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On the Comparison of L2 Poetry Teaching Approaches: L1 Use in the Iranian EFL Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

Empirical studies have shown the occasional use of L1 by both teachers and students could create a peaceful environment for better leaning and help in overcoming the affective barriers of learning and bringing out learning motivation (Cook, 2001; Tang, 2002; Wells, 1999). The present study intends to investigate the effect of making Iranian intermediate EFL learners familiar with Persian translation of English poems on learning these poems. To achieve this goal, some English poems the difficulty level of whom was appropriate to the participants of the study were translated to Persian by the researcher. 60 EFL learners, identical in terms of their English proficiency level in one of the foreign language institutes of Kerman city, were randomly selected and 30 members randomly assigned to each group. The experimental group was taught both the English poems and the Persian translation of these poems. The control group treatment was only the poems in English. At the end of the semester, the two groups' grades in English poetry test were compared and by doing statistical analysis, the effect of exposing the learners to the Persian translation on learning these English poems was identified. Also, the relationship between English proficiency level and English poetry learning was realized.

Keywords: L2 Poetry, L1 Use, Translation, Teaching Approaches, EFL Classrooms

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1. Introduction

Learning a foreign language is a challenging process. EFL teachers try to bring and establish variety and motivation, and to reduce the monotonous and boring classroom atmosphere. As Dunkin and Biddle (1974) state, the classroom management could provide the requisite circumstances for learning, and if the teacher could not solve the learning and learner problems, he/she should give up his/her work. Classroom management implies a much more significant concept than merely achieving the class control and establishing disciplines and rules for it. That main concept, which Everstone and Emmor (1982) also refer to, is providing desirable conditions for learning.

Using new methods, techniques and other aids such as video, computer, cassettes, drama and even various games has been one resolution to this problem in the EFL classes. During the 1980s, the use of literary texts as the authentic resources which could bring about students' motivation became fashionable.

The poetic text is one form of literary texts. Poetry is opted to teach English since it is considered as a valuable authentic material for cultural enrichment, language enrichment, literary enjoyment and personal involvement (Collie & Slater, 1990). As Woodall and Ziembski (2004) state, oral language is a social and interactional process, and using poetry in this process is a natural way for experiencing and acquiring a perfect interactional linguistic competence through a desirable, encouraging and enjoyable method. Davis (2000) believes poetry helps with establishing the relationship among feelings, thought, and learning and also he realized that various empirical studies have shown utilizing poetry in language teaching could be a means of creating a non-threatening classroom atmosphere, bringing out variety and motivation, overcoming the affective barriers of learning and as a result, promoting language learning since research has shown that the emotional contents of a poem evoke interests and thereby motivation which ensures that if poetry is taught using right approaches, students can communicate



effectively about things they are familiar with or care about and this ultimately leads to better language learning (VK & Savaedi, 2014). Meanwhile, it may help the learners in developing their language skills within a communicative-interactive process in the EFL classroom.

The other significant finding of some researches indicates the occasional use of L1 by both teachers and students creates a peaceful and comfortable environment for better leaning and increases both comprehension and learning of L2 (Cook, 2001; Tang, 2002; Wells, 1999). Using L1 in the EFL classroom could avoid the learners' negative attitudes toward the L2 learning which greatly impacts on their learning experience (Brown, 2003). According to Tang (2002), many students find the exclusion of the mother tongue to be degrading to that tongue; thus, if they feel that their home language is a valuable part of the language learning process, they are less likely to feel resentful about the learning of a foreign language.

The occasional uses of L1 helps the students compare their native language culture with the foreign language culture and get familiar with differences and similarities between the two language cultures and linguistic structures, and provide a clearer paradigm for translations. Also, as Cook (2001) states, finding cognates and similarities between languages builds up the interlinked L1 and L2 knowledge in the students' minds. However, the idea is that the L1 role in foreign language learning classrooms is a supportive and facilitating one, that is, it is used for clarification purposes, after attempts have been made to communicate ideas in L2 and students still appear to be confused.

The use of L1 in L2 classrooms allows the students to work within their "Zone of Proximal Development" as proposed by Vygotsky (Wells, 1999). When L1 is used to help learners realize the meanings of L2, or to communicate with their peers and the teacher about the L2 materials, they are cognitively processing at a higher level and may reach higher levels of understanding than when they were limited to only the L2.

