

The Use of First Language in Teaching ESP Vocabulary to Engineering Students at a Technical College

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Abstract

There has been a long-standing debate over the issue of including or excluding the student's mother tongue (L1) in English as a foreign language (L2) classrooms. There are two opinions in this regard: monolingual approach and bilingual approach. While advocates of monolingual approach suggest that learning is determined by the exposure to L2, those advocating the bilingual approach think that L1 makes a valuable contribution to the learning process. Despite the widespread English-only use in EFL classes, the use of L1 is still a perennial topic. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the use of L1 in English for specific purposes (ESP) classes at a Technical College in Ho Chi Minh City-Vietnam (*Henceforth called TC*). More specifically, it attempts to explore the extent to which L1 is used and the reasons why L1 is used, and discover what attitudes engineering students have towards the use of L1 in the process of teaching ESP vocabulary to students. The instruments used for collecting data were questionnaires and class observations. The participants were 8 EFL teachers and 314 students at TC. The findings of the study indicated that all the teachers of English overused L1 in teaching ESP vocabulary. The study also revealed that the ESs had supportive attitudes towards their teachers' use of L1 in teaching ESP vocabulary. Based on the findings, the study provided practical implications in order to help both EFL teachers and engineering students to improve their teaching and learning ESP at vocational training colleges in the Vietnamese context.

Keywords: Use of L1; English for specific purposes (ESP); Learning and teaching ESP vocabulary; Technical students; Vietnamese context.



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1. Introduction

The history of foreign and second language teaching and learning has witnessed the blooming of a variety of methods and approaches. Richards *et al.* (1986) and Larsen-Freeman (2000) mention such methods and approaches as: the Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method, the Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching, the Audio-Lingual Method, the Silent Way, Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning, Total Physical Response, the Natural Approach, Communicative Language Teaching, Content-based, Task-based, and Participatory Approaches. Each of the methods or approaches has its own characteristics. Some methods did not encourage the use of L1 in classroom instruction; meanwhile, some others did. For example, one of the methods that encouraged the use of the students' native language as the medium of instruction is the Grammar-Translation Method. Accordingly, L1 was used to explain new items and to enable comparisons to be made between the foreign language and the student's native language. However, in the Direct Method, classroom instruction was conducted exclusively in L2; or the Audio-lingual Method admitted that language skills were learned more effectively if the items to be learned in L2. Especially, Communicative Language Teaching did not encourage the use of the first language, but it allowed that L1 might be used to facilitate language learning.

Obviously, there have been contradictory perspectives of using L1 in foreign language classrooms. The supporters of the monolingual approach have argued that students of L2 should minimize or even neglect the use of L1 in their classroom. Nevertheless, the ones who support the bilingual approach are aware of the positive role of L1. The supporters of L1 have given the reasons why L1 should be used. For example, Bui and Nguyen (2014) assumed that the use of L1 in the classroom should not be considered as drawbacks any longer. They added that the use of L1 in the teaching process can be believed to be a teaching strategy in explaining the meanings to students more effectively. L2 input must be understood and internalized by students; L1 use can facilitate intake and thereby contribute to learning (Le, 2011). Especially, Nation (2001) believes that L1 should be used to teach students who are low proficient in L2; and L1 is often used as a mediating tool to facilitate task completion. It can be seen that using L1 in learning L2 is also helpful for students to finish the tasks given in the learning process more easily. From this point of view, L1 still has its own value in teaching English language. In reality, during the teaching process, L1 use still remains its values in certain cases, for example, difficult situations in which students do not have sufficient English to express their own ideas or the use of English makes them misunderstand. It is essential for L2 students to learn L2 effectively in a non-threatening environment, and so L1 can be used by the teacher in a certain case. However, L1 overuse makes negative impact on students' interaction and performance when they study the target language. It does not mean that L1 is banned using in teaching ESP vocabulary. In other words, L1 use should be

taken into consideration in order to make the final decision to encourage the teachers to use L1 in teaching ESP vocabulary or limit its use.

So far in the international context, a variety of studies have been conducted to investigate different aspects regarding the use of L1 in teaching and learning L2. The possibility of the students' L1 use in the classroom has been discussed by EFL researchers; and a noticeable number of studies in literature have examined the role of L1 in EFL/ESL classes as well as ESP classes. Nonetheless, it is not the case of Vietnam where very little literature in terms of the use of L1 in teaching ESP has been found. Especially, at TC no studies relating to ESP vocabulary teaching and learning have been conducted. The dearth of study on controversial issues of the use of L1 in ESP teaching raised by EFL teachers as well as educators has motivated the current study with the aim of investigating how EFL teachers and students perceive the use of L1 in teaching and learning ESP vocabulary at TC.

