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DIPLOMA THESIS

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English Language in Education

Benefits of Using Mother Tongue in EFL Classrooms

Olomouc 2024

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I hereby declare that I have worked on my thesis independently using only the sources listed in the bibliography.

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Anotace práce:	Diplomová práce je zaměřena na zjištění přínosů používání mateřského jazyka v hodinách anglického jazyka. Cílem výzkumu je zjistit tyto přínosy, situace a důvody, kdy učitel použije mateřštinu, jeho postoje k této problematice a četnost těchto situací.
Klíčová slova:	Mateřský jazyk, anglický jazyk, výuka anglického jazyka, ELT, EFL, přínosy mateřského jazyka
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2. Zvolení metody a postupu výzkumu v praktické části
3. Zpracování tématu v teoretické části diplomové práce
4. Realizace výzkumu
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List of abbreviations

ELT	English language teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
MT	Mother tongue
TPR	Total Physical Response
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CLL	Community Language Learning
CBL	Content-Based Learning
PBL	Project-Based Learning
TBL	Task-Based Learning
CLIL	Content Language Integrated Learning

Introduction

In today's diverse educational field, the role of the mother tongue (MT) in English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms at primary schools has gained significant attention. The use of mother tongue alongside with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has been the topic of debate among educators and researchers worldwide. When, how and to what extent to use the mother tongue goes contradict with the methodologists of traditional educational methods and innovative, modern methods that are more pupil-centred and thus give emphasis to the learner's needs.

Nowadays, researchers tend to divide into two groups. The first group supports using mother tongue in ELT. They say that mother tongue using in ELT classrooms serves to ensure comprehension, facilitate proficiency development, and address the diverse needs of all pupils. They argue that mother tongue helps students understand complex concepts and instructions, making learning more accessible and less intimidating. The second group, however, strongly opposes using mother tongue in ELT classrooms. They believe that exclusively using the target language is essential for effective language acquisition. According to this group, immersion in English from the beginning encourages students to think in the target language and speeds up the learning process.

In this regard, the theoretical part of this diploma thesis aims to investigate the benefits of using mother tongue in ELT classrooms at primary school level. The central hypothesis guiding this research is that incorporating mother tongue in EFL classrooms is necessary and helpful. The sub-hypothesis states that EFL teachers use their mother tongue to set the discipline, and to explain complex terms such as grammar or vocabulary. By examining existing literature, exploring traditional (Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method and Audiolingual Method) and modern teaching methods (Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Language Teaching, Content- Based Learning and Language Integrated Learning) and conducting the empirical research , this thesis seeks to shed light on the potential benefits of mother tongue using. Additionally, the thesis will explore EFL methodology, the role of mother tongue, advantages and disadvantages of using mother tongue as well as the balance between using mother tongue and target language. The final chapter of the theoretical part will delve into the use of translation in ELT classes, discussing its strategic use and limitations.

The empirical part is supported by a questionnaire survey aimed at ELT teachers. These questions are designed to answer the frequency of mother tongue using, the reasons for employing the mother tongue, the attitude of teachers towards its usage and the motivation in EFL classrooms. By collecting data through this questionnaire, the research aims to gain an insight into teachers' perception regarding the use of the mother tongue. The empirical part is supported by the theoretical framework and provides empirical evidence to support the questionnaire outcomes.

Through this careful examination of both theoretical and empirical findings, this thesis seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of mother tongue usage and its benefits. This study also aims to provide valuable insights on this topic and to lay groundwork for further investigation into the complexity of mother tongue usage in language learning. Although there may not be a singular correct approach of whether the mother tongue should be used or omitted in ELT classrooms, it is necessary to distinguish the diverse contexts and pupil's needs that may influence the decision-making concerning this issue.

Theoretical part

1. Methodology of English Language Teaching

Globalization has provided teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) with the opportunity to familiarize themselves with a wide range of teaching methods. This exposure is highly beneficial as it enables teachers to tailor their teaching approaches and materials to suit specific groups, lesson types, and personal preferences. Teachers are encouraged to selectively incorporate various techniques to develop their own unique teaching style (Freeman and Anderson, 2011, pp. 180-184). Understanding these principles gives teachers the ability to effectively adapt to diverse learners and educational settings. While some argue that exceptional teachers are born, it is evident that teaching skills can also be acquired. Teaching should not be disorganised; instead, it should be an intentional practice to ensure that teachers are able to promote the engagement and effectiveness in various contexts. Mastery in teaching is an ongoing and progressive journey (Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 185). The same applies to acquiring and implementing different instructional strategies or mastering language proficiency.