Broadly, poetry has been thought to be more suitable to be used with advanced learners. Tomlinson (1986) and Lazar (1993) are the only scholars in favour of using poetry who think it can be used at lower levels. Poetry may work at all levels-even at elementary level if chosen carefully and implemented creatively. Using the

native language translations of the L2 poems in lower level classrooms may make the poems more meaningful and understandable and help in building the low-stress environment which these classes are going to have. Translation is sometimes referred to as the fifth language skill alongside the other four basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). As Ross (2000) states:

Translation holds a special importance at an intermediate and advanced level: in the advanced or final stage of language teaching, translation from L1 to L2 and L2 to L1 is recognized as the fifth skill and the most important social skill since it promotes communication and understanding between strangers. (pp. 61-66)

Considering some theories of language learning, the current study assumes the L1 translation of English poems could help the intermediate and even lower level learners to understand the complicated English words and structures, increase their motivation, and as a result, promote their poetry learning. These theories and issues are briefly discussed in the next parts.

2. Literature Review

During the last decades, the role of mother tongue in language teaching has been the subject of a host of research studies (e.g., Block, 1986; Kern, 1994; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1996; Upton, 1997). According to Ellis (1994), learners' prior linguistic knowledge is an important factor in L2 acquisition, and theories of L2 acquisition ignoring learners' L1 cannot be considered complete.

While there are studies to understand further the role of L1 use in comprehending L2 texts (Cohen, 1995; García, 2000) throughout decades of foreign language (L2) teaching, a recurring issue has been the role of the first language (L1) in the classroom. A long-term and wide-ranging debate persists regarding practical and theoretical questions about the significance of the L1's obvious influence on the L2 being learned.

Although many feel that the L1 should not be used in the classroom, other researchers, teachers, and learners do see a role for the L1 and support its use as a communication strategy and instructional tool (Fung, Wilkinson, & Moore, 2003; Mukattash, 2003; Sheen, 2001; Tang, 2002).

A special classroom use of the L1 is the translation of L2 texts into the L1, a procedure that has been neglected, possibly because of its association with the old Grammar Translation Method (Owen,

2003). However, current research reveals that today's translation activities have little to do with the previous method, which occurred in a non-interactive teacher-centred classroom with few activities aside from the translation of difficult, non-relevant, and often boring texts (Bonyadi, 2003; Owen, 2003).

According to Vaezi and Mirzaei (2007), the idea of the effectiveness of using translation from L1 to L2 as a teaching technique to improve a group of Iranian EFL learners' linguistic accuracy was supported. So, the conclusion is that translating from L1 to L2, using specific structures, can lead to learners' linguistic accuracy in the realm of those structures. It also revokes the idea of uselessness of learners' mother tongue in second or foreign language learning; that is, mother tongue, if used purposefully and systematically, can have a constructive role in teaching. It is believed by many teachers that L1 in the classroom is a positive inter-language sign. The data on inter-language and language transfer show that it is highly probable that L2 learners will always think most often in their L1, even at the advanced level (Mahmoud, 2006).

More importantly, a way of highlighting similarities and differences between L1 and L2 forms in L2 classroom can be through translation. The translation is useful for L2 acquisition because, firstly, it uses authentic materials, secondly, it is interactive, thirdly, it is learner-centred, and finally it promotes learner autonomy (Mahmoud, 2006).

Besides, to learn new L2 vocabulary, translation can be used as a productive means. And translation can draw the teacher's attention to the words and structures that need to be practiced (Van Els, Bongaerts, Extra, Van Os, & Janssen-vandieten, 1984).

Navidinia, Akar and Hendevalan (2019) conducted a study to discover the linguistic, humanistic and practical advantages and disadvantages of using translation in language teaching. The results of their study revealed that students had a positive attitude towards using translation in language teaching from the two perspectives of linguistic aspect which are "namely Cognitive Aspect and Contrastive Analysis" (Navidinia, Akar and Hendevalan, 2019, p. 16). It was found when their own language is used more often in the classroom, students feel much more peace, preserve their identity and get more motivated; therefore, the researchers concluded that the

participants' attitude toward the humanistic aspect of using translation in language teaching was also positive. Also, the students' perceptions about the practical aspect of own language use that was divided into two parts, namely 'time efficiency and bilingual dictionaries' were positive. In other words, the results of their study showed that EFL learners considered the use of translation in language teaching as a time saving technique and they believed that bilingual dictionaries were more helpful than monolingual English dictionaries.

Pakzadian, Barati and Moinzadeh (2012) in a study explored whether paraphrases vs. translations of English poems make any significant difference in EFL students' level of comprehending literary texts. They also examined whether paraphrases or translations of literary text at undergraduate level affect significantly the performance of male and female students' comprehension of such texts. The overall findings of the study indicated that there was no significant difference between the comprehension of those who received Persian translation of the poems and those who dealt with the paraphrase of the same poems. However, in the group, in which students received translation of the poems, the male participants significantly outperformed the female learners whereas in the group in which students received the paraphrase of poems, the female participants significantly outperformed the male learners.