2. Purposes of the Study

The current study aims to investigate the use of L1 in the process of teaching ESP vocabulary to engineering students at TC. More specifically, it attempts to explore the extent to which L1 is used in teaching ESP vocabulary; and why teachers use L1 to teach ESP vocabulary in their English language classrooms. Especially, the study also attempts to explore the students' attitudes towards the use of L1 in teaching ESP vocabulary.

3. Research Questions

To achieve the above-mentioned purposes, the current study attempts to address the following three questions:

1. To what extent is L1 used in teaching ESP vocabulary to the students?
2. What are the teachers' reasons for using L1 in teaching ESP vocabulary to the students?
3. What are the students' attitudes towards the use of L1 in teaching ESP vocabulary?

4. Significance of the Study

This study aims to investigate the use of L1 in teaching and learning ESP at TC. It is expected that the study will make contributions at both theoretical and practical levels. Theoretically, this study will discover, from teachers' and students' point of view, whether the use of L1 in teaching ESP is useful or not. It will contribute to the way how to use L1 effectively as well as shed light on making good use of the strong points of L1 use and reducing its limitations in the teaching and learning process. Practically, it is expected that the present study will help EFL teachers have a sufficient look at L1 use in teaching ESP vocabulary. They can identify the reasons why or why not L1 is used, and or in which situations it is used so that they can focus on the advantages and restrict the disadvantages of using L1 to deliver ESP vocabulary in the context.

5. Brief Literature Review

5.1. Vocabulary and Language Acquisition

The language which children learn in their early stage of life is called L1. It takes a long time to acquire this language through doing different activities in life; and the language which they learn later in their teenage, adolescence or adulthood is called L2. That means L1 acquisition is considered as acquiring the language during the early age in the childhood; and L2 acquisition is often taking place after that. L2 acquisition is clearly different from L1 acquisition in some ways. L2 learners have the experience of already acquiring a first language (Schmitt, 2000); they almost always succeed in learning L1 without so much effort whereas L2 learning is concerned with many different conditions and processes, and it is hard to be successful. In reality, L1 is normally mastered naturally while L2 requires a lot of effort from students at the same time this acquisition needs to be supported by various techniques to acquire the language, and learning conditions and environment (Saville-Troike and Barto, 2016). The learning process of any language requires that the students obtain some extent of the vocabulary in order to understand the language, so vocabulary plays a vital role in language acquisition. According to Schmitt (2000), knowledge of vocabulary is central to language competence and to L2 acquisition. Nonetheless, L2 vocabulary acquisition is not similar to L1 vocabulary acquisition because an L2 student has already developed conceptual and semantic systems linked to the L1 (Takac, 2008); and although L1 and L2 language students acquire vocabulary through the same processes: explicit learning through the focused study of vocabulary and incidental learning through exposure to the use of language, L2 learning context usually differs markedly from students' L1 learning context (Schmitt, 2000). Obviously, the more L2 learning context is similar to L1 learning one, the easier for students to acquire vocabulary. The input hypothesis claims that exposure to comprehensible input is both necessary and sufficient for L2 learning to take place (Mitchell and Myles, 2004); and L2 students can learn lexical items if they are exposed to sufficient amounts of comprehensible input (Takac, 2008) both inside and outside the classroom. Nonetheless, in contexts where English is taught and learned as a foreign language, whether language input is comprehensible to students depends on a variety of factors such materials, teachers, and learning environment. What is more, according to Krashen (1989), L2 students know that a large vocabulary is of course essential for them to master a language. As a result, for a long time EFL teachers and educators have emphasized the importance of vocabulary knowledge and attempted to explore ways of promoting it more effectively.

5.2. The Use of L1- a Controversial Vocabulary Teaching Technique

Researchers have suggested several techniques for presenting the meaning and form of vocabulary. Nevertheless, according to Takac (2008), techniques employed for teaching vocabulary by teachers depend on several factors, such as the content, time availability, General English (GE) or ESP and students' preferences and levels of proficiency. Those techniques are using objects, drawing, eliciting, using pictures or illustrations, giving synonyms or antonyms, enumeration, miming or gestures, using contextual clues, giving word families, translation and some others.

