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Research Paper

The Effect of Using First Language and Inverse Translation on the Iranian Beginner EFL Learners' Performance: Modal Verbs in Focus

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Abstract

The present study is an attempt to investigate the effect of using first language (L1) and inverse translation (IT) on the EFL students' performance in terms of specific grammatical structures (modal verbs), as well as the learners' attitudes toward using L1 and IT in an EFL class. The mixed-methods design encapsulating quasi-experimental and survey study was employed. In order to triangulate the survey results, a semi-structured interview was also conducted. Sixty beginner language learners were selected as the participants based on availability sampling and assigned into the experimental and control groups. The participants of both groups took the pretest of the intended modal verbs. Then, both groups went through 12 sessions of one-hour instruction focusing on teaching modal verbs. Using IT and L1 in the control group was prohibited whereas the experimental group was taught drawing on IT and L1. Following the treatment, the participants of both groups were given a post-test on the modal verbs. The participants of the experimental group were also given a questionnaire to uncover the learners' attitudes toward using L1 and IT in the EFL class. Finally, 5 participants of the experimental group were interviewed to answer 5 questions regarding the use of L1 and IT in the EFL class. Descriptive and inferential statistics including the paired-sample t-tests and the ANCOVA test were used to analyze the data. The principles of grounded theory (GT) were also applied to analyze the interviews. The results suggest that using L1 and IT in teaching modal verbs has a significant effect on the participants' performance on the post-test. The analysis of the questionnaire and the interviews also indicated participants' positive attitudes toward using L1 and IT in the EFL class.

Keywords: Beginner Learners; First Language (L1); Inverse Translation (IT); Modal Verbs.

1. Introduction

As the demand for English proficiency continues to grow, the role of First Language (L1) and translation in the process of language learning has received considerable attention (Al-Musawi, 2014; Mollaei et al., 2017; Putrawan, 2019). Grammar Translation Method, as the main traditional approach to language teaching, champions the use of first language and translation exercises which are from Target Language (TL) to Mother Tongue (MT), (i.e., Direct type) and vice versa (i.e. Inverse Translation). However, it is criticized for hindering the development of fluency and communicative language use (Newson, 1998).

Accordingly, most teachers prefer to hold their EFL classes exclusively in English, arguing that L1 and translation should entirely be eliminated from the process of language learning due to their negative effects on learners' target language development. It appears that by adopting this approach, these teachers are neglecting the role of L1 in EFL classrooms without giving it a second thought (Ghaiyoomian & Zarei, 2015).

Yet, Ellis (2008) states that "the effects of the L1 are very evident in L2 acquisition" (p. 470), and many scholars also believe that the complete deletion of L1 in L2 situations is neither appropriate nor possible (Larsen-Freeman, 2000;

Schweers, 1999; Tang, 2002, as cited in Khalili & Hashemi, 2013). Thus, the use of L1 has persisted in language instruction across various (national) contexts by teachers (Benson, 2000; Cook, 2008, as cited in Hall & Cook, 2012). According to Ghaiyoomian and Zarei (2015), these teachers believe that using L1, especially at the lower levels of proficiency, eliminates learners' anxiety, demotivation, and finally withdrawal from foreign language (FL) classrooms.

To alleviate the complexities associated with teaching complex grammatical structures and abstract vocabularies, educators have increasingly taken advantage of L1 and translation as effective pedagogical tools, since these two practices provide a means to enhance understanding while reducing the perceived complexity of linguistic elements for the learners (Klages & Romer, 2002). One area of particular difficulty in this regard for both teachers and learners is understanding and applying English modal verbs.

Klages and Romer (2002) argued that the complexity of English modal verbs—which may hinder learners' ability to use them in communicative contexts—stems from differences in their meanings and usage. They suggest that translation can be employed in teaching these verbs to facilitate learners' comprehension and simultaneously reduce their perceived complexity. It is worth noting that, the use of translation in language learning has drawbacks as well as advantages. As Cook (2010) mentioned, the balanced and judicious application of translation in language teaching is essential to derive maximum advantages while mitigating negative impacts. Concerning this, some of the prominent pros and cons of using translation in language learning are briefly discussed in the following paragraphs.

One significant advantage of using translation in language learning is its role in bridging gaps in understanding. As Cook (2010) points out, translation can act as a bridge between the learner's existing knowledge of the native language and the target language, enabling them to make connections and comprehend complex concepts more easily. In this regard, Ross (2000) claims that “the real usefulness of translation in the EFL classroom lies in exploiting it to compare grammar, vocabulary, word order, and other language points in English and the students' mother tongue” (p. 61).

Translation also improves language awareness by highlighting differences between the learner's first language and the target language. By using translation, learners are directly forced to notice differences between their L1 and target language systems. As a result, they are required to discuss and correct common mistakes (Dagiliene, 2012). Carver (1983) also states that translation can be used to make explicit comparisons between students' MT and the target language. This prevents learners from making MT-based errors as it helps learners to know why some expressions are not correct in the target language.

Additionally, using translation in FL classrooms results in the development of cultural awareness. In fact, by exposing learners to the cultural context of the target language, and encouraging them to compare and interpret different cultures, translation can deepen their understanding of foreign cultures and enhance their cross-cultural competence and intercultural awareness in language learning (Meng, 2020; Olk, 2009).

