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A Comparative Study on Teachers' Beliefs about Code-Switching

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ABSTRACT

In the field of second language acquisition, the issue of code-switching or L1 use in relation to second language teaching and learning has been regarded as a hot debate for several decades. As a result, several studies have been conducted so as to support the idea that L1 should be implemented for L2 teaching and learning, while another studies provided evidence to the disadvantages caused by such implementing of L1. Since, it is widely acknowledged that the notion of 'belief' is one of the most significant factors that influence L2 teaching and learning, the current study aims at comparing teachers' beliefs towards using L1 in language classrooms in two different Arab countries Libya and Iraqi Kurdistan. The current study tries to shed light on whether Libyan EFL teachers and Kurdish EFL teachers have similar or different beliefs towards the use of L1 in their language classrooms and to find out what beliefs these groups have. Teachers' beliefs questionnaire has been used for data collection. 40 EFL teachers from the two contexts participated in the study. The findings showed that significant differences were found between the two EFL teachers in terms of their beliefs towards the use of L1 for Subject access, Classroom management, and CS for interpersonal relations. However, there were no significant differences between the two groups of teachers in relation to teachers' personal.

Keywords: Teachers' beliefs, code-switching, using L1, Libya, Iraqi Kurdistan.

1. Introduction

According to Howatt (2004) while some researchers believe that teaching L2 through the help of L1 can never help learners achieve high levels of fluency, others regard L1 use as a successful strategy to teach new language items or to give important instructions. It is also argued that in order to achieve the goal of improving learners' competence knowledge of L2, L1 should be avoided while teaching (Krashen, 1981). In the same regard, Halliwell and Jones (1991) believe that teaching L2 naturally for the purpose of improving learners' communicating skills should be stressed so as to help them improve their thinking abilities in the foreign language. According to them, translation is unnecessary for learners since they can understand the message even if they do not know the meaning of the received words.

On the other hand, some researchers believe that L1 should not be excluded when learning L2, and that using L1 is a necessity for mastering L2 (Schweers, 1999). Another view related to the fact that L1 is essential for L2 learning claims that while learners still unaware of how to use the foreign language properly, they won't be able to express themselves accurately and thus they cannot improve their critical thinking skills (Harbord, 1992, p. 351). In a study that was conducted so as to address the impact of using translation for L2 teaching and learning, Durce (2013) has found that translation into L1 was highly perceived as a necessity for successful L2 learning in particular conditions. Similarly, Elmetwally (2012) has found, depending on the results of a study aimed at investigating learners' and teachers' beliefs towards using Arabic for learning English in United Arab Emirates, that using L1 can be beneficial for successful learning. Al, H (2010) in her case study examined the attitudes teachers and learners carry towards using Arabic language in English classrooms in KSA. The findings of her study showed that teachers and learners have positive attitudes about using L1 for L2 learning. In addition, Mahado (2013), who focused in his study on EFL teachers' attitudes about using Creole in language classrooms in Mauritian schools, has found that while English-only method can help students get beneficial maximum exposure to that language, using Creole can provide numerous opportunities to participate sufficiently during their learning process. In this regard Hansen (2012) found that EFL teachers prefer to use their mother tongue because they lack for adequate preparation training on how to teach English accurately.

Furthermore, teachers of English, especially those who do research in the EFL area, teachers of other academic subjects taught in English, and the students, both those taking EMI and EFL courses, cannot imagine how, in their practical conditions, L1 can be totally avoided. Furthermore, they can't understand why it should be avoided if, in fact, it makes learning easier and faster, not damaging or slowing down the process of target language acquisition. (Tranopolsky & Goodman, 2012)

Song (2009) suggests that there is no significant difference between the teachers of English majors (EM) students and the teachers of non-English majors (NEM) students in terms of their attitudes towards the use of L1. This study also reveals that L1 may also be inevitable in the L2 class, even when students have no difficulty in understanding. Thompson (2006) emphasizes that student and teacher beliefs need to be further studied to be able to modify existing beliefs that are inconsistent with language acquisition theories and to reinforce those beliefs that tend to lead toward greater learning and eventual language acquisition. Yao (2011) from the results of his study demonstrates that most of the students are not often encouraged by their teachers and thus need much more encouragement.

In their study, Uysal and Bardakci (2014) found that teachers do not believe that the new innovations could be employed in their own classroom contexts, and thus most teachers developed their own working practices demonstrating a more traditional explicit deductive method of grammar teaching (focus on- form S) due to factors such as time constraints, crowded classes, low student motivation, noise and classroom management problems, textbooks, central examinations, cultural and L1-related problems, and their lack of special training in teaching English to young learners. Nuttall (1982) pointed out that there is plenty of work for the language teacher to do; for instance, she could make use of appropriate texts and activities that focus on the learner's attention on the text itself.