Among those above-mentioned techniques, translation which means the way of communicating the meaning from one language to another language has been considered as a technique commonly employed by EFL teachers with several purposes such as presenting the meaning of words, dealing with incidental vocabulary, pointing out similarities or differences between first and second language, checking students' comprehension (Takac, 2008; Thornbury, 2002). According to Grammar-Translation Method, L1 is very helpful for students to master the meanings of the language. The use of the L1 certainly facilitates the transition of L2 to L1, i.e. translating L2 into L1; or in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the use of L1 is permitted whenever it was necessary to facilitate the process of learning languages (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). More interestingly, Doff (1988) and Nation (2001) state that L2 vocabulary acquisition through translation is a very useful and effective technique, and it is often the simplest and clearest way of showing what a word means. Translating is strongly believed to help most students master English better, especially vocabulary, idioms and phrases (Schmitt, 2000). It can be inferred that the meaning of L2 words becomes easy to be understood through translation from L2 into L1.

Regarding teaching ESP, Day and Krzanowski (2011) state that almost all principles employed for the teaching of GE are directly transferable to the teaching of ESP, and that a combination of methodologies may be more appropriate than adherence to a single method e.g. CLT and the Grammar-Translation Method. In addition, Scrivener (2011). Claims that teachers keep teaching all kinds of English in the ways they know in the teaching process. It can be inferred that the use of L1 in teaching ESP is still encouraged by educators and researchers. They may consider translating as one of the many techniques that can be employed to convey the meaning of words to students. Although they admit that using more English in the classroom would be better for students, they never object to the need to use L1 in teaching vocabulary to ESP and less able students. Findings of previous studies regarding both teaching vocabulary of GE and ESP in both international and Vietnamese contexts also revealed that most of EFL teachers and students have positive attitudes towards the use of L1 in the L2 classrooms. They all support the reasons that L1 is most commonly used for explaining new and difficult words, abstract concepts, or terminologies; and this is one of the techniques that save time and help students understand the meaning of words (Afzal, 2013; Alshammari, 2011; Dujmović, 2014; Kieu, 2010; Mahmutoğlu and Kıcı, 2013; Tajgozari, 2017; Timor, 2012).

In contrast, as mentioned above, there have been contradictory perspectives of using L1 in foreign language classrooms, some professionals believe that L1 use could impede progress in the acquisition of English (Auerbach, 1993), or according to the naturalistic approach, defining and translating lexical items were to be avoided (Takac, 2008). Previous studies also revealed that using L1 or translation for teaching vocabulary may cause some negative effects. L1 use should be avoided or reduced as much as possible because it may be a serious impediment to L2 acquisition and hindered comprehensible input as well as learning (Bouangeune, 2009; Mirza *et al.*, 2012).

In conclusion, using L1 to teach vocabulary of GE or ESP is still a controversial technique. Those who support L1 use think that L1 is the quickest way to connect L2 to L1. The others consider that L1 should be forbidden or reduced as much as possible. The current study attempts to explore whether the use of L1 for teaching ESP vocabulary in the context is favored or not.

6. Research Methods

6.1. Participants

This study was conducted at a Technical College (TC) in Ho Chi Minh City-Vietnam. The total number of students at TC is about 13,000. They major in mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, electronic engineering, telecommunications, and information technology. Their training program is implemented in six semesters. After completing the GE course in the third semester, they are all required to take the ESP course in the fourth semester. At the time the study was conducted, there were 22 classes of ESP and 8 teachers were teaching those classes. To collect data for the study, 8 classes were randomly chosen, all the students (325) in 8 classes, and all the EFL teachers (8) were invited to participate in the study.

6.2. Research Instruments

Two instruments were employed for collecting data for the current study, including questionnaires and class observations.

Questionnaire: Two questionnaires for teacher participants and student participants were designed. The questionnaire for the teacher participants consisted of 16 items aiming to find out if teachers used L1 to teach ESP vocabulary in their real situation or not, how frequently they used their L1 in teaching ESP vocabulary; and the reasons why they used L1 in teaching ESP vocabulary. The questionnaire for student participants consisted of 13 items aiming to explore the students' attitudes towards the use of L1 in teaching ESP vocabulary in terms of benefits of the use of L1 and their preferences. The questionnaire items were adapted from literature (Bouangeune, 2009; Doff, 1988; Kieu, 2010; Tang, 2002), and employed a five point Likert scale ranging from Never True (NT), Rarely

True (RT), Sometimes True (ST), Usually True (UT) to Always True (AT). After being piloted, the both the questionnaires for the teachers and students were revised and the final versions were used for collecting data.