Moreover, translation activities allow learners to focus on both form and meaning. The act of translating naturally needs close attention to both form and meaning in the source language to transfer the meaning into other forms in the target language.

Using the act of translation has positive effects on writing and reading skills in SL/FL. According to Taillefer (1996), once FL learners are at advanced level, they comprehend and talk fluently, but in meantime they often struggle with reading and writing skills. Reading activities involving the act of translating help advanced learners develop their reading and writing skills because these activities naturally attract learners' attention to detailed sentence forms and discourse structures.

According to Leonardi (2010), translation can improve speaking and listening skills. From his perspective, translation as a communicative activity involves interaction between the teacher and students. This engagement in conversation around the translation task helps students strengthen their speaking skills.

Using translation, thus, can positively influence learners' motivation by providing immediate understanding of words, phrases, or texts, which in turn creates a sense of progress, increases their confidence, reduces their anxiety and encourages continued study of the foreign language (MacIntyre et al., 2001). It allows them to connect the target language to their own lives and experiences, in turn leading them to actively engage with the language and think critically about its structures and meanings in order to use it meaningfully (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013; Oxford, 1990).

A number of language instructors and translation studies researchers argue that the use of translation in language classes is an attempt to facilitate and deepen students' learning through increased input (Cook, 2001; Cook, 2010; Malmkjær, 2004; Pym et al., 2013; Pym, 2016, 2018). Thus, given the importance and complexity of learning EFL grammar, the role of translation and L1 should not be neglected and teachers should feel confident in making their own decisions to use L1 in leading to what is known as negative transfer, which can hinder.

Considering these pieces of evidence, it seems that despite the criticisms leveled against incorporating L1 and translation in language teaching and learning, their merits in EFL classrooms have led some researchers to adopt more favorable views in recent years. Therefore, by considering both their benefits and limitations, the use of L1 and translation can be suggested to be employed in a more novel, judicious, and effective way (Galali & Cinkara, 2017; Ghaiyoomian & Zarei, 2015; Gutierrez, 2020; Mayni & Paramasivam, 2021; Nourinezhad, & Kashefian-Naeeni, 2020; Shariati, 2019).

Although the role of L1 and translation in language learning has received increasing attention in recent years (Gutierrez, 2020; Karimian & Talebinejad 2013; Kovacic & Kirinic, 2011; Mollaei et al., 2017; Navidnia et al., 2020; Putrawan, 2019; Shariati, 2019), two areas of research in this regard have almost remained underexplored. The first area concerns the type of translation. In effect, the majority of studies have in this regard examined the effect of Direct Translation (DT) rather than Inverse Translation (IT) on learning and teaching grammar (Al-Musawi, 2014; Calis & Dikilitas, 2012; Tan, 2015).

The second gap concerns the role of IT or L1 in teaching specific grammatical structures—such as modal verbs—rather than grammar as a whole, which is too broad and complex to be addressed in a single study. To this end, the present study investigates the impact of L1 use and inverse translation (IT) on the performance of Iranian EFL beginner learners, with a particular emphasis on the acquisition of modal verbs.

2. Literature Review

As can be inferred from the section above, since long ago, the argument over the use of L1 in foreign language classes has turned into a contentious issue (Brown, 2000). Regarding this, two main contradictory approaches appeared in teaching and learning English as an SL/FL, which are the monolingual approach and the bilingual approach. For some scholars (e.g., Ellis, 1984; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Long, 1996), the use of the first language (L1) is seen as an obstacle in the process of learning the target language (TL), while for others (e.g., Cook, 2001; Cummins, 1981; Krashen, 1982; Swain, 1985), it is considered a facilitating tool.

Despite the prevalence of the monolingual approach in FL pedagogy, controversies have surfaced among scholars as well as instructors over using TL and L1 in FL settings (Chang, 2009; Ferguson, 2003; Macaro, 2001). Given that teacher code-switching appears to be both necessary and inevitable in FL settings, many scholars (Cook, 2001; Kang, 2008; Swain & Lapkin, 2000) have reconsidered the role of TL. Generally, these scholars warn against the increased use of L1; but at the same time, they advocate for the use of L1 in cases such as elicitation, evaluation of comprehension, providing instructions, and teaching grammatical points. Thus, L1 appears to be commonly present in the FL classroom and may facilitate FL acquisition under certain conditions (Galali & Cinkara, 2017).

The role of grammatical knowledge in FL learning and teaching has been extensively discussed by scholars (Azar, 2007; Chung, 2005; Ellis, 2006; Sogutlu, 2014). Whether inspired by personal experience or the results of empirical research, these scholars have concluded that grammar should occupy a key position in L2 pedagogy. Others, however, have either assigned minimal significance to its position or dismissed it entirely as an irrelevant concern. All these standpoints have had a direct bearing on the development of different teaching methods and approaches (Sogutlu, 2014). In practice, teachers have availed themselves of different options for teaching grammar (Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam, 2011).

Most students in FL classrooms have problems in learning and retrieving grammatical structures. This is particularly evident when TL structures conflict with their L1 structures leading to what is known as negative transfer, which can hinder the learning process. The role of using L1, either consciously or subconsciously, as a learning strategy by EFL learners should not be neglected. In this regard, Ellis (2008) reckoned that the effects of the L1 are highly apparent in L2 acquisition.