In this study we are trying to find the differences and similarities in beliefs of teachers towards using L1 in classrooms between EFL university teachers in Iraqi Kurdistan and Libya, so as to find out what are the reasons behind using L1 after long period and wide philosophy behind the significant of communicative approaches in teaching English language in EFL classrooms.

Methodology

Participants

Forty teachers of English as a foreign language participated in the current study. Twenty teachers were university EFL teachers from Libya. The other Twenty were university EFL teachers from Iraqi Kurdistan.

Data Collection Procedures

In order to find out what beliefs Libyan and Kurdish university teachers of English as a foreign language have towards the use of L1 in their language classrooms, and in order to find out whether those teachers from the two EFL contexts have similar or different beliefs towards using L1 in the language classrooms; a survey about teachers' beliefs towards the use of L1 in the language classrooms has been distributed. Each of the two researchers distributed the questionnaires via email and Facebook for his/her participants.

Research Questions

1. Do Libyan university teachers and Kurdish university teachers of English as a foreign language differ in terms of their beliefs towards using L1 in the language classroom?
2. What are the beliefs Libyan university teachers have towards using L1 in the language classroom?
3. What are the beliefs Kurdish university teachers have towards using L1 in the language classroom?

Data Analysis

In order to answer the first research question and in order to find out whether Libyan university teachers and Kurdish university teacher of English as a foreign language have similar or different beliefs towards the use of L1 in the language classroom, data was submitted into SPSS version 16. Thereafter, T- test has been run to get those obtained results of the two participating groups.

Table (1) is used to give the general group statistics of the two participating groups indicating the mean, standard deviation and the standard error mean for each category of the questionnaire.

	Nationality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Teacher' personal	Libyan	20	12.6000	2.06219	.46112
	Kurdish	20	13.8000	4.94815	1.10644
Subject access	Libyan	20	21.8500	2.79614	.62524
	Kurdish	20	15.2500	5.11834	1.14449
Classroom management	Libyan	20	21.1500	3.32890	.74436
	Kurdish	20	14.1500	4.79336	1.07183
CS for interpersonal relations	Libyan	20	22.0500	3.26827	.73081
	Kurdish	20	14.6000	5.60451	1.25321

T –test table is used for the of comparing the two participating groups so as to find out whether these two groups are similar or different in terms of their beliefs towards using L1 in the language classrooms. As table (2) shows, the results of means of the first category which is Teachers` Personal are different from the other three categories. Looking at Sig. (2-tailed) for comparing the means of the two groups for the first category, it is clear that Equal Variances Assumed was $.323 > 0.05$ which means there is no significant difference between the two participating groups in terms of their beliefs towards the use of L1 for the category Teacher` Personal. For the Equal Variances not Assumed Sig. (2-tailed) was $.326 > 0.05$ which also means there is no significant difference between the beliefs of the two groups about using L1 for the first category of the questionnaire. However, the means of the two groups for the second category which is Subject Access were significantly different for the two participating groups. That's to say, $.000 < 0.05$ which means there is a significant difference between the means of the two groups. As for the third category which is Classroom Management, Sig. (2-tailed) was also $.000$ which is less than alpha which is 0.05 .

		Levine's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Interval of the Difference	Confidence of the
							Lower	Upper
Teacher' personal	Equal variances assumed	14.801	.000	.323	-1.20000-	1.19868	-3.62661-	1.22661
	Equal variances not assumed			.326	-1.20000-	1.19868	-3.66673-	1.26673
Subject access	Equal variances assumed	8.440	.006	.000	6.60000	1.30414	3.95990	9.24010
	Equal variances not assumed			.000	6.60000	1.30414	3.93435	9.26565
Classroom management	Equal variances assumed	2.438	.127	.000	7.00000	1.30495	4.35827	9.64173
	Equal variances not assumed			.000	7.00000	1.30495	4.34764	9.65236
CS for interpersonal relations	Equal variances assumed	9.328	.004	.000	7.45000	1.45073	4.51316	10.38684
	Equal variances not assumed			.000	7.45000	1.45073	4.48959	10.41041

Thus the means of the third category of the two groups are significantly different. The last category of the survey was CS for Interpersonal Relations.

The means of this category obtained from the results of the T-test are significantly different since Sig. (2-tailed) is also .000 which is less than 0.05.