Mahmoud and Imran Ho (2017) investigated learners' metaphorical comprehension in L1 and its effect on the metaphorical comprehension in L2 by Iraqi EFL learners at secondary school. The results of their research approved that the cognitive skills that a learner possesses in L1 can be as an instrument in the process of developing the abilities in L2. Results of the study implied that if EFL learners are submitted to a course of study that is designed to activate their awareness of the L1 conceptual mappings between the source domains and the target domains in the metaphorical expressions, they can be more qualified to acquire L2.

In a qualitative study by Saeli and Cheng (2019), Iranian learners' prior L1 (i.e., Farsi) experiences, their L2 (i.e., English as a foreign language) writing-related perceptions, and the effects of these writing-related L1 experiences on L2 writing-related perceptions were explored. The results of the research revealed that the learners' evaluation of their L1 writing



experiences was negative, the learners regarded the skill of writing in English not much important and that the learners drew on their L1 experiences in forming their L2 writing perceptions. Also, the participants believed that their L1 writing experiences were not “useful.” As researchers of the study (2019) contended, this negative perception was transferred to L2 writing contexts as well.

Sanmuganathan (2014) conducted a study to see whether L1 had an impact on the ESL writings of the undergraduates of university of Jaffna. Various errors were found in his study and these errors were ranked the most frequent error categories, which ESL teachers could use them as guide to better understand which errors are probable for their students to make and instruct them thereby. There were many L1-related errors in this study. In other words, language transfer caused problems for the participants of this study and made the English learning process even more complicated. The proposition of this study's findings is that various sentence types of both L1 and L2 should be differentiated and distinguished and should be made known to the students to prevent L1 interference on L2 sentence. Also, Sanmuganathan's (2014) findings suggest for agreement problems, the relationship between words should be taught and if the problems are due to L1 structure, the students should become aware of the relationship and variation between L1 and L2 in sentences through instruction.

Derakhshan and Karimi in a study in 2015 tried to find out factors that play an important role in the acquisition of second language. It was found that first language has interference in second language. They observed that if there are similarities in L1 and L2, the learners have less problems in acquisition of L2 and fewer errors may occur in L2, but if there are no or little similarities of the structure of first language and second language, learners are faced with a lot of problems in L2 acquisition and it may be difficult for them to learn.

Anton and DiCamilla (1999) studied the role of L1 in the collaborative interactions of five dyads of learners of Spanish completing a writing task and found that “use of L1 is beneficial for language learning since it acts as a critical psychological tool that enables learners to construct effective collaborative dialogue in the completion of meaning-based language tasks by performing three important functions: construction of scaffolded help,

establishment of intersubjectivity, and use of private speech” (Anton & DiCamilla, 1999, p. 245). Similarly, Villamil and De Guerrero (1996) claimed that for most of their Spanish students learning to write in English, “the L1 was an essential tool for making meaning of text, retrieving language from memory, exploring and expanding content, guiding their action through the task, and maintaining dialogue” (p. 60).

Lameta-Tufuga (1994) examined the effects of having learners discuss a task in their first language before they had to carry it out in writing in the second language. The discussion helped learners both to get high understanding of the content and gain control of relevant L2 vocabulary in a very supportive L1 context. In a study by Knight (1996) also similar findings were obtained. The learners who did the preparatory L1 discussion in groups did much better on the L2 written task than other learners who did preparatory L2 discussion despite the discussion was in the same language as the subsequent written task. Thus; the L1 has a useful role for helping learners gain the required knowledge to perform in a higher level of L2 performance. Knight (1996) concluded when a meaning based L2 task might be beyond the capabilities of the learners, a pre-discussion in L1 can help make easy some of the difficulties.

Kupferberg and Olshtain (1996) and Kupferberg (1999) examined the effect of contrastive metalinguistic input (CMI) on learners' grammar acquisition. CMI, according to them, was defined as “teacher-induced salience which foregrounds differences between the learners' L1 and L2 which have been established as areas of difficulty in studies independent of the CA” (Kupferberg, 1999, p. 212). These studies both showed that CMI focusing attention on explicit differences between the languages facilitated the acquisition of difficult L2 structures. Moreover, they supported the theoretical claim that L2 learners often made a cognitive comparison between the L2 input they noticed and their L1 (Kupferberg, 1999), as well as the view that helping learners to make an L1-L2 comparison could be beneficial to L2 learning and teaching.