Learning syntactic structures of FL seems to be both significant and sensitive at the elementary levels, for, on the one hand, the first and not necessarily the easiest structures should be learned at this stage, and, on the other hand,

teaching these basic structures more comprehensibly and retrievably can pave the way for learning and understanding the more advanced grammatical structures. Ellis (1996) suggested that teaching grammar can promote learners' proficiency and accuracy and help them acquire the syntactic system of the language. Yet, he reckoned that the sensitivity of teaching grammar arises from the fact that increased attention to grammar might de-motivate the learners and contribute to a monotonous classroom atmosphere.

Whereas many EFL teachers might have neglected the role of L1 and translation in language teaching, they still widely use them in language teaching (Hall & Cook, 2012; Kelly & Bruen, 2014; Lems, et al., 2010). Notably, as Shariati (2019) and Mollaei et al. (2017) affirm, learners tend to hold positive attitudes toward the use of L1 and translation, particularly in emergency situations and when teaching grammar. These findings are supported by several studies, as outlined below.

Ghaiyoomian and Zarei (2015) investigated the effect of using translation from L1 to L2 (inverse translation) on EFL junior high school students' language accuracy. Using a quasi-experimental design, they assigned 62 participants to control and experimental groups. Whereas the experimental group received grammar exercises in the form of translation from Persian into English, the control group worked on their textbook exercises. The results revealed that the treatment had a significant effect on students' language accuracy.

The outcome of a survey study conducted by Mollaei et al. (2017) on 100 teachers in Iran indicated that for some teachers, translation is not helpful except in teaching English vocabulary and grammar, while for others, L1 can interfere with learning a foreign language and translational activity is a time-consuming task. They finally concluded that translation can remove students' psychological barriers, explain complex grammatical concepts, facilitate comprehension of vocabulary, and explain TL cultural concepts.

Shariati (2019) conducted a survey study on elementary, intermediate, and advanced-level learners. Learners were found to have a tendency to use L1 for asking about new issues, finding correct English words, and explaining grammatical points to their classmates. In addition, from students' point of view, teachers had used L1 to enable students' comprehension of difficult words and complex grammatical structures, and translate difficult English words into L1, thus facilitating classroom management. However, the findings also indicated a negative relationship between learners' level of proficiency and their attitude toward using L1.

Navidnia et al. (2020) examined the efficacy of using translation in teaching grammar to 30 EFL students. The control and experimental groups received 18 sessions of instruction. L1 and translation were used in teaching grammatical rules for the experimental group, while the English language was the only language of instruction in the control group. The results indicated the treatment's efficiency.

Yuzlua and Dikilitas (2022) examined the potential effect of Translanguaging on EFL learners' four language skills and the participants' perceptions of translanguaging. Thirty students were assigned to the experimental group and the other half to the control group. The experimental groups received 10 weeks of Translanguaging, whereas one of the control groups was taught through GTM, and the other, through a communicative language approach. The results showed that Translanguaging has an impact on improving students' performance in all four modules. Similarly, the perceptions of the participants demonstrated constructive, interactive, cognitive, and affective benefits of implementing Translanguaging.

In conclusion, despite the importance of grammar in language teaching and the need to reconsider the meditative role of L1 and translation in language pedagogy, empirical studies addressing the effects of L1 and inverse translation use in teaching EFL grammar are almost lacking in the Iranian context. Thus, this study made an attempt to investigate the effects of using L1 and IT on learning modal verbs, which are a key component of English grammar and pedagogy.

3. Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods design encapsulating a quasi-experimental design and survey design, triangulated with interviews. At first, the researchers attempted to explore the effect of using first language (L1) and inverse translation (IT) on the EFL students' performance in terms of modal verbs. Since L1 and IT are interrelated and closely intertwined, they were treated as a single independent variable in the study. The dependent variable was the performance of the participants on modal verbs. Then, the learners' attitudes toward using L1 and IT in EFL classes were investigated through a survey and an interview.

The participants of this study were 60 beginner students who were selected based on the results of the Oxford Placement Test from RAHA English Institute of Zanjan, Iran. They were females with Persian as their L1 and their age range from 10 to 15 years old. In order to fulfill the research objectives, the participants were assigned to control and experimental groups, each containing 30 students. Both groups were taught by the same teacher, who as an M.A. holder of TEFL, was an experienced instructor. The participants' official language was Persian and their mother tongue was Azari (a dialect of Turkic language).

3.1. Materials and Instruments

To comply with the objectives of the present study, the following instruments were utilized: 1. Oxford placement test, 2. A pre-test and a post-test (Appendix A), 3. A questionnaire (Appendix B), and 4. A semi-structured interview (Appendix C.)

3.1.1. Oxford Placement Test (OPT)

Following the administration of the Oxford Placement Test (OPT), 60 out of 112 participants, who achieved the target score range (19–25) and were identified as elementary-level students, were selected to participate in the present study.

3.1.2. Pre-Test and Post-Test

The test used in the present study was designed by the researcher based on the target grammatical structures and vocabulary (modal verbs), taught during the training course prepared for the participants of the study. This test which was used as both pre-test and post-test of the study included 20 items, 4 items for each modal verb (i.e. may, can, could should, and will). It had a total score of 20 (1 point for each item) (see appendix B). The test was validated by the experts who were faculty members of the English department at the University of Zanjan. Then, Kuder-Richardson formula was employed to estimate the reliability level of the test. The result, 0.783, confirmed the reliability of the test.