After analyzing this table of the T-test, we can say that this table provided the required answer for the first research question. In other words, the results of the T-test clearly show that the means of the two participating groups from the two countries are significantly different for three categories of the questionnaire these categories represent questions from 6 to 20. However, there is no significant difference between the two groups with the first category which represent questions from 1 to 5.

All in all, we can argue that the participating teachers though are all EFL teachers teaching in two countries with almost the same status of English, their beliefs towards the use of L1 are different which answers the first research question. In order to answer the second and the third research questions, SPSS has been used to get the percentages of each single item of the questionnaire from the two groups and a table has been used to summarize the results for this purpose.

Findings and Discussions

In order to answer the first research question and in order to find out whether Libyan university teachers and Kurdish university teacher of English as a foreign language have similar or different beliefs towards the use of L1 in the language classroom, data was submitted into SPSS version 16. T- Test has been run to get those obtained results of the two participating groups.

The participants of our study consist of 40 English teachers from Libya and Iraqi Kurdistan (Federal region in north of Iraq), each teacher was interviewed.

These interviews elicit information about the teachers' background and training, philosophy of teaching, some simple attitudes to using L1 (either Arabic language in Libya or Kurdish language in Iraqi Kurdistan) in EFL classroom, and school guidelines and policies.

We also asked them about their views on teaching, and particularly their views regarding the role of using L1 in the EFL classroom.

A questionnaire was administered to investigate their attitudes towards using L1 in EFL classroom, to find out how teachers switch codes and when and why they code-switch. The questionnaire consists of four sections and twenty items. The first five-item section elicits some information on teachers' personal according to their use of L1 in classrooms. The rest elicit data on attitudes to functions of teachers' using L1 in subject access, classroom management and interpersonal relations respectively: Section two elicits participants' attitudes to language-switching used for subject access. Section three elicits data as to whether teachers' language-switching was used for classroom management and the last section elicits attitudes towards teachers' language-switching for interpersonal relations. Attitudes to use L1 in EFL classrooms will be analyzed under four subheadings: attitudes to teachers' personal in using language-switch (questions 1 to 5); attitudes to language-switch in subject access (questions 6 to 10); attitudes to language-switch in classroom management (questions 11 to 15); and attitudes to language-switch for interpersonal relations (questions 16 to 20). The outputs from SPSS16.0 are shown in Table3.

Table 3. Percentages of the Questionnaire Responses of each Participating Group

N	Questions	Nationality	Agree %	Not sure %	Disagree %
1	Teachers who use first language in classroom can express themselves clearly in both languages.	Libyan	35	25	40
		Kurdish	50	25	25
2	Teachers who use first language in classroom may cause difficulty in understanding.	Libyan	15	15	70
		Kurdish	30	25	55
3	Teachers who use first language in classroom pollute languages.	Libyan	15	15	70
		Kurdish	45	05	60
4	Teachers use first languages in classroom are deficient in English.	Libyan	35	15	50
		Kurdish	35	20	45
5	Teachers use first languages in classroom are proficient in English.	Libyan	25	40	35
		Kurdish	10	40	50
6	Teachers who use first language in classroom can do so in all kinds of topics in class.	Libyan	75	15	10
		Kurdish	20	35	45

7	Teachers use first language in classroom can better explain the grammatical points and lexical items in the text.	Libyan	90	0	10
		Kurdish	55	20	25
8	Teachers who use first language in classroom can better explain cultural topics in the text.	Libyan	100	0	0
		Kurdish	55	15	30
9	Teachers who use first language in classroom can better explain cultural topics in the text.	Libyan	90	5	5
		Kurdish	35	45	10
10	Teachers who use first language in classroom can better clarify the lesson content taught.	Libyan	100	0	0
		Kurdish	50	20	30
11	Teachers who use first language in classroom can better clarify task instruction.	Libyan	85	0	15
		Kurdish	65	15	20
12	Teachers who use first language in classroom can better discipline the students.	Libyan	80	10	10
		Kurdish	30	25	45
13	Teachers who use first language in classroom can better engage students' attention.	Libyan	95	5	0
		Kurdish	35	30	35
14	Teachers use first language in classroom can better request quiet.	Libyan	85	5	10
		Kurdish	25	30	45
15	Teachers who use first language in classroom can better direct (call on) students.	Libyan	75	20	5
		Kurdish	10	25	65
16	Teachers who use first language in classroom can better encourage students.	Libyan	90	10	0
		Kurdish	30	10	60
17	Teachers who use first language in classroom can better praise students.	Libyan	85	5	10
		Kurdish	40	10	50
18	Teachers who use first language in classroom can better enliven the atmosphere of class	Libyan	100	0	0
		Kurdish	55	25	20
19	Teachers who use first language in classroom can better comment on the students' response.	Libyan	90	0	30
		Kurdish	35	20	45
20	Teachers use first language in classroom can better negotiate with students (reduce distance).	Libyan	95	0	5
		Kurdish	60	15	25