Numerous arguments support the integration of the mother tongue in foreign language teaching, highlighting its role as the foundation for subsequent language learning. Deller and Rinvolutri (2002) suggest that the native language acts as a source from which new languages are conceived, aiding in the acquisition of a second language and promoting ease in the learning process. The use of the mother tongue is commonly observed in specific scenarios, such as explaining grammar, providing instructions, or assessing comprehension. However, it is essential for teachers to incorporate the native language deliberately and appropriately, considering the optimal amount and suitable circumstances for its use. Unfortunately, some educators rely excessively on the native language without proper structure, which can ultimately be more detrimental than beneficial. This chapter is going to explore various aspects of incorporating or purely omitting the utilization of the mother tongue as the society and its demands were changing and the methodology of English Language Teaching (ELT) was developing.

1.1. Traditional methods of English Language Teaching(ELT)

Brown (2007: 14) says that: *“There are no instant recipes. No quick and easy method is guaranteed to provide success. Every learner is unique. Every teacher is unique. Every learner-teacher relationship is unique, and every context is unique.”*

According to Brown (2007, p. 10), Celce-Murcia (2001, p. 6) Larsen-Freeman & Anderson (2011, p. 4), it is believed that a single suitable method for language teaching does not exist. However, it is necessary for language teachers to possess a deep understanding of various teaching methods and approaches. Around the world, multiple methods and approaches have been published, used, and applied into teaching, specifically in teaching languages (Babická, 2017). For the purpose of this paper, the terms EFL and ELT will be used synonymously as they refer to the same topic of foreign language teaching.

Finding a perfect teaching method for every ELT classroom seems impossible, so Brown (2000: 14) advises teachers to adopt *“a cautious, enlightened, and eclectic approach”*.

As highlighted by Celce-Murcia(2001, p. 3) this knowledge methods allows teachers to reflect on their own beliefs and principles, adapt their teaching methods purposefully, and utilize a broader spectrum of techniques.

When it comes to the most important method that dominated in Europe, Grammar Translation method is necessary to mention. It originated in Germany in the 19th century. As the name of the method suggests, the emphasis is put on translation rather than using the target language. The origins consisted of studying grammatical rules, memorization of vocabulary and most importantly translating texts. Among scholars who were educating the society, the study of grammar and its rules has become widely popular and helped to create a suitable method for foreign language teaching (Babická, 2017).

The basic principles of this method lie in reading and understanding texts. The learner’s mother tongue is used both for translation and classroom language as well as for bilingual vocabulary lists and new language items. Since communication in English is not one of the key features of this method, the teacher does not need to possess a high level of proficiency (Celce-Murcia, 2001, p. 6). The main aim is to understand the meaning of the text passage through translating it into the learner’s mother tongue which only confirms that the importance of the mother tongue is indispensable in this method (Richards, Rodgers, 2014, p. 6-9).

The Grammar Translation method has several limitations that have been noted by educators and researchers. One major limitation is its focus on rote memorization and translation, which may hinder learners from developing communicative language skills. The method was criticised due to the excessive use of texts which may be too difficult and complicated for younger learners such as primary level. This is because learners at this stage have not typically developed cognitive skills that allow them to understand complex grammatical structures and abstract rules. Primary level learners do not understand these rules in their mother tongue, let alone apply them to the target language and understand them.

On the other hand, this method becomes more useful for lower secondary level learners (Arikan, 2014, p. 7 in Babická, 2017). They possess a greater sense of abstract terms, some grammatical structures of mother tongue can be transferred into the target language, thus this method may be more useful for this age level.

At the end of the 19th century, the Direct Method appeared as a reaction to the previous method and its ineffectiveness in preparing learners to communicate in the target language. Educators formulated the direct method based on a child learning a language and it became very popular among language teachers (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 25). The theory consisted of greater emphasis on pronunciation and the use of International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), spoken language should be the focus and most importantly learners and teacher should avoid translation. Avoiding translation contrasted with the main principle of grammar translation method which helped to move from text analysis to oral production. (Richards, Rodgers, 2014, p. 9-11). The mother tongue thus becomes dispensable and has no function in this method.