It is important to note that the participants had no prior knowledge of, or familiarity with, the test content before the administration of the pre-test. After the pre-test, they were not given access to the answers. Yet, to prevent test-wiseness, the researchers rearranged some of the questions and their answer options on the posttest compared to the pretest. Additionally, the interval between the administration of the pre-test and the post-test was long enough (i.e., 6 weeks) to reduce the memory effect. These were among the precautions that were taken to eliminate factors such as test-wiseness. In the last part of the study, the researchers interviewed five participants from the experimental group. For the control group, everything was almost similar to that of the experimental group, with the exception that there was no explanation in Persian and translation. In other words, using L1 and IT was prohibited for both the teacher and learners in the control group.

3.1.3. Questionnaire

The questions used in the questionnaire and interview for this study were developed based on two previously designed instruments: Gutierrez's (2020) questionnaire on IT and Khalili and Hashemi's (2013) questionnaire on students' and teachers' perceptions of using L1 in the EFL classroom. The questions in the questionnaire and interview were translated into Persian, as they were intended for low-proficiency English learners (Appendix B & C). Developed based on a four-point Likert scale, the questionnaire was validated by the experts (faculty members of the English department at the University of Zanjan.) Then, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the reliability of the questionnaire. The result, 0.856, confirmed the reliability of the questionnaire.

3.1.4. Semi-Structured Interview

A semi-structured interview was also conducted with the participants to elicit their opinions regarding the use of IT and L1 in the EFL classroom. Permission was obtained from the students involved in the project to record their voice while being interviewed. These recordings were then transcribed by the researcher. Five participants from the experimental group took part in the interview. They answered five questions regarding: a) whether they prefer using IT and L1 in General English classes, b) the reasons for using/ not using L1 and IT in the classroom, c) their preferred amount of using L1 and IT d) the situations that they think necessitate the use of L1 and IT, e) the effect of using L1 and IT on

their stress level, motivation, and comprehension in the process of learning English. Each of the interviews took about 10 to 15 minutes.

3.2. Procedure

Before the onset of the treatment, the participants took a pretest on modal verbs. Then, they participated in 12 one-hour instructional sessions focused on teaching modal verbs (may, can, could, should, and will). Two sessions were held per week. IT and learners' L1 were used with the TL to teach intended grammatical structures to the experimental group while the control group was exposed to the same instructional conditions, except that neither L1 nor translation involving IT was used in their classroom. More specifically, the treatment for the experimental group involved the use of Persian as learners' L1 (technically speaking their 'official language', on the grounds that their mother tongue is Azerbaijani Turkic Language) to explain the usage of modal verbs and distinguish them from one another, and IT was used as a tool to evaluate learners' understanding.

Each week of the one-term training course was dedicated to a specific modal verb. In the first session of the week, the teacher explained the usage of that verb in English and provided some examples. Then, she encouraged the students to infer the meaning of the modal verb in their L1 and asked them to give their own examples. The next step was to explain the negative and interrogative forms of the modal verb and to do some exercises in this regard. In explaining the negative and interrogative forms, the teacher did not use the L1 to comply with time constraints.

In the second session of each week, initially the usage, meaning, negative form, and question form of the modal verb were reviewed by asking some questions and giving further examples. Then, affirmative, negative, and interrogative sentences containing modal verbs were translated into English by the learners in the experimental group.

In the first session of the last week (11th session of the course) when all five target modal verbs (may, can, could should, and will) had been taught, the teacher classified their differences in Persian. Subsequently, some exercises in TL illustrating these distinctions were done by the beginner learners in the experimental group. Meanwhile, the control group was taught based on the traditional approach in which no-translation procedure was observed, while some IT exercises were completed by the experimental group to allow the teacher to evaluate their understanding of all target modal verbs and to prepare them for the final exam. The IT exercises included sentences such as ' آنها میتوانند انگلیسی صحبت کنند ' (Literal Translation: They can speak English.) and ' آنها میتوانند انگلیسی صحبت کنند ' (Literal Translation: They could speak English.), which were translated into English by the experimental group as a part of treatment to recognize the difference between Can and Could. A post-test was administered to assess the effectiveness of the treatment and placebo in the study.

4. Data Analysis

Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics to report the results of the experimental and survey components of the study. The principles of grounded theory (GT) were also applied to analyze the interviews.

4.1. Quantitative Results

Prior to the inferential analysis of the research data, the assumption of normality of the data was checked through the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and the homogeneity of variance test with Levene's test. According to the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the data for the research variables were normally distributed ($\text{sig} > 0.05$). Moreover, according to the results of Table 1, the assumption of homogeneity of variances was confirmed ($\text{sig} > 0.05$).

Table 1. Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) Test for Pre-test and Post-test of Control and Experimental Groups

Variable	Period	One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test				Test of Homogeneity of Variances			
		(Experiment Group)		(Control Group)		Levene	df1	df2	P_value
		Test Statistic	P_value	Test Statistic	P_value	Statistic			
Performance	Pre-test	0.148	0.094	0.123	0.200	0.017	1	58	0.898
	Post-test	0.152	0.075	0.123	0.200	2.665	1	58	0.108

The assumption of homogeneity of regression slope and linearity of the correlation between the covariate variable and independent variable also needed to be tested. As demonstrated in table 2, this assumption was confirmed through analysis of the covariance test ($\text{sig} > 0.05$). In addition, the selection of an auxiliary variable (pre-test) as a covariate in this research was confirmed ($\text{sig} < 0.05$).