Section one: Attitudes to using L1 in relation to teachers' personal

The first question concerns the teachers' attitudes to the language proficiency of those who use L1 in EFL classroom. Table 3 shows that Libyan university teachers are somehow similar with Kurdish university teachers, 25 percent of the teachers selected 'not sure' or 'strongly agree' that teachers who use L1 in EFL classroom can express themselves freely and clearly. In addition, 20-25 percent of the teachers disagreed with the this item. 10 percent of the Libyan teachers do agree about this opinion and also 40 percent of Kurdish teachers agree. In contrast 20 percent of Libyan teachers strongly disagree with this opinion. In the other hand, none of the Kurdish university teachers showed their strongly disagreement with this item. The second question is about teachers' attitudes towards whether teachers' using L1 will cause any difficulty in understanding what the teacher speaks. In contrast with the first question, the table provides information on that most of the participants (30-40%) 'Disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with this opinion on the question. (5-10%) of the subjects strongly agree with this opinion and 10 percent of Libyan participants and 20 percent of Kurdish teachers think they agree with this idea, but 15% of Libyan and 25% of Kurdish teachers take no side. Question 3 elicits opinions from teachers varying on whether teachers' using L1 will pollute the languages 45 and 50 percent of the Libyan and Kurdish teachers 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with the opinion of the question. However, one problem should be noted that more than 15-25 percent of participants agree with the opinion, and only 5 percent of Kurdish and 15 percent of the Libyans are not sure of it. We consider that one of the reasons for their choice is that they do not understand what 'language pollution' is. Another reason may be that some fluent English speaking teachers tend to disagree with this language deviation, though occasionally some of them use first language in their classes. The fourth question concerns teachers' attitudes towards the nature of the link between switches and bilinguals' proficiency in languages. Contrary to the common view, Table (3) displays that 45-50 percent of the sample contradicts the opinion on the question. And 40 percent out of 40 teachers agree with it. 15% of Libyan teachers and 20% of Kurdish teachers take no side on this opinion. Question five, asks about the same

opinion on the proficiency of the teachers who use first language in EFL classroom, Table 3 shows that 40 percent of Libyan and Kurdish teachers not sure about this issue. 25 percent of Libyan participants agree or strongly agree with it while only 10 percent of Kurdish teachers agree with this idea. Other 35 -40 percent of participants in both contexts disagree even strongly disagree with this opinion.

Section two: Attitudes to use L1 in relation to subject access

This part tries to investigate teachers' views on whether using L1 in EFL class will help students understand the subject matter of their lessons or not. In the previous section we noted that there were no significant differences between beliefs of university teachers in Libya and Iraqi Kurdistan towards using L1 in EFL classroom. Table 3 illustrates an unexpected result of question six. 45 percent of Kurdish teachers disagree or strongly disagree with the opinion on the question. While 75 percent of the Libyan teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the opinion on the question and 35 percent of Kurdish and 15 percent of Libyan subjects were uncertain. As to the attitudes towards teachers' using L1 in explaining the grammatical points or lexical items Table 3 provides information on that about (90%) of the Libyan subjects either 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the opinion on the statement; whereas about half of Kurdish participants "uncertain" or 'disagree' with it. This result confirms our hypothesis that, when teaching grammatical points and lexical items, Libyan teachers questionably choose students' native language. In the same way, it is assumed that, when encountering the cultural points in texts, most of the Libyan teachers prefer to use L1 in order to illustrate them better. The opinions to the question 8 confirm the assumption. All of the Libyan participants 100% 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the point in the question; while only 45 percent of the Kurdish teachers 'disagree' or some of them uncertain with the statement on the question. Responses to question 9 for Libyan teachers were similar to those offered in question 8 in that teachers sometimes use students' L1 for both eliciting answers to the teachers' question and attracting their attentions. Table 3 displays that (90%) of the Libyan teachers 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the opinion on the question, while only 35 percent of Kurdish teachers 'agreed' and 65 percent of Kurdish teachers were disagree or not sure. According to answers for question 10 about whether teachers, using L1, would better clarify the lesson content they taught, Libyan university teachers totally 100% percent of the sample 'agreed' or 'strongly agree' with this opinion on the question, whereas only 50 percent of Kurdish teachers agreed, and 20 percent of the Kurdish teachers were uncertain. Of five questions concerning using L1 in subject access, we can see significant differences between Libyan university teachers and teachers in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Section three: Attitudes to using L1 in relation to classroom management