In a study by James (1996), it was found that establishing a link between an L2 form and its corresponding L1 form can make learners conscious of the target form and help them with memorizing it since the relationship between the L1 and L2 is often asymmetrical. Also, it was discovered that translation can be particularly effective since

“two manifestations of the L1 and L2 are juxtaposed in the act of translation and language juxtaposition is the essence of CA” (pp. 146–147).

Murga, Damián and Tacoaman (2018) in an investigation focused on whether the use of Spanish as L1 in the classroom helped students to improve their learning English as a foreign language in two Universities in Ecuador. Results of their study showed that the use of L1 in the classroom does not seem to hinder the learning of an L2 and in fact seems to facilitate it in some of the lesson stages.

Du (2016) in an investigation of the use of first and second language use in Chinese university classrooms realized that the L1 is a natural part of L2 learners’ thinking, and it plays a significant role in L2 learning, especially in L2 vocabulary acquisition.

Zhanming (2014) discovered in his study that in the process of SLA, the way of thinking of L1 is very common. He contends that L1 both promotes the study of L2 and constrains the study of L2 and in the process of SLA, L1 is an important basis for language study. He (2014) found that L1 can help learners to classify the language input and help them improve their language learning ability but its negative influence cannot be neglected.

Bingjun (2013) in a longitudinal study of the role of L1 in L2 acquisition found that if L1 teachers and learners keep something positive and try one’s best to avoid something negative, our language teaching and learning can be greatly promoted. He concluded that the role of L1 transfer in L2 acquisition can never be neglected.

As Cook (2001) noted, “the L2 meanings do not exist separately from the L1 meanings in the learners’ mind, regardless of whether they are part of the same vocabulary store or parts of different stores mediated by a single conceptual system” (p. 407). Similarly, Kern (1994) said that L1 use in the form of mental translation is probably inevitable, especially for L2 learners at early stage. Stern (1992) also claimed that “the L1-L2 connection is an indisputable fact of life” (p. 282). Cook (1991, 1992, 1999, 2001, 2002a, 2005) has investigated some distinctive characteristics of L2 users as well as the relationship between the L1 and L2 in their minds. He suggested the term ‘multicompetence’ to refer to the compound state of a mind with knowledge of more than one language. Observing the evidence that L2 users differ

from monolinguals in many respects including L1 knowledge, L2 knowledge, metalinguistic awareness and cognitive processes, Cook (1992, p. 557) contended that people with multicompetence have “a distinct state of mind” which is not simply equivalent to two monolinguals but a unique combination. From the multicompetence perspective, L2 acquisition should be examined based on the whole mind of L2 learners rather than simply their L1 or L2.

To illustrate how the L1 and L2 coexist in L2 learners’ minds, Cook (2002a, p. 11) presented an integration continuum which could be applied across different areas of language such as phonology and grammar, shown in Figure 1.

As seen in Figure 1, three possible relationships exist between the two language systems in multicompetence: total separation, interconnection and total integration. In most cases, the two languages are more or less interconnected. Total separation and total integration at the two ends of the integration continuum are the two extreme possibilities that rarely take place.

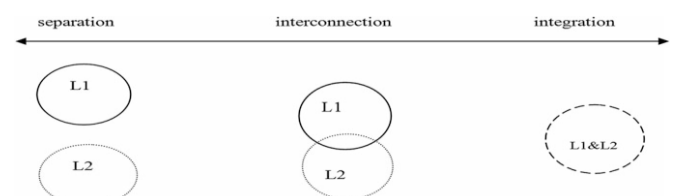


Figure 1 The integration continuum of possible relationships in multicompetence (Cook, 2002a, p. 11)

It seems clear that multicompetence theory provides a rationale for some (though perhaps limited) use of the L1 positively in L2 learning. As Cook (2001) clarified it, keeping the languages visibly separate in language teaching is contradicted by the invisible processes in students’ minds. Language teaching that works with this fact of life is more likely to be successful than teaching that works against it.

In a review article published in 2000, Lantolf summarized the current state of understanding on mediation through the L1 and suggested that “it does make sense to recognize that the L1 plays a key role in helping learners to mediate each other, and themselves, in the appropriation of another language” (Lantolf, 2000a, p. 87). Moreover, he (2000a) pointed out that “learners’ L2 proficiency is not the only determinant of the use of the L1 for mediation since language is strongly implicated in their identity as thinking beings” (p. 87).



Macdonald (1993, as cited in Ustiinel & P. Seedhouse, 2005) argues that it is unnecessary to switch to the L1 to explain what the teacher has said to learners and it undermines the learning process. Hence, according to him, unpredictability and developing L2 system are realized through teaching entirely in the target language.