Observation: Observation was conducted to find out the extent L1 was utilized in teaching ESP vocabulary, and the percentage of L1 and L2 was used to explain ESP vocabulary by the eight teachers. A structured-checklist was used to collect data during observations. The checklist recorded the frequency use of L1 and L2 by using forward slashes. Each forward slash “/ ” was put for the number of times when the teachers delivered ESP vocabulary.

6.3. Data Collection

Data collection took place during the 2nd semester of the academic year 2017-2018. Firstly, a consent form was sent to the teacher participants to ask for permission and inform them of the purposes, requirements, and methods of the study to avoid any unnecessary confusion when they completed the questionnaire. After that, 8 copies of the questionnaire were administered to them. The participants were allowed 15 minutes in total to complete the questionnaires. All the 8 copies of the questionnaire were correctly completed. Regarding the administration of the student questionnaire, 325 copies of the student questionnaire were given by hand to the students of the eight classes which were observed. However, 314 copies (96.5%) of the questionnaire were correctly and relevantly completed. There were twenty-four observation sessions conducted in eight classes. Three observation sessions were conducted in each class. Each session lasted forty-five minutes. The observer chose the last row in the classroom so that it could be more convenient for observing the whole class and teaching activities. Two observation techniques used to collect data were note-taking and structured-checklist. The observer recorded or completed the observation sheet and took notes of how the teachers dealt with new words in all the ESP classes. During all the class observations, the times the teachers used L1 were also recorded. The total number of vocabulary items which was taught with or without using L1 in twenty-four sessions was listed for analyzing. How the meaning of each new word was explained was also recorded. After class observations, confirmation forms were sent to the eight teachers to sign and confirm their teaching activities.

6.4. Data Analysis

Data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively by using SPSS, version 22. Descriptive statistics such as percentages (%), means (M) and standard deviations (St.D) were used to analyze the participants' responses to address the three research questions. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was measured as an indicator of homogeneity to the degree of instrument as a whole. Analysis of quantitative data collected from the teacher and student questionnaires were based on the following scale:

1.00-2.60: never true and rarely true; 2.61-3.40: sometimes true; 3.41- 5.00: usually true and always true

Cronbach's alpha reliability index for the questionnaires was calculated. The index is displayed in the table below.

Table-1. Cronbach's Alpha index

RQs	Contents	Item No	Cronbach's Alpha
RQ1	The extent to which teachers used L1 to teach ESP vocabulary	7	.797
RQ2	Reasons for using L1 to teach ESP vocabulary	9	.754
RQ3	Students' attitudes towards using L1 to teach ESP vocabulary (benefits)	6	.756
	Students' attitudes towards using L1 to teach ESP vocabulary (preferences)	6	.799

Regarding data analysis for class observations, the number of ESP vocabulary items which was taught with or without using L1 in twenty-four sessions was counted and sorted out. The total time allotted for teaching ESP vocabulary in each session with or without L1 was analyzed and compared so that the researcher could explore whether the teachers spent more time on L1 or L2. In addition, the ways which the teachers used L1 in delivering ESP vocabulary lessons were analyzed in order to find out the most common ways. Each participating teacher was assigned the code T, ranging from T1 to T8.

7. Results

7.1. Results of RQ1: The Extent to Which Teachers Used L1 to Teach ESP Vocabulary

Research question 1 attempted to explore the extent to which L1 is used in teaching ESP vocabulary. The table 2 and 3 below display the findings from class observations related to the total number of ESP words taught to the students, the total time allotted for teaching those words as well as the frequency of L1 use in different techniques for dealing with ESP .