Larsen-Freeman (2011) says that “*the purpose of language learning is communication*”. To teach and practice this method, classroom language should be only the target language. The focus is on teaching orally and inductively, learners should be able to derive grammatical rules and be able to apply them straight away. One of the main features of this method is the demonstration of vocabulary through pictures and object to not use the mother tongue translation but rely on learning in target language. Speaking practice complies with the rules of speaking naturally but also to use sentences to create the whole meaning and not only single words (Richards, Rodgers, 2014, p. 12). In contrast with Grammar Translation Method, teachers are not required to have knowledge of learners' mother tongue as lessons are conducted in the target language. Nevertheless, it is essential for them to be native speakers or possess a high level of proficiency in the target language (Celce-Murcia, 2001, p. 4-6).

The Direct method emphasises reading aloud, self-correction, dictation and question and answer exercise. Each speaking practise is focused on using a specific piece of grammar and applying already taught vocabulary at the same time (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 30-32)

Even though the beginning of using this method was quite revolutionary, some potential drawbacks were outlined. Most of the drawbacks are connected to the teacher's proficiency. Not only should the teacher be a native speaker or have the level of native like proficiency, but the teacher should be also already experienced with advanced teaching skills.

The key limitation of its reliance on the target language exclusively can pose challenges for learners, particularly those who are beginners or have limited exposure to the language. From a learner's point of view, the learning process may result as counterproductive due to the time-consuming descriptions of word by avoiding the use of a mother tongue. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), the Direct Method is effective for learners who seek practical language skills and authentic communication experiences rather than just academic knowledge of grammar rules and vocabulary. This method comes more useful for mostly secondary level students or adults whose priority is achieving higher oral skills. Teachers should treat their pupils' mother tongues with the utmost respect (Brown 2000, p. 195).

To ensure communication during World War II, Audio-Lingual method arose out of the rapid need to teach soldiers a foreign language. Since this method is closely linked with wars and war conflicts, the main focus is to ensure that the learner learns the language in the shortest possible time in order to be able to communicate correctly during war conflicts. Due to this focus, this method is also called '*The Army Method*'. Native speakers were supposed to teach a learner the most necessary speaking skills which was later grasped by US universities and applied to their language lessons (Richards, Rodgers, 2014, p. 58-62, Demirezen, 2014, p. 29-32).

As it has been already mentioned, the Audiolingual Method focus is appointed to oral proficiency in the target language with using correct grammar as well as pronunciation. To ensure these skills, learners explore the grammar inductively through examples and drills. They avoid using the mother tongue in classes, so the target language should be used as much as possible. Learners are repeating the sentences, try to complete or replace units of the text in order to be as unambiguous as possible (Brooks, 1964, cited in Richards, Rodgers, 2014, p. 67-68).

This method is reviewed mostly from the perspective of drawbacks. Since the method uses an excessive amount of repetition, learners are often unable to perform a conversation. The main

focus is placed on accuracy rather than actual understanding (Richards, Rodgers, 2014, p. 72-74, Demirezen, 2014, p. 35 in Babická, 2017).

According to Larsen-Freeman (2000), the Audio-Lingual Method is especially suitable for learners who seek to improve their oral proficiency and fluency in the target language through systematic practice and reinforcement of language patterns. Thus, this method may come as useful for primary level learners as well because of the focus on listening skills and the focus on repetition which is crucial for pupils at this age.

1.2. Modern methods of English Language Teaching (ELT)

The field of teaching second languages has experienced several modifications that have reflected changes in language acquisition, language structure and culture (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 1). Specifically, there was a notable shift away from stressing written language and reading comprehension and towards developing oral skills. Switching between two types of approaches: getting learners to use a language (to speak and understand it) versus getting learners to analyse a language (i.e., to learn its grammatical rules) is how language teaching methodology evolved before the twentieth century (Celce-Murcia, 2001, p. 3).

The end of the previous century, Brown (2002, p.10) argues that the concept of methods is outdated for various reasons. Initially, he points out that methods are overly broad and excessively rigid. While methods may appear clear at the start of a language learning, distinguishing between them becomes challenging as the learning progresses. It has been found that these methods lack the precision required for effective testing, making it difficult to determine the most effective approach.