Macaro (2009, p. 38) pointed out, “optimal use of L1 is where code-switching in broadly communicative classrooms can enhance second language acquisition and/or proficiency better than second language exclusivity”. However, he (2009) pointed out that few studies have investigated whether “switching to the first language as opposed to maintaining second-language discourse, in specific circumstances, actually leads to better learning whether in the short term or the long term.” (p. 39). Therefore, he examined this issue in two studies within the area of L2 vocabulary acquisition. In the first study, the teacher taught new vocabulary items to three groups of Chinese students of English in different ways: providing L1 equivalents, L2 definitions or both L1 equivalents and L2 definitions. The results of the study showed that there were no significant differences in learning under these conditions. In Macaro’s (2009) opinion, this demonstrated that using the L1 at least did no harm to vocabulary acquisition. In the second study, Macaro (2009, p. 47) explored students’ “strategic reactions to teachers’ switches to the L1” and reported that teacher code-switching “triggers a number of strategic reactions which appear to confirm students’ hypothesis generation, leads to contextualization and provides information used in additional processing”.

There are numerous ways of conveying the meaning of an unknown word. These include a definition in the second language, a demonstration, a picture or a diagram, a real object, L2 context clues, or an L1 translation (Nation, 2003). In terms of the accuracy of conveying meaning, according to Nation (2003), none of these ways is intrinsically better than any of the others. It all depends on the particular word concerned. However, studies comparing the effectiveness of various methods for learning always come up with the result that an L1 translation is the most effective (Lado, Baldwin, & Lobo, 1967; Mishima, 1967; Laufer & Shmueli, 1997). This is probably because L1 translations are usually clear, short and familiar, qualities which are very important in effective definitions

(McKeown, 1993). When the use of L1 translation is combined with the use of word cards for the initial learning of vocabulary, then learners have a very effective strategy for speeding up vocabulary growth (Nation, 2001). Although there are frequent criticisms raised of learning L1-L2 word pairs, these criticisms are not supported by research. The research shows the opposite, the direct learning of L2 vocabulary using word cards with their L1 translations is a very effective method of learning (Nation, 2003).

3. Theoretical Framework of the Study

3.1 Theory of Meaningful Learning

Ausubel (1968) contended that learning in the human beings happen through a meaningful process of relating new events or items to already existing cognitive concepts or propositions. Meaning is a “clearly articulated and precisely differentiated conscious experience that emerges when potentially meaningful signs, symbols, concepts, or propositions are related to and incorporated within a given individual’s cognitive structure on a nonarbitrary and substantive basis.” (Anderson & Ausubel, 1965, p. 8).

It is better understood by contrasting rote learning and meaningful learning. Rote learning as described by Ausubel (1968) is the process of acquiring material as “discrete and relatively isolated entities that are relatable to cognitive structure only in an arbitrary and verbatim fashion, not permitting the establishment of [meaningful] relationships.” (p. 108).

Meaningful learning or subsumption, on the other hand, as proposed by Brown (2007) may be “a process of relating and anchoring new material to relevant established entities in cognitive structure” (p. 91). He describes, the new material entered the cognitive field, interacts with, and is appropriately subsumed under a more inclusive conceptual system. What accounts for the meaningfulness of the material is that it is subsumable or in other words relatable to stable elements in cognitive structure.

There are two necessary conditions for a learning situation to be meaningful. The first condition is that the learners have a disposition to relate the new learning task to what they already know, and the second condition is that the learning task is relatable to the learners’ structure of knowledge.

3.2 Schema Theory

A schema is a structure that organizes large amounts of information into a meaningful system (Schunk, 2012). Guy

Cook (1995) states “the mind, stimulated either by key linguistic items in the text or by the context activates a schema and uses it to make sense of the discourse.” (p. 11). It has also described by Widdowson (1984) as cognitive constructs that allow for the organization of information in long-term memory.

As Schunk (2012) states, encoding is assisted by schema because it elaborates new material into a meaningful structure. While learning the material, students attempt to fit information into the schema’s spaces. In other words, the cognitive characteristics of schema allow us to relate incoming information to already known information. Schema also allows us to predict the continuation of both spoken and written discourse. The initial part of a discourse or text activates a schema that is either confirmed or disconfirmed by other next parts of that discourse or text.

3.3 Input Hypothesis

Language acquisition, according to Krashen (1984), takes place only through exposing to comprehensible input. He claims that an “important condition for language acquisition to occur is that the acquirer understands (via hearing or reading) input language that contains structure ‘a bit beyond his or current level of competence...’ If an acquirer is at stage or level I, the input he or she understands should contain $i+1$.” (Krashen, 1981, p. 100). In other words, as Brown (2007) states, the input that the learners are exposed to should neither be so far beyond their reach that they are overwhelmed, nor so close to their current stage that they are not challenged at all.