Table 2. Homogeneity Test of the Regression Slope and Confirmation of the Assumption of the Effect of Auxiliary Variable.

Variable	Reception of homogeneous regression slope		variable	Correlation pretest & posttest	
	F	P_value		F	P_value
Hypnosis 3 Experimental*group	0.649	0.252	Performance	173.579	0.001

Next, to determine the extent to which using the IT and L1 was effective in learning modal verbs, the pre and post-tests of both experimental and control groups were compared via paired-sample t-tests. Then, the performance of the groups on the pre-test and post-test was analyzed by running ANCOVA in SPSS.

4.1.1. Paired Sample T-Test with Regard to the Experimental Group

A pre-test and a post-test were administered which aimed at measuring the learners’ knowledge of modal verbs. As shown in Table 3, the mean scores on the pretest and posttest of the experimental group were 9.0 and 17.20 respectively.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics: Pretest and Posttest of Experimental Group

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max
Pre-test	9.000	2.639	4	15
Post-test	17.200	2.074	14	20

To compare the mean scores of the experimental group on the pretest and post-test, a paired-sample t-test was run. Table 4 illustrates the result.

Table 4. Paired Sample t-test for the Experimental Group

Group	Period	Mean	Difference	Paired Differences		t	df	P_value
				Mean	Std. Deviation			
Experimental Group	Pre-test	9.000	post_test	- 8.200	1.323	33.935	29.000	0.001
	Post-test	17.200	pre test					

The results of the paired t-test indicated that the difference between mean scores of the pre-test and post-test in the experimental group is 8.20 and significant at the 0.05 level ($P_value < 0.05$). In other words, using L1 and IT has significantly improved students' performance in the post-test.

4.1.2. Paired Sample T-Test with Regard to the Control Group

A pre-test and a post-test focusing on modal verbs were also administered to the participants in the control group. As shown in Table 5, the mean scores on the pretest and posttest were 9.267 and 12.967 respectively.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics: Pretest and Posttest of Control Group

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max
Pre-test	9.267	2.559	4	15
Post-test	12.967	3.090	6	20

In order to compare the mean scores of the control group on the pretest and post-test, a paired-sample t-test was run. The result of this test can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6. Paired Sample t-test with regard to the Pretest and post-test of the Control Group

Group	Period	Mean	Difference	Paired Differences		t	df	P_value
				Mean	Std. Deviation			
Control Group	Pre-test Post-test	9.267 12.967	post_test pre_test	- 3.700	1.368	14.810	29.000	0.001

The results of the paired sample t-test showed that the difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores is 3.700 and significant at the 0.05 level ($P_value < 0.05$). In other words, the performance of language learners has significantly improved on the posttest.

Comparing the pre-test and post-test results of both the experimental and control groups and referring to paired-sample t-tests (Tables 3 to 6), it can be concluded that the use of L1 and IT in teaching modal verbs, applied as the treatment for the experimental group, had a statistically significant effect on participants' performance in using modal verbs.

4.1.3. ANCOVA

After running the paired sample t-tests, the scores of the two groups were compared through the analysis of the covariance (ANCOVA) test. The result of the covariance analysis is displayed in Table 7.

Table 7. The result of Covariance Analysis (ANCOVA) of Learner's Performance, Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Variable	Period	Mean		Analysis Covariance					
		Experimental Group	Control Group	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P_value	Partial Squared
Students' Performance	Pre-test	9.000	9.267	298.580	1	298.580	171.359	0.001	0.750
	Post-test	17.200	12.967						

It was concluded that the means of the two groups in the post-test differed significantly different from each other after adjusting for the pre-test scores. As seen in Table 7, using L1 and inverse translation has a significant effect on the performance of students ($sig=0.001$, $F=171.359$). Moreover, the mean score of the students in the control group on the pre-test was 9.267 and on the post-test was 12.967, while the mean score in the experimental group on the pre-test was 9.000 and on the post-test was 17.200. Given the significant difference between the scores in the post-test of both control and experimental groups, it was concluded that by removing the pre-test factor (covariate), using L1 and inverse translation improved the performance of students, and according to the effect size of the Eta square coefficient, 75% of the performance variability of students in the experimental group was caused by using L1 and the IT.

Comparing the pre-test and post-test results of both groups and referring to the ANCOVA test (Table 7), it can be concluded that incorporating L1 and IT in teaching modal verbs is more effective than prohibiting their use in ELT context.

4.1.4. Analysis of Students' Responses to the Questionnaire

Students' responses to the questionnaire concerning their attitudes toward using the IT and L1 to teach modal verbs were analyzed in terms of percentage and frequency. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 8 and interpreted in the following paragraphs.