According to Scrivener (2005, p.8-9), the primary role of the teacher is to facilitate learning by engaging students, encouraging active participation, communication, and interaction, and using diverse learning activities. Teachers, aiming to enrich vocabulary, have been incorporating various methods into ELT, relying on their professional development and appropriate selection of methods, approaches, and materials (Wali et al., 2022). Richards (2014, p.4) emphasizes the importance of using language for meaningful communication, shifting the focus from grammatical aspects to practical communicative purposes in real-life situations (Richards, 2014, p.8). Additionally, interactive approaches emphasizing the practical application of language skills, such as Brainstorming, Think-Pair-Share, Buzz Sessions, and Total Physical Response (TPR), among others, are gaining popularity (Wali et al., 2022).

In examining the current state of foreign language teaching and learning, it is important to acknowledge the contrasting views on the use of the target language versus the mother tongue. While some advocate for exclusive use of the target language, others argue for incorporating the mother tongue in certain contexts and for specific reasons. Šebestová (2011, p.41) notes that in the Czech Republic, the Grammar-Translation Method persisted until recently in the local teaching profession. However, nowadays, there are suggestions to either incorporate or avoid the mother tongue based on the specific context and the strategies that teachers believe to be advantageous (p. 41).

Finally, Noah Chomsky played a pivotal role in revolutionizing the perspective on language instruction. He argued that language acquisition should involve individuals utilizing their own cognitive abilities to uncover the underlying rules of the language they are learning (Larsen-Freeman, 2008, p.52). In addition to the Cognitive Approach, which emphasized students' autonomy and accountability in their learning process, subsequent methodologies prioritized addressing learners' specific needs and capabilities.

Although most of the educational milestones have already been mentioned in this chapter, the following subsections will discuss the various modern methods of ELT education such as *Communicative Language Teaching*, *Task-Based Language Teaching*, *Content-Based Learning* and *Language Integrated Learning*, to further explore the evolving landscape of language education.

In the 1970s, linguists initiated a re-evaluation of conventional methodologies centred on teaching language as a set of discrete components (such as grammar and vocabulary). Instead, they began to focus on a functional and communicative perspective of language acquisition according to Babická (2017). This approach also raised awareness in the Council of Europe which developed the first communicative syllabus defining its principles (Richards, Rodgers, 2014, p. 87-88).

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach views language as a means of communication. As it has been said, the target language is the main language used mainly for the purpose of communication and developing communicative competence which means that mother tongue is used as little as possible, if at all. (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 125-135, Richards, Rodgers, 2014, p. 95-102, Harmer, 2015, p. 57-59, in Babická, 2017). The role of the mother tongue is mentioned only with a connection to translation which is allowed if the learner benefits from it (Richards and Rodgers, 2014, p.15). Communicative Language Teaching

remains the predominant approach in language instruction today. However, it is typically modified and often incorporating elements of traditional methodologies. Newer methods such as CLIL and Task-based teaching are directly influenced by principles of Communicative Language Learning (Babická, 2017).

In the USA around the 1970s, Community Language Learning (CLL) was developed by an American psychologist Charles Curran as a form of humanistic approach (Richards, Rodgers, 2014, p. 303-305).

One of the key features of this method is to understand the principles of the language components such as sounds or sentence structure to be able to produce communication in the target language (Richards, Rodgers, 2014, p. 305-306). The method embraces the use of the mother tongue as a resource for language learning. It acknowledges that learners feel comfortable expressing themselves in their native language and encourages the integration of the mother tongue into the learning process. The CLL approach values the natural communication between learners and the teacher, which may involve code-switching between the mother tongue and the target language as needed. By allowing learners to use their mother tongue, CLL aims to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment where individuals can express themselves more freely and effectively. Learners typically sit in a circle using mother tongue and translating the messages into the target language (Richards and Rogers, 2014, in Babická, 2017). This feature contrasts with the Audio-Lingual method not only from the perspective of using mother tongue, but also from the perspective of group learning and the point of translation which on the other hand comes closer towards the principle of Grammar Translation method.

One of the drawbacks of this method is the teacher's necessity to possess a high level of target language as well as the mother tongue of learners. The emphasis on group dynamics and the use of the learner's native language in CLL sessions may not align with the preferences or goals of all learners, particularly those seeking a more immersive language learning experience (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, M., 2011).