This hypothesis predicts that “... [A]n approach that provides substantial quantities of comprehensible input will do much better than any of the older approaches.” (Krashen, 1987, p. 30). Hence, teachers should send meaningful and understandable messages to the learners and provide opportunities and conditions for them to expose to comprehensible language, and thus, enable them to understand and express the meaningful messages.

3.4 The Affective-Filter Hypothesis

Krashen (1983) contends that the best acquisition takes place when the affective filter is low; in other words, there should be positive attitude toward the task, anxiety should be low and defensiveness should be absent. But, if the affective filter is high; that is, the learners’ attitude toward the task is not positive, the learner isn’t going to be

interested in learning. It can be stated that the learner’s emotional state is just like an adjustable filter which freely passes or hinders input necessary to acquisition. This hypothesis could readily explain why some EFL learners acquire the L2 so easily while some others have difficulty and problem to learn it.

3.5 Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Vygotsky (1978) defined the zone of proximal development as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 34). According to Puntambekar and Hubscher (2005), the ZPD represents the amount of learning possible by a student given the proper instructional conditions. In the ZPD, a teacher and learner (adult/child, tutor/tutee, model/observer, master/apprentice, expert/novice) work together on a task that the learner could not perform independently because of the difficulty level (Schunk, 2012).

Schunk (2012) refers to a profound and remarkable view of cultural development in Vygotsky’s ZPD. He stated that the culturally mediated interaction and participating in the cultural world transforms mental functioning rather than simply accelerate processes that would have developed anyway. That is, the influence of the cultural-historical setting is seen clearly in Vygotsky’s belief that schooling was important not because it was where children were scaffolded but, rather because it allowed them to develop greater awareness of themselves, their language, and their role in the world order.

According to Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory, collaborative interaction is essential to learning. As Swain and Lapkin (1998, p. 321) pointed out, “what occurs in collaborative dialogues is learning”. So, the studies of L2 learning as a mediated process have focused on looking at how L2 learning is mediated by language use in collaborative interactions between students and between teacher and students, and a number of them (see, for example, Donato & Lantolf, 1990; Brooks & Donato, 1994; Villamil & De Guerrero, 1996; Brooks, Richard, & McGlone, 1997; Swain & Lapkin, 1998; Anton & DiCamilla, 1999; De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000) have discussed the role of the L1, and the functions it serves in collaborative interaction in the L2 classroom.



3.6 Aims of the Study

The current study aims to see if there is any impact of L1 on the understanding and motivation of Iranian EFL learners to learn poetry in intermediate level classes, and if there is any impact; and then identify the positive or negative direction of this impact. The other purpose of this research is to investigate the relationship between these learners' English proficiency and learning English poems. As such, the following null hypotheses are investigated in this study:

1. Use of L1 translation of English poems in intermediate EFL classrooms has no impact on the students' learning L2 poems.
2. There is no significant relationship between EFL learners' English proficiency and learning poetry.

4. Methodology

4.1 Design of the Study

This study, through an experimental method, tries to compare the results obtained after teaching English poems with and without the L1 translation in two intermediate EFL classes.

4.2 Participants

The sample included 60 intermediate learners of an English institute in Kerman. The participants were almost identical in terms of their English proficiency level and were randomly selected and randomly assigned to the experimental and control group. Both experimental and control group included 30 participants.

The participants were not told about the exact purpose of the study and were assured that the information collected would not affect their poetry test scores. The participants' final grades of the previous course in this institute were utilized to indicate their proficiency level. However, to assure the homogeneity among the participants' proficiency, the T-test was ran and the two groups were perceived identical.

4.3 Data Collection Procedures

To achieve the goal of the study, some of the poems with appropriate level of difficulty were translated by the researcher from English to Persian. These English poems were taught to the learners along with other materials of the program. To do this research, 60 EFL learners of the intermediate classes of an English institute in Kerman who were almost identical regarding their English proficiency level (their proficiency level was identified through their final grades of the previous course in this institute) were randomly selected and assigned to the control group and the experimental group. Each group

consisted of 30 members. The experimental group was taught the English poems with their Persian translations but the control group was taught the poems only in English. At the end of the program, these 60 participants were asked to take the test which had been prepared by the researcher and it was evaluated how well each group had learned the English poems taught during that program and the results were compared.