Table 8. Students' Responses to the Questionnaire

Questions		Completely disagree	Disagree	Agree	Completely Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
Question1	Frequency	0	1	9	20	3.633	0.556
	Percent	0.0	3.3	30.0	66.7		
Question2	Frequency	0	2	8	20	3.600	0.621
	Percent	0.0	6.7	26.7	66.7		
Question3	Frequency	0.0	3	9	18	3.500	0.682
	Percent	0.0	10.0	30.0	60.0		
Question4	Frequency	0.0	3	6	21	3.600	0.675

	Percent	0.0	10.0	20.0	70.0		
Question5	Frequency	0	4	6	20	3.533	0.730
	Percent	0.0	13.3	20.0	66.7		
Question6	Frequency	0	2	11	17	3.500	0.630
	Percent	0.0	6.7	36.7	56.7		
Question7	Frequency	0	2	7	21	3.633	0.615
	Percent	0.0	6.7	23.3	70.0		
Question8	Frequency	0	2	9	19	3.567	0.626
	Percent	0.0	6.7	30.0	63.3		
Question9	Frequency	0	1	10	19	3.600	0.563
	Percent	0.0	3.3	33.3	63.4		
Question10	Frequency	0	2	7	21	3.633	0.615
	Percent	0.0	6.7	23.3	70.0		
Question11	Frequency	0	2	4	24	3.667	0.606
	Percent	0.0	6.7	20.0	80.0		
Question12	Frequency	1	2	5	22	3.600	0.770
	Percent	3.3	6.7	16.7	73.3		

In response to the first question, inquiring about the benefits of using the Persian language and IT exercises in teaching English modal verbs, 66.7 percent of respondents expressed their approval. In other words, the mean score obtained for this question was 3.63, which indicated that the majority of the students found L1 and IT helpful in modal verb learning.

The second question inquired about students' better performance in using English modal verbs through applying L1 and IT exercises. 66.7 percent of the students completely agreed on this point. The mean score of this part was 3.600, which means most of the respondents think L1 and IT exercises improved their performance on the use of modal verbs. The third question examined whether students had achieved a deep understanding of English modal verbs through the use of L1 and IT exercises. 60 percent of the respondents expressed complete agreement about gaining this understanding. The mean score of 3.5 on the third question indicated that respondents mostly asserted that using L1 and IT contributed to a deeper understanding of English modal verbs.

The fourth question addressed the facilitating role of using Persian and IT in learning English modal verbs, with which 70 percent of the respondents completely agreed. With mean score of 3.6, the responses to this question revealed that using L1 and IT facilitated the learning of English modal verbs for most students.

The fifth question dealt with the role of using Persian and IT exercises in overcoming the problems of learning English modal verbs. 66.7 percent of the respondents stated their approval of this issue. In other words, the mean score for this item was 3.533, indicated that the use of Persian and IT exercises helped students overcome difficulties in learning English modal verbs.

The sixth question stated, "Using Persian language and IT exercises makes me confident in learning English modal verbs," to which 56.7 percent of the respondents strongly agreed. Obtaining the mean of 3.5 showed that using the Persian language and IT exercises increased most respondents' confidence in learning the English modal verbs.

In response to the seventh question, which asked whether the use of the Persian language and IT exercises helped them become more independent in learning English modal verbs, the students' answers varied. However, 70 percent of them strongly agreed. Considering the mean score of 3.63, it is evident that most of the students held positive views about using the Persian language and IT exercises in gaining independence while learning English modal verbs.

In response to the eighth question that dealt with increased motivation to learn other components of English grammar through the use of Persian and IT exercises, 63.3 percent of the students completely agreed. The mean score for this item was 3.56. Therefore, it can be concluded that respondent mostly believed that using the Persian language and IT exercises increased their motivation to learn other components of English grammar.

In response to the ninth question, which asked, "English to Persian translation exercises for learning modal verbs are more efficient than Persian to English translation exercises", 63.4 percent of the students completely disagreed. The mean score of the answers to this item became 3.6, which indicated that most of the respondents had positive views concerning the use of Persian-English translation exercises as opposed to English-Persian translation exercises.

In response to the tenth question that reads "Persian to English translation exercises for learning modal verbs are more efficient than English to Persian translation exercises", 70 percent of the respondents completely agreed. The answers to this item, which gained the mean of 3.63, revealed that most of the respondents preferred IT to direct translation.

The eleventh question addressed the efficiency of English-Persian and Persian-English IT exercises for learning modal verbs. 80 percent of the respondents strongly agreed on the efficiency of these exercises. With a mean score of 3.66, the results indicated that the vast majority of students found both English-Persian and Persian-English translation exercises effective for learning modal verbs.

Finally, the twelfth question asked about the efficiency of using the Persian language and IT exercises in reducing stress while learning modal verbs. 73.3 percent of the respondents completely agreed with this item. In other words, the mean score of this part was 3.6, which indicated that the use of Persian and IT exercises reduced students' stress in learning modal verbs.

The analysis of students' responses to the questionnaire in terms of frequency and percentage revealed a high proportion of "agree" and "completely agree" options, which shows that these options were selected more frequently than others. All in all, there were both positive and negative attitudes toward using the Persian language and IT exercises in the experimental group with positive attitudes outweighing the negative.

4.2. Analysis of Students' Responses to Interview Questions

To analyze the answers to interview questions, the researchers used the principle of grounded theory (GT). In applying GT, the researchers first transcribed the recorded interview.