Additionally, to the methods where the mother tongue is used very little, in some Content-Based Learning (CBL) programs which are designed for language learners with limited proficiency in the target language, the mother tongue may be used strategically to support students' understanding of complex content or to clarify concepts. In such cases, the mother tongue serves as a support mechanism to ensure comprehension and facilitate meaningful learning

experiences. On the other hand, proponents of immersion based CBL models often advocate for minimal or no use of the mother tongue in instructional activities, emphasizing the importance of maximizing exposure to the target language for language acquisition and proficiency development.

Methods in which the mother tongue is used are already exhausted, in any case current modern methods or approaches such as Project-Based Learning (PBL), Task-Based Learning (TBL) and Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) do not use the mother tongue as such. The mother tongue is only used as a tool to clarify meaning, but otherwise it does not feature in these methods and is completely omitted.

To conclude the chapter on traditional and modern methods of English Language Teaching (ELT), it is important to highlight the key features and benefits of each approach. Traditional methods, such as the Grammar-Translation Method, focus on teaching grammar rules and vocabulary through direct translation and memorization. This method provides a strong foundation in understanding the grammatical structure of the language, which can be useful for reading and translating complex texts. However, it often fails to effectively promote active communication skills and it makes it challenging for students to use the language fluently in real-life contexts.

On the other hand, modern methods like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) emphasize the use of language in meaningful and practical contexts. These approaches encourage interaction, communication, and the development of fluency by engaging students in activities that simulate real-life situations. This helps learners to use English more naturally and confidently. However, these methods may sometimes overlook the grammatical instruction that traditional methods provide. In conclusion of this chapter, a balanced approach that combines traditional and modern methods can provide a comprehensive ELT strategy and enhance both grammatical knowledge and practical communication abilities.

2. The role of the mother tongue in language learning

Deller and Rinvoluceri (2002, p.4) state that “*mother tongue is indeed the mother of the second, third and fourth languages, it is from this womb that the new languages are born in the students' mind.*”

Mother tongue, L1, first language or native language - all these terms refer to the one specific language we are brought up in. According to Deller (2002), the mother tongue serves as an essential source for learning a new language, which is usually referred to as the foreign language, L2, or a target language (p. 3).

As we learn a new language, the structures of the mother tongue are transferred to the new language. The process moves more quickly the more similarities there are. Similar to how languages and culture are closely related, cultural background is also a factor. If it is different, the process will be more challenging as students will need to acquire both the structure and meanings of the new language (Ilić, 2004, pp. 2-3).

Several studies demonstrate that providing students with a full immersion experience in the language they are learning (L2) is crucial for their language acquisition (Krashen and Terrell 1983, Willis 1991). However, some linguists believe quite the opposite, namely that once a learner is exposed to the second language (L2), mother tongue should be fully omitted (Ellis 1985, Atkinson 1993). Even though this is one approach that may work, pupils may still use their mother language in their minds if it is not spoken in the classroom. It is likely for learners to compare the target language with the experiences they have from mother tongue structures - intentionally or unintentionally—until they achieve an advanced level in the target language (Dawson, 2010, p. 2).

Despite the fact that many linguists proved that using mother tongue during learning process has some positive effects, they also that mother tongue should be also minimized as much as possible (Deller, 2002).

2.1. Mother tongue using with young and lower-secondary learners

In the Czech education system, pupils typically come across a foreign language for the first time in the third grade, although certain primary schools tend to introduce English learning already in the first grade when the pupils are around six years old. Some students may begin

even earlier, often due to parental encouragement or alternative schooling systems in kindergartens. The Framework Educational Program for Basic Education specifies that the expected foreign language proficiency level attained during primary school is A2 (or A1 for a second foreign language) in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. It is evident that educators must adapt their teaching methods to cater to the diverse needs of children across different age brackets.

When it comes to language learning and young learners, they represent a distinct category within the field of Foreign Language Teaching. According to Clark (1989, p. 7), their mother tongue system is not yet fully matured, and they may still be in the process of grasping the grammatical rules of their mother tongue. Additionally, they are still in the process of developing their communication abilities. Young learners do not possess the same range of language skills as older students when it comes to acquiring a second language. Cameron (2011, p. 13) highlights that children come into Foreign Language Learning with varying levels of proficiency and learning aptitudes in their first language. However, Pinter (2009) points out that young learners have a different approach to learning, where they grasp the overall meaning without necessarily analysing the language itself. For instance, even if they do not comprehend every