Number of ESP vocabulary items taught through the use of L1

Table-2. Number of ESP vocabulary items taught with L1 and without L1 during twenty-four observation sessions

Teachers	Observation sessions	Vocabulary items taught with L1		Vocabulary items taught without L1	
		Words	Time (seconds)	Words	Time (seconds)
T1	3	49	293	10	32
T2	3	25	194	8	55
T3	3	25	120	9	57
T4	3	22	92	7	35
T5	3	25	135	14	58
T6	3	22	103	11	38
T7	3	37	222	9	29
T8	3	28	123	7	17
Total	24	231	1.282	79	321

Data displayed in table 2 indicates that during the twenty-four observation sessions conducted in the eight classes, the total number of vocabulary items was explained by the eight teachers in the study was 310 words or phrases. Only 79 of the items were explained without the use of L1; meanwhile 231 out of them were explained in L1, accounting for about 74.51% of the total ESP vocabulary items. More accurately, the eight teachers in twenty-four observation sessions spent the total time of 1.282 seconds explaining 231 ESP vocabulary items with L1 so the total time for using L1 to teach the ESP vocabulary accounted for a high percentage (80%). Meanwhile the time for teaching 79 ESP vocabulary items without L1 just made up 20% of the duration in the delivery of the ESP vocabulary lessons. Frequency and ways of dealing with ESP vocabulary through the use of L1

Table-3. Frequency and ways of dealing with ESP vocabulary

No	Techniques for dealing with ESP vocabulary	Frequency of Using L1 (times)of
1	Explaining the information related to the vocabulary	38
2	Giving a direct translation	110
3	Asking students to translate	111
4	Confirming the meaning	113
5	Explaining the meaning	15
6	Explaining the word use	18
7	Giving example(s) related to the vocabulary	12
8	Other ways of explanation	0
9	Total	417

Data displayed in Table 3 revealed that three most frequently-used ways of teaching ESP vocabulary through the use of L1 were for giving a direct translation, asking students to translate, and confirming the meaning, ranging from 110 times to 113 times respectively. It also means that the three most common ways accounted for over 75% of the total times that the teachers employed to teach the ESP vocabulary. It was observed that when the students did not say anything after being asked to translate the ESP vocabulary into L1 or after the students gave the meanings of the new words incorrectly, the teachers might give an equivalent meaning in L1 correctly. The findings also revealed that the teachers rarely used L1 to give examples related to ESP vocabulary, i.e. only 12 times. It can be concluded that L1 was frequently employed with a high percentage (80%) in teaching ESP vocabulary by all the eight teacher participants in the study.

Data obtained from the teacher questionnaire also revealed similar findings related to the frequency as well as the ways of dealing with ESP vocabulary through the use of L1. The findings obtained from the teacher questionnaire are displayed in Table 4 below.

Table-4. Teachers' perceptions of the ways of using L1 to teach ESP vocabulary

No	Items	N	M	St.D
1	I write the English words on the board and then give a direct translation orally.	8	4.00	1.069
2	I write the English words on the board, and write the Vietnamese meanings as well.	8	2.87	.991
3	I write the English words on the board, and ask students to say it in L1.	8	4.50	.755
4	I write the English words, give examples in English, and ask students to say them in L1.	8	2.87	.834
5	I read aloud the English words, and then ask students to give the meaning in L1.	8	3.62	.916
6	I read aloud the English words, and then give the meaning in L1 orally.	8	4.00	.925
7	New words are presented in an easy context with definitions and explanations in L1.	8	3.12	.640

Data displayed in Table 4 shows that the most common ways of using L1 in teaching ESP vocabulary are reading the new words aloud or writing them on the board, and then giving direct translation or asking the students to say it in L1 (items 1,3,5,6 with M=4.00; M= 4.50, M= 3.62, M=4.00 respectively). Meanwhile, very few teachers wrote the words and Vietnamese meanings on the board (item 2), or wrote the words, gave examples and asked the students to translate (item 4) with M= 2.87 and 2.87 respectively.

To measure the extent to which L1 is used in teaching ESP vocabulary, data was also gathered from the students through the questionnaire (item 1). Table 5 below displays the finding.

Table-5. Students' Perceptions of the frequency of the use of L1

No	Item	N	NT	RT	ST	UT	AT
1	The teachers always use L1 to teach ESP vocabulary.	314	0%	4.1%	18.2%	47.5%	30.3%

Data displayed in table 5 indicates that most of the students (77.8 %) perceived that their teachers usually or always used L1 for teaching ESP vocabulary. The finding is consistent with the teachers' perceptions as well as with the findings from class observations, which shows that the extent to which the teachers used L1 in teaching ESP vocabulary in the context is rather high.