The researchers then encoded similar themes or concepts and put them into categories. Finally, as result of research background processes and interviews with five students of the experimental group, eight components and three dimensions were identified that indicate the benefits of using inverse translation in an EFL classroom. Table 9 presents the results of the analysis of semi-structured interviews based on GT.

Table 9. *The Main Themes (Dimensions) and Components Indicating the Benefits of Using L1 and IT*

The Main Themes of the Answers to Interview Questions (Dimensions)	Components
Effectiveness of teaching	Understanding the teacher's intention
	A better understanding of grammar
	Improving the quality of teaching
Improving learning skills and ability	Being motivated to learn
	Removing mistakes
	Improving skills
Motivation and desire to learn	Solving learning problems
	Being motivated

Based on the data gathered from interviews and analyzed by principles of GT, the students found the use of L1 and IT as a beneficial and necessary factor in their language learning process. According to the students' answers to the interview questions, 3 dimensions of the effectiveness of teaching, improving learning skills and ability, motivation and desire to learn were identified as the benefits of using L1 and inverse translation. A better understanding of the teacher's intention and grammar in the experimental class, are the components mentioned by students for the first dimension (i.e., effectiveness of teaching). As for the second dimension (i.e., improving learning skills and ability), it was revealed that using L1 and IT lead to removing students' mistakes, nurturing their interest in learning a FL, and improving their language skills. Finally, the components of the third dimension (i.e., motivation and desire to learn) were using L1 and IT to solve students' language learning problems and increasing their motivation to learn EFL.

Consequently, considering the analysis of students' responses to the questionnaire and interview questions, it can be concluded that the attitudes of the participants in experimental group toward using L1 and IT in teaching modal verbs were positive.

5. Discussion

The current study made an attempt to find out whether using L1 and IT has any statistically significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' performance on modal verbs. The results of the comparison between the experimental and control groups demonstrated that L1 and IT contributed to enhancing the participants' mastery of modal verbs. These results are in line with the findings of Kovacic and Kirinic (2011), who indicated L1 is helpful in teaching the grammar and abstract concepts of FL. In addition, these results are consistent with Hidayati's (2012) and Shariati's (2019) findings, which revealed that L1 is beneficial in EFL classes if it is used judiciously and properly for explaining grammar and difficult lexical items or checking students' comprehension.

Since the experimental group outperformed the control group based on the ANCOVA test, it can be concluded that their performance on modal verbs had boosted after receiving instructional treatments in which using L1 and IT was allowed in an EFL environment. These results are similar to the outcome of the study conducted by Navidnia et al. (2020), which indicated the use of translation in teaching grammar has an effective impact on improving students' grammar knowledge. These research findings also support Karimian and Talebinejad (2013), Lee et al. (2015), and Yuzlua and Dikilitas's (2022) findings on the practicality of translation in EFL classrooms to improve learners' English skills and resolve their linguistic problems.

The findings also complement the findings of Moradi-Joz et al. (2018) on teaching English vocabulary with IT, in which they examined the effect of pedagogical cartoons accompanied by teacher-learners' interlingual interpretation and interactional illustrations on learners' performance. It was found out that teaching English vocabulary along with interlingual oral translation and interactive explanations can provide more comprehensible inputs and better acquisition of words.

In terms of the second objective of the current study, it was found that the participants in the experimental group held positive attitude toward using L1 and IT in teaching modal verbs and they were willing to use their first language and inverse translation for a number of reasons such as reducing their anxiety, increasing their motivation to learn EFL, removing their mistakes, and resolving their FL learning difficulties especially in the case of grammar. The positive attitude toward the use of L1 in the current study is compatible with the findings of Anindya et al. (2022), which indicated the students' positive perception of using L1 in the EFL learning process because of its effectiveness on their understanding of English language. Taking the attitudes toward using IT into account, these results also support Mayni and Paramasivam (2021), Yuzlua and Dikilitas (2022), and Nourinezhad and Naeeni's (2020) findings on the constructive, cognitive, interactive, and affective benefits of implementing Translanguaging in L2 classrooms specially to improve students' comprehension.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, the findings of this study suggest that using L1 and IT fostered learners' performance on modal verbs. Therefore, the judicious and appropriate implementation of these two techniques in ELT environment appears to be more effective than restricting their use. In addition, participants found the use of L1 and IT highly beneficial and appreciated the improvement of their performance on modal verbs by increasing their sense of motivation and decreasing their feelings of anxiety. The participants also perceived that using L1 and IT resulted in the development of both grammatical knowledge and other language-related skills.

The findings of this study seem to be beneficial for both teachers and students. EFL teachers, teacher trainers, and the English language teaching community can redesign and reconsider the teaching practice and enhance its outcome by using L1 and IT in English language teaching, facilitating students' learning. Furthermore, the use of L1 and IT also helps EFL learners assess their performance, especially on modal verbs. The findings of this study may also help students to better understand learning difficulties as well as the strategies used to cope with them.