4.4 Data Analysis

As mentioned earlier, to make sure the proficiency level of the two groups was the same, the T-test was conducted in the beginning level of the study and the two groups were perceived identical. To test and investigate the null hypotheses of the study, the participants' grades of the English poetry test and the previous course final grades which were indicators of their English proficiency were analyzed by means of the SPSS software and through T-test for independent samples and partial correlation test.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Descriptive Statistic

Table 1: Frequencies Statistics

	SUBJECT	PRFSCR	POEMSCR
N Valid	60	60	60
Missing	1	1	1
Mean	30.5000	93.2167	15.5625
Std. Deviation	17.46425	2.98068	3.03218
Minimum	1.00	89.00	9.50
Maximum	60.00	98.00	20.00

By virtue of the above table, the mean for both the highest grades (Maximum) and the lowest grades (Minimum) and also the standard deviation of variables of this study (Std. Deviation) are clearly revealed. The small standard deviation (2.980) of proficiency scores indicates that the participants were convergent in terms of their English proficiency.

5.2 Testing the First Hypothesis of the Study

Table 2: T-test Group statistics

TRMEN	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
POETRSCR				
L1 translation	30	17.6333	1.73421	.31662
No L1 translation	30	13.4917	2.61254	.47698

Table 3: Independent samples test

		Levene's test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
POETRSCR	Equal variances assumed	5.81	.019	7.234	58	.000	4.1417	.57250	2.99568	5.28766
	Equal variances not assumed			7.234	50.401	.000	4.1417	.57250	2.99199	5.29135

As, tables 2 and 3 show, the experimental group achieved higher grades than the control group as the experimental group mean score for poetry test grades is 17.633 while the mean score of the control group for this test grades is 13.491. This discrepancy is significantly large because as it has been shown in the Table 3, the signification rate (Sig. (2-tailed)) is .000. In other words, the discrepancy level between the mean scores of these two groups' poetry test grades is very high and the direction of this discrepancy is such that the experimental group who was exposed to the poems in L1 along with these poems in English (L2) got higher test scores of the poetry test than the control group who was only taught the English poems.

There are a number of researches which either support or oppose the use of first language in a foreign language classroom. Some researchers have promoted the exclusive use of target language in monolingual foreign language classrooms. Particularly, the practitioners who support the strong version of communicative language teaching emphasize on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language and frown upon the use of the L1 in EFL classrooms. Thus; the finding of this part of the study is contrary to these practitioners' beliefs about use of L1 in EFL classrooms.

This finding of the present study is also against behaviourist learning theory that believes "the old habits of the L1 inevitably interfere with the process of learning the new habits of the L2, and predicts that the differences between the two languages lead to negative transfer and errors." (Ellis, 1985, p. 22). Ellis (1994) mentioned "according to behaviourist theories, the main impediment to learning was interference from prior knowledge." (p. 299). Corder (1981, p. 1) also stated that this theory predicted errors to be "the results of the persistence of existing mother tongue habits in the new language".

Zhanming's (2014) study finding that suggests L1 has a negative influence on L2 learning in spite of helping learners in classifying the language input and improving their language learning ability, is not in line with the present study result.

These findings are also contrary to Sanmuganathan's (2012) study on the influence of L1 upon the undergraduates' ESL writings and it was found that L1-related errors were the main problems of these English learners in their learning process.

On the other hand, some researchers disagree about the negative influence of L1 in learning L2. To mention some of them, Newmark and Reibel (1968), and Dulay and Burt (1972) have argued that the influence of the L1 is of little importance in L2 learning. Ellis (1994) believed that the 'minimalist position', as he called it, was "an overreaction caused by overestimating the closeness of the relationship between interference and behaviorism." (p. 315).

This finding of the present study which proposes use of L1 in L2 classrooms could be helpful is in line with Cook's (2001) multicompetence theory that emphasizes keeping the languages visibly separate in language teaching is contradicted by the invisible processes in students' minds and so suggests that some amount of L1 use could be helpful in L2 learning.

The findings of the studies by Lameta-Tufuga (1994) and Knight (1996) that showed the preparatory L1 discussion has an effective role for helping learners gain the required knowledge to perform more highly in the L2 writing tasks support this part of the present study findings. The studies by DiCamilla (1999) and Villamil and De Guerrero (1996) that were also on writing tasks released similar findings which are in line with the present study findings as L1 helped their Spanish participants in the processes required in completing the meaning-based English writing tasks.

The study by Du (2016) that discovered L1 plays a significant role in L2 learning and especially in L2 vocabulary acquisition, the study by Bingjun (2013) that found L1 transfer has an effective role in learning L2, the research by Mahmoud and Imran Ho (2017) that gained results which led to the conclusion that making EFL learners aware of the L1 conceptual mappings between the source domains and the target domains in the metaphorical expressions could help them develop cognitive abilities in the process of L2 learning, the study by James (1996), Kupferberg and Olshtain (1996) and Kupferberg (1999) that discovered translation is effective in L2 learning since two manifestations of the L1 and L2 are juxtaposed and focusing attention on explicit differences between the languages facilitates the acquisition of difficult L2 structures are all in line with the present study finding and thus; they support it.