7.2. Results of RQ2: Reasons for Using L1 to Teach ESP vocabulary

Research question 2 attempted to explore the reasons why the teachers use L1 to teach ESP vocabulary. Data collected from the teacher questionnaire is presented in Table 6 below.

Table-6. Teachers' perceptions of the reasons for using L1 in teaching ESP vocabulary

No	Items	N	M	SD
8	Using L1 makes students focus on vocabulary item which is learned.	8	3.50	.755
9	Using L1 makes me comfortable with presenting the vocabulary.	8	4.12	.834
10	Using L1 provides the meaning of words exactly.	8	3.75	.462
11	Using L1 helps me explain the phonetic symbols easily.	8	3.25	1.164
12	Using L1 is more efficient to explain an English word with many different meanings.	8	3.75	.886
13	Using L1 helps make clear the meaning of abstract words or difficult words.	8	3.87	.991
14	Using L1 helps check whether my students understand the words clearly.	8	4.25	.707
15	Using L1 prevents misunderstanding of the meanings of new words.	8	4.00	.755
16	Using L1 helps save time when there are a lot of new words in one teaching session.	8	3.87	.991

Data displayed in Table 6 shows that three major reasons of using L1 are making the teachers comfortable with presenting the vocabulary (item 9), helping check whether the students understand the words clearly (item 14), and preventing misunderstanding of the meanings of new words with M=4.2, 4.25 and 4.00 respectively. In addition, about three-fourths of the teachers agreed that they used L1 for making clear the meaning of abstract words or difficult words (item 13), saving time when there are a lot of new words in one teaching session (item 16), providing the meaning of words exactly (item 10), explaining an English word with many different meanings (item 12) with M= 3.87, 3.87, 3.75 and 3.75 respectively. The two least common reasons are making students focus on vocabulary item which is learned (item 9), and explaining the phonetic symbols easily (item 11) with M= 3.50 and 3.25 respectively. It is evident that all of the 9 reasons for using L1 mentioned in Table 6 were more or less employed by the teachers in ESP classes.

7.3. Results of RQ3: Students' Attitudes Towards the Use Of L1 To Teach ESP Vocabulary

Research question 3 attempted to explore the students' attitudes towards the use of L1 to teach ESP vocabulary in relation to the benefits of the use of L1 and preferences of the situations in which L1 is used.

Regarding the benefits of the use of L1, data collected from the student questionnaire is presented in Table 7 below.

Table-7. Students' perceptions of the benefits of the use of L1

No	Items	N	Mean	SD
2	L1 helps me understand the meaning of the word more easily.	314	4.34	.836
3	L1 helps me understand the reading or listening text more easily.	314	4.19	.895
4	L1 helps me retain the word for a longer time.	314	3.12	1.020
5	L1 helps me focus on the word I am learning.	314	4.01	.969
6	L1 makes me feel interested and less stressed in the lesson.	314	4.19	.835
7	L1 helps me prevent misunderstanding the meaning of the word.	314	4.19	.855

It can be seen in Table 7 that most of the students perceived that they could get benefits of the teachers' use of L1 in learning ESP vocabulary. That using L1 can help students understand the meaning of new words more easily was one of the most preferred benefits (item 2) with $M=4.34$. In addition, most of the students also thought that using L1 could help them understand the reading or listening text more easily (item 3), focus on the word (item 5), make them feel interested and less stressed in the lesson (item 6), and prevent misunderstanding the meaning of word (item 7) with $M= 4.19, 4.01, 4.19,$ and 4.19 respectively. More interestingly, not many of the students thought that using L1 could help them retain the word for a longer time (item 4) with $M= 3.12$.

Regarding students' preferences of the situations when L1 is used, data collected from the student questionnaire is presented in Table below.

Table-8. Students' preferences of the situations when L1 is used

No	Items	N	Mean	SD
8	I like the teacher to use L1 when there are so many new words in the lesson.	314	3.82	1.069
9	I like the teacher to use L1 when I cannot catch up the meaning in English.	314	3.95	1.056
10	I like the teacher to use L1 when there are some abstract or technical terms which are difficult to understand.	314	3.70	.960
11	I like the teacher to use L1 when my teacher wants to check what I understand is correct or not.	314	3.62	.881
12	I like the teacher to use L1 when my teacher wants to prevent misunderstanding of the meaning of the word.	314	3.67	.970
13	I like the teacher to use L1 when my teacher explains the use of the word.	314	3.58	1.048

The findings displayed in Table 8 show that about three-fourths of the students have similar preferences of the situations when L1 should be used to support their ESP vocabulary learning. They preferred the teachers to use in such situations as when there are so many new words in a lesson (item 8), when they cannot catch up the meaning of new words in English (item 9), when there are some abstract or technical terms which are difficult to understand (item 10), when my teacher wants to check what I understand is correct or not (item 11), when the teacher wants to prevent misunderstanding of the meaning of the word (item 12), and when the teacher explains the use of the word (item 13) with $M= 3.82, 3.95, 3.70, 3.62, 3.67,$ and 3.58 respectively.

8. Discussion

Vocabulary is central to EFL teaching and learning because lacking vocabulary students in EFL contexts cannot understand other people or express their own ideas. Foreign or second language students may know that vocabulary acquisition is a basic and essential component in the process of learning. A good knowledge of vocabulary is important for all students who study GE or ESP. Teachers' vocabulary teaching supports students in enhancing knowledge of lexicon, and thus assists them in improving their L2 vocabulary knowledge and use.

The findings of the study revealed that L1 was used through the delivery of ESP vocabulary with a fairly high extent, accounting for up to 80% of the time spent on vocabulary teaching. It is evident that most of the teachers in the context use L1 very often in teaching ESP vocabulary. These findings of the study are in line with those of [Alshammari \(2011\)](#) and [Sharma \(2006\)](#) studies which revealed that L1 is employed in the teaching process quite often. One of the most significant findings from the classroom observations and questionnaire is that most of the teachers write the English words on the board and then give a direct translation orally; or read aloud the English words, and then give the meaning in L1 orally. It is evident that the students do not have opportunities to work on the meaning by themselves so they cannot master the words well except the meanings in L1. That is because the teachers

do the work of translation, instead they should ask the students to try different techniques and finally translate the word by themselves. By doing so, the students are encouraged to work hard to struggle with the meanings of words, and thus they will remember them longer, supporting their improvement of long-term memory. Another reason for a high frequency of using L1 may be because teachers also encounter difficulty in finding the ways of conveying meanings of specialized terms or concepts, so they choose “Translation” as the quickest, easiest way to convey the meanings of words.

The findings of the study also revealed that most of the teachers had similar purposes of employing L1 in ESP vocabulary teaching. Those common purposes are helping students understand new words clearly and quickly, clarifying the meanings of abstract words or difficult words, preventing misunderstanding of the meanings, and or saving time in the delivery of ESP vocabulary. These findings of the study seem to be consistent with those of other previous studies conducted by [Al-Nofaie \(2010\)](#), [Kieu \(2010\)](#), [Alshammari \(2011\)](#), [Jafari and Shokrpour \(2013\)](#) in different contexts. [Takac \(2008\)](#), states that connecting an L2 item with its equivalent in L1 is considered as one of the mostly-used strategies for checking comprehension of the meanings of words and of pointing out the similarities or differences between L1 and L2 in order to avoid error making or misunderstanding. It can be understood that L1 should not be used for presenting the meanings of words, but for checking understanding. Teachers tend to convey the meanings of words as quickly as possible through the use of L1. Nonetheless, they forget one important thing that vocabulary teaching techniques are plentiful. Obviously, teachers use translation to help students to understand what new words mean, but they cannot help them to remember those words and use them in communication. What is more, if students always depend on teachers’ translation of words, they may not certainly be able to develop vocabulary learning strategies for understanding words in reading or listening texts. If teachers do not use different techniques for presenting and checking vocabulary instead of only using translation, it is certainly very boring to more able students who like using the target language in class.

The findings of the study also revealed that a majority of the students had positive attitudes towards teachers’ use of L1 to teach ESP vocabulary. They considered L1 as an effective tool for them to understand the meanings of new words. It is evident that the students’ positive attitudes are in agreement with the teachers’ actions in the use of L1 in teaching and learning ESP vocabulary. In EFL contexts, students are considered to study in a bilingual environment where the temptation to use L1 cannot be avoided simply because they easily associate the meanings of new words in L2 with L1. It is also more challenging for the teachers who share the students’ L1 to find more effective techniques to convey the meaning of vocabulary; instead, the only choice is to resort to L1.