With regard to the limitation of the present study, lack of random sampling can be considered as a limitation. In addition, due to the private nature of the language institute, the number of participants was not as comprehensive as

desired. To resolve limitations as such, this study can be replicated in public school settings in order to consolidate the results.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Appendix A: Pre/Post Tests

A. Choose the best modal verb to complete the sentences.

1. A a fish swim? B. Yes. It lives in the sea.
a. Will b. Can c. Must
2. I go out of the class for a while?
a. Should b. Must c. May
3. My English teacher always says "You..... speak Persian in English class".
a. Shouldn't b. Will not c. Could not
4. My mom is sick. She see the doctor soon.
a. Should b. Could c. May
5. A. you help me? B. Yes of course.
a. Should b. Can c. Must
6. Tomorrow is Friday, so we go to school.
a. Won't b. Couldn't c. May not
7. When she was a little girl, she ride a bike very well.
a. Will b. Could c. Can
8. I was stressful last night. I sleep well.
a. Should not b. Could not c. May not
9. A. Why you come to the party? B. I was studying for the exam.
a. Shouldn't b. Couldn't c. Won't
10. Rosa is a music teacher. She play guitar and piano.
a. Should b. Could c. Can
11. I'm not sure but teacher give an exam tomorrow. We should be ready.
a. Should b. May c. Could
12. My car is broken. I borrow yours?
a. Should b. May c. Must
13. You stop smoking. It is bad for you.
a. Should b. May c. Could
14. What time you arrive this afternoon?

I'll be there at 6.00 p.m.

- a. Will b. Could c. Must

B. Choose the best answers to complete the following paragraph.

My family and I are living in Rasht. The weather is rainy here most of the time, so everyone.....1..... check the weather conditions before traveling.

Uncle Naser and Aunt Sara are also from Rasht, but they live in Tehran with their children. We.....2..... travel and visit each other last year because of the Coronavirus outbreak. But this year, fortunately, all of us are vaccinated and everyone.....3..... travel. So Aunt Sara invited us to go to their house and we decided to go by airplane tomorrow. But it seems the weather....4.... be rainy and our flight.....5.... be cancelled. This made me and my brother so sad. We are missing our cousins so much. My father checked the weather condition and told us "Don't worry. Next weekend.....6..... be rainy and we can invite them to come here."

1. a. will b. should c. could
2. a. Couldn't b. Can't c. May not
3. a. Can b. Should c. Could
4. a. Will b. Should c. Could
5. a. May b. Should c. Could
6. a. Should not b. Will not c. Could not

Appendix B: Questionnaire

ردیف	سوالات	كاملا موافقم	موافقم	مخالقم	كاملا مخالفم
۱	روش استفاده از زبان فارسی و تمرینات ترجمه معکوس در تدریس افعال مودال انگلیسی برایم مفید بود.				
۲	استفاده از زبان فارسی و تمرینات ترجمه معکوس، باعث عملکرد بهتر من در بکارگیری افعال مودال انگلیسی شد.				
۳	روش استفاده از زبان فارسی و تمرینات ترجمه معکوس، باعث فراگیری عمیق افعال مودال انگلیسی برایم مفید بود.				
۴	روش استفاده از زبان فارسی و تمرینات ترجمه معکوس باعث تسهیل فراگیری افعال مودال انگلیسی شد.				
۵	روش استفاده از زبان فارسی و تمرینات ترجمه معکوس در فایز آمدن بر مشکلات فراگیری افعال مودال انگلیسی برایم مفید واقع شد.				
۶	روش استفاده از زبان فارسی و تمرینات ترجمه معکوس، برای من باعث ایجاد اعتماد بنفس در فراگیری افعال مودال انگلیسی شد.				
۷	روش استفاده از زبان فارسی و تمرینات ترجمه معکوس باعث کسب استقلال من در فراگیری افعال مودال انگلیسی شد.				
۸	روش استفاده از زبان فارسی و تمرینات ترجمه معکوس، باعث ایجاد انگیزه بیشتر من برای فراگیری دیگر مولفه های دستور زبان انگلیسی شد.				
۹	به نظر من تمرینات ترجمه از انگلیسی به فارسی برای یادگیری افعال مودال موثر تر از فارسی به انگلیسی است.				

			به نظر من تمرینات ترجمه از فارسی به انگلیسی برای یادگیری افعال مودال موثرتر از انگلیسی به فارسی است.	۱۰
			به نظر من استفاده از تمرینات هر دو نوع ترجمه مستقیم و معکوس برای یادگیری افعال مودال اثربخش است.	۱۱
			روش استفاده از زبان فارسی و تمرینات ترجمه معکوس در کاهش استرس من در رابطه با یادگیری و به کارگیری افعال مودال انگلیسی موثر بود	۱۲

Appendix C: Semi-structured Interviews

۱. آیا فکر میکنید در کلاس زبان باید فقط از زبان انگلیسی استفاده شود یا در مواقع نیاز میتوان از زبان فارسی هم کمک گرفت؟ دلایل شما چیست؟
۲. از نظر شما در کلاس زبان انگلیسی برای تدریس و یادگیری چه مواردی نیاز به استفاده از زبان فارسی وجود دارد؟
۳. از نظر شما مدرس و زبان آموزان در سطوح مختلف کلاس زبان (از مبتدی تا پیشرفته) تا چه اندازه مجاز به استفاده از زبان فارسی هستند؟
۴. استفاده از تمرینات ترجمه معکوس (از فارسی به انگلیسی) چه تاثیری روی یادگیری و عملکرد شما در ساختارهای گرامر داشت؟
۵. استفاده از تمرینات ترجمه معکوس (از فارسی به انگلیسی) چه تاثیری روی اعتماد بنفس و انگیزه شما در کلاس زبان داشت؟



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