In response to question 11 which states that "Teachers who use first language in classroom can better clarify task instruction" the result demonstrates that responses to the opinion tilted toward agreement, 85 percent of the Libyan teachers and 65 percent of Kurdish teachers expressed agreement whereas only 15 percent of Libyan and 20 percent of Kurdish teachers disagreed, and 15 of the Kurdish teachers take no extreme sides. It is believed that using L1 for both contexts can help teachers better clarify classroom task instruction. With the answers to the statement of, "Teachers who use first language in classroom can better discipline the students". Libyan teachers also tended to agree with the statement. The result displays that 80 percent of Libyan teachers expressed agreement, whereas 30 percent of university teachers in Iraqi Kurdistan agreed with this statement, and 25 percent teachers of Kurdistan and 10 percent of university teachers in Libya were uncertain. Again in question 13, which states that "teachers who code-switch from English to L1 can better engage students' attention" we can see significant difference between beliefs of teachers in these two context towards using L1 in EFL classroom, 95 percent of Libyan teachers 'agree' or 'strongly agree', while 65 percent of Kurdish teachers "not sure" or 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' and only 5% of the teachers in Libya were not certain. In question fourteen, answers to the statement of "teachers who switch codes from English to L1 can better request quiet", indicate that only (85%) of Libyan teachers 'agreed' or "strongly agreed", whereas 25 percent of Kurdish teachers 'agreed' and 30 percent of the teachers in Kurdistan were uncertain. It seems that code-switching for requesting the students' to be quiet is agreed by many of the Libyan teachers. To the statement of question fifteen, "teachers who switch codes from English to L1 can better direct (call on) students", 65 percent of the Kurdish samples 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' with it, whereas 75 percent of Libyan teachers 'agreed' with it and 20-25 percent who were uncertain. All above five questions about using L1 in EFL classroom management gain high percentage of agreement in Libya. While Kurdish teachers were somehow disagree with statements in this section.

Section four: Attitudes to using L1 in relation to interpersonal relations

With the statement of question 16, "Teachers who switch codes from English to L1 can better encourage students", the result shows that 90% of the Libyan teachers tended to 'agree' or 'strongly agree', whereas, only 60 percent of Kurdish university teachers expressed disagreement and 10 percent were uncertain, so the majority approve of this statement. This ties in well with the fact that in Libyan university in contrast with Kurdistan universities in EFL classroom teachers believe that it is necessary to encourage students when appropriate. The opinions to statement of question 17, "Teachers who use first language in classroom can better praise students", are similar with

those of Question 16, about 85 percent of the Libyan teachers showed agreement, 50 percent of Kurdish teachers showed disagreement and 15 percent teachers from context were uncertain. To the following three question items, there are different opinions. In responding to question 18, the participants of our study from Libya totally 100% showed 'agreement' to the statement, in contrast the percentage of the Kurdish teachers (55%) agreed with the statement. 45 percent of Kurdish teachers were uncertain" or "disagree" and "strongly disagree" to the statement. Answers to question nineteen, "Teachers who use first language in classroom can better comment on the students' response", show that 90 percent of our participants from Libya 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' compared to 35 percent of teachers from Kurdistan who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' and 20 percent Kurdish teachers were unsure. To the last question "Teachers use first language in classroom can better negotiate with students (reduce distance)", whereas 95 percent of the samples from Libya 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed', 60 percent of Kurdish participants 'agreed or strongly agreed and 25% expressed disagreement and 5 percent expressed uncertainty. After this intensive analysis of the responses, we can argue that Libyan EFL and Kurdish EFL teachers, though different in some percentages, have positive attitudes towards the use of L1 in the language classrooms.

Conclusion

Using L1 in the language classroom is still considered as a hot debate in the field of second language teaching and learning. The current study was carried out in order to investigate the differences and similarities of EFL teachers teaching English for university level students in Iraqi and Libya. The results revealed that significant differences were found in the majority of the questionnaire responses between the two groups. To obtain those required results, T-test has been used. Furthermore, in order to get a clearer vision of the differences between the two participating groups, SPSS has been used to obtain the percentages of the responses for each single item of the questionnaire selected by the two groups. Overall, we can argue that EFL teachers' beliefs towards using L1 in their language classrooms are different in the two studied contexts. That's to say, teachers' beliefs towards the use of L1 should not be studied and generalized as EFL and ESL contexts, for example, since beliefs in this study were different in the EFL context.

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