Another issue is that the students in the context only study 60 credit hours of GE in the third semester before they start studying ESP in the fourth semester. That means their English proficiency may be at preliminary or pre-intermediate level. It cannot be avoided that the number of less able students in classes exceeds the number of more able ones. Students of low English proficiency may encounter a lot of difficulties in understanding of meanings of words. They may not understand the teacher’s explanation of meanings in L2. The best and safest way for them to cope with difficult words may be “translation”. In vocabulary teaching, teachers can employ a host of strategies and activities which help their students acquire the language ([Takac, 2008](#)). However, which strategies are employed depends on the students’ learning styles and preferences or the time allotted to the each unit. Due to insufficient time allotted to the course and students of low English proficiency, although EFL teachers might realize that using more L2 in the classroom would be better for students to acquire the language, they are reluctant to rely on L1 in teaching ESP vocabulary to less able students. According to [Thornbury \(2002\)](#), an over-reliance on translation may mean that students fail to develop an independent L2 lexicon, with the effect that they always access L2 words by means of their L1 equivalents, rather than directly. Moreover, using L1 to express the meanings of words in L2 is certainly to reduce or hinder students’ exposure to comprehensible input and the only opportunity for them to receive such input is inside the classroom. The use of vocabulary teaching strategies such as introducing, presenting the meaning and form of new specialized words or concepts, practicing using the words, monitoring and evaluating level of acquisition of various components of lexical knowledge ([Takac, 2008](#)), will certainly motivate students and bring a lot of benefits to them in the process of learning ESP.

9. Conclusions and Implications

The present study was designed to investigate the use of L1 in teaching ESP vocabulary from teachers’ and students’ points of view. One of the most significant findings to emerge from this study is that all the teachers employed L1 in teaching ESP vocabulary. L1 was mainly used for presenting the meanings, checking the students’ understanding of specialized words or abstract concepts, clarifying the meanings of abstract words or difficult words, preventing misunderstanding of the meanings. Most of the teachers disclosed that they had to use L1 when the students failed in understanding the meanings of words in L2. They frequently overused L1 in the delivery of the ESP vocabulary lessons. Another significant finding of the study is that a majority of the students expressed their positive attitudes towards the L1 use in teaching ESP vocabulary, which means they agree with the teachers about the use of L1 in ESP vocabulary teaching.

No matter how vocabulary items are taught, implicitly or explicitly, the selection of and reason for any specialized vocabulary to be presented in an ESP unit should be taken into consideration. It does not mean that all vocabulary items must be dealt with during a lesson. When dealing with specialized words, teachers need to consider whether or not and how to teach these words depending on the needs of the students and the aims of the course. Many of specialized words are quite familiar to the students. The teacher may deal with the meanings of these words in different ways, not just translation. Translation of words may be used; however, teachers should have students study vocabulary in contextualized translation instead of providing them with decontextualized translation

equivalents only. In this case students may get some benefits; for example, they may know how the words are used and how they combine with other words. Thornbury (2002), states that students need to wean themselves off a reliance on direct translation from L1. They will need plentiful exposure to talk and text as well as training for self-direct learning. They need to be actively involved in the learning of words through tasks and activities. ESP students may confront an extremely large learning task in order to fully develop their understanding and use of specialized vocabulary in a professional context later in their future job (Coxhead, 2013). That is why they need to remember specialized words for long. Instant understanding meanings of words, but forgetting them right after class will help them with nothing in their future professional context. Therefore, it is recommended that for teachers, an adjustment of the use of L1 in the teaching process should be made so that students can improve their ways of acquiring ESP vocabulary, and teachers are able to give ESP lessons more effectively. Teachers should reduce the amount of L1 use in teaching ESP vocabulary in order to help students have more opportunities to expose themselves to L2. Only teachers cannot accomplish this task. For students, it is suggested that they should make themselves gradually familiar to listening to teachers' explanation of meanings of new words in L2. They only ask their teachers to give meanings in L1 in case the words or terms are too difficult to understand. By doing so, they will certainly improve both listening skill and vocabulary knowledge; and for the course designer, it is suggested that sufficient time allotment for the GE course be a must. That is because only when the students reach Pre-or Intermediate level of English proficiency will they be able to follow an ESP course more effectively. In-service professional development courses should be held for teachers. Both the course designer and teachers should discuss what types of ESP vocabulary items need to be taught and learned in class and how they should be presented.

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