5.3 Testing the Second Hypothesis of the Study



Partial correlation was done to clarify the relationship between the participants' proficiency test scores (PRFSCR) and their poetry test scores (POETRSCR). Also, the L1 variable (each participant being a member of either the control group or the experimental group) was controlled. To make sure of Normality, Linearity and Homoscedasticity, preliminary analyses were done. A very strong and positive relationship was identified between proficiency test scores of participants and their poetry test scores, [$p < .0005$, $n = 57$, $r = .9713$]; that is, participants who got higher grades than others in the proficiency test, have also achieved higher grades than them in the poetry test, and vice versa, in other words, learners who have obtained lower proficiency test scores, have also got lower poetry test scores. To sum up, the higher the proficiency test score, the higher the poetry test score, and vice versa. The calculated Zero Order Correlation indicates that the variable control or TRMEN (the existence of L1 or the lack of L1) which is the specific group pertaining to each participant, has no remarkable impact on the strength of the relationship between PRFSCRs and POETRSCRs.

Partial Correlation

	PRFSCR	POETRSCR	TRMEN
PRFSCR	1.0000 (0) P=.	.8138 (58) P=.000	-.1748 (58) P=.182
POETRSCR	.8138 (58) P=.000	1.0000 (0) P=.	-.6887 (58) P=.000
TRMEN	-.1748 (58) P=.182	-.6887 (58) P=.000	1.0000 (0) P=.

(Coefficient / (D.F.) / 2-tailed Significance)

". ." is printed if a coefficient cannot be computed

PARTIAL CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS

Controlling for.. TRMEN

	PRFSCR	POEMSCR
PRFSCR	1.0000 (0) P=.	.9713 (57) P=.000
POETRSCR	.9713 (57) P=.000	1.0000 (0) P=.

(Coefficient / (D.F.) / 2-tailed Significance)

". ." is printed if a coefficient cannot be computed

Unfortunately, the influence of English proficiency on learning English poetry in any level and any age of EFL learners has not been paid attention to and investigated at all although the opposite relationship (the influence of poetry teaching

on learning English) has been explored and investigated vastly. As such, several experimental studies are suggested to be carried out to figure out the influence of EFL proficiency on learning English poetry among different ages and different proficiency levels.

However, reviewing the related literature, the researcher realized that Krishnan, Roszainora, Siti, Elangkeeran, Razita, Myshithah, Mohan, Ramachandran, Aida and Illiani (2012) in their study which was conducted on Malaysian EFL students of a school found that English general knowledge has positive direct relationship with the learning of poems and literature. In other words, the participants who had higher English proficiency were more successful in learning English poems and literature. Hence, their study finding supports this part of the current study findings.

6. Conclusions

Teaching has brought about new and different outlooks on the role of the mother tongue as a skeleton in the closet. While Gabrielatos (2001) calls it a 'bone of contention', such views are but a mere reflection of the different methodological shifts in English Language. Variety of findings indicates that the role of L1 transfer in L2 acquisition can never be neglected. Teacher's attention to the words and structures that need to be practiced (Van Els et al. 1984). Such views are but a mere reflection of the different methodological shifts in English Language speaking, reading, writing): "Translation holds a special importance at an intermediate and advanced level: in the most important social skill since it promotes communication and understanding between strangers" (Ross 2000).

This study tried to clarify the remarkable role of L1 in learning English poetry and as a result in learning the English language among intermediate EFL learners. The findings of the study revealed the positive role of the L1 obviously. The study also proved the EFL learners who are more proficient in English could learn the English poems more easily and quickly.

The findings can have some implications for language teachers and syllabus designers. Exposing the EFL learners to L1 translation of the poems makes them aware of the equivalents of idioms and complicated words to help them comprehend poetry and avoid misunderstanding. Because understanding is achieved much more rapidly by adding the

poems in L1 to L2 ones, there would be more time to practice L2 poems. By using poems in L1, the EFL learners could compare their L1 culture with foreign language culture, and become aware of the differences between the foreign language conventions and their L1 customs and culture. Moreover, accompanying learning English poetry with some amount of L1 builds up a low-stress and encouraging atmosphere for learning. This also increases the learners' acceptance of the new language. In this situation, due to high motivation and low affective filter, there are not many barriers to hinder learning. The results of the study recommend that the teachers, authors of the books and instructors use the L1 translation of the poems along/after teaching them in L2.

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