay in space.

D However, there are some dangers with very small satellites.
E Satellites use solar batteries, which get thei energy from the sun.

F For example, they can measure rising sea evels or look at how land is used.
G First, there are communications satellites, which help send telephone calls, radio and television programmes around the world
H The first man-made satellite, the Sputnik 1, was sent into space in 1957 by the Soviet Union.


- Can you imagine your life without satellites? What would you miss the mos? - Can you think of any other ways, no mentioned in the article, that we use satellites?


|รา|
A There are more than 1,700 working satelles in the sky io is as 160,000 kilometres above us. They collect images and oher data, broadcast information, keep track of our locations and even listen to our conversations.
B Some satellites are no bigger than a shoebox, while others can be the size of a bus! Recently, even smaller satelites have been eveloped. NASA has developed a satedit storms and bad weather made by a 3D printer! It's used oup pre keep track of them and if (1) It can be dinficul endanger other spacecraft C There are three main types of satellite. (2) $\qquad$ They work
up to the C. There are three main types of satelle. (2) in sent from Earth up to the a little bit like a mirror-inatllite and is then sent to another place on satellite. - il collect data, often by taking photos of Earth. From a D Other satellites collectometres, a herd of buffalo, for example, or the distages of a forest fire can be seen and photographed atch a weather You have probably seen satellite photor when yout things all around the forecast. Satellites can gather information abour things ail aro world. (4)
CPS elelites we use when we use maps on E GPS satellites are the sare than thirty active GPS satellites. our phones. There A.GS receiver in your phone needs signals fom aus (5) - A GPS ecerd out your location, using a mehow cat your four of these sateles sellite gives you precise informato four or more triangulation. Each . When you have that information you are distance from it. Whisle to work out exact


### 9.4. Appendix D: Coursebook-Vocabulary 1



9.6. Appendix F: Teachers' Interview Questions


1. Do you use English only in your EFL classes?
$\qquad$
$\qquad$
$\qquad$
$\qquad$
2. What are some of the constraints you face when you try to use English only?
$\qquad$
$\qquad$
$\qquad$
$\qquad$
$\qquad$
3. Do you think it is significant or essential to use Greek in English classes?
4. Do you think that exposure to students' mother tongue deprives students of valuable input?
$\qquad$
$\qquad$
$\qquad$
$\qquad$
5. When do you use Greek in class and why?
$\qquad$
$\qquad$
$\qquad$
$\qquad$

Source: Tsagari \& Georgiou (2016), p. 126
9.7. Appendix G: Parental consent form

## Гoviкŋ́ $\alpha \delta \varepsilon ı \alpha ~ ү ı \alpha ~ \sigma u \mu \mu \varepsilon т о \chi ŋ ́ ~ \pi \alpha เ \delta \iota \omega ́ v ~ \sigma \varepsilon ~ \varepsilon ́ p \varepsilon u v \alpha ~$

Aүarntoí poveís,




## 





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## Tı $\theta \alpha \kappa \lambda \eta \theta \varepsilon i ́ v \alpha$ к $\alpha v \varepsilon ı$ то $\pi \alpha \iota \delta i ́ ~ \mu o v ; ~$

Eáv $\varepsilon \pi \iota \tau \rho \varepsilon ́ \psi \varepsilon \tau \varepsilon ~ \sigma \tau 0 ~ \pi \alpha เ \delta i ́ ~ \sigma \alpha \varsigma ~ v \alpha ~ \sigma u \mu \mu \varepsilon \tau \alpha ́ \sigma \chi \varepsilon ı ~ \sigma \varepsilon ~ \alpha u \tau \eta ่ ~ \tau \eta ~ \mu \varepsilon \lambda \varepsilon ́ \tau \eta, ~ \theta \alpha ~ \tau о u ~ そ \eta \tau \eta Ө \varepsilon i ́:$

 ıvotıtoúto.
 $\varepsilon ́ \mu \alpha \theta \varepsilon$.

## Прє́лєı v $\alpha$ оu $\mu \mu \varepsilon \tau \varepsilon ́ \chi \varepsilon \iota ~ т о ~ \pi \alpha เ \delta i ́ ~ \mu o u ; ~$



 $\tau \omega ่ \rho \alpha$ к $\alpha \iota v \alpha \alpha \lambda \lambda \alpha ́ \xi \varepsilon \tau \varepsilon ~ ү v \omega ́ \mu \eta ~ \alpha \rho ү o ́ \tau \varepsilon \rho \alpha . ~$

##  



 v $\alpha$ סı $\alpha \tau \eta \rho \eta Ө \varepsilon i ́ \eta \alpha v \omega v u \mu i \alpha$.

 $\varepsilon \rho \omega \tau$ ர்бєıৎ.

## Үлоүрафท́





 тоu/tņ $\alpha v \alpha \dot{\alpha} \pi \alpha \dot{\alpha} \sigma \alpha ~ \sigma \tau \iota ү \mu ウ ́ . ~$

Ovouatєtúvu

[^0]H $\mu$ гро $\mu \eta v i \alpha$

### 9.8. Appendix H: Approval from Ministry of Education



ЕӨNIKH EПITPOПH BIOHӨІКНГ КҮПРOY

Ар. Фак.: ЕЕВК/ЕП /2016/39
Ар. Түд.: 22809038/22809039
Ар. Фаछ: 22353878
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1678 Лعטкюбía

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## 





 ท́ $\tau \mathrm{ol}$ દ́ $\omega \varsigma ~ \tau \iota \varsigma ~ 30$ Iovvíov 2023.

Мє єкті́ $\mu\rceil \sigma \eta$,


E入દ́vๆ A $\theta \alpha$ vaбov́ $\lambda 1 \alpha$
Про́єб $\rho \circ \varsigma$




[^0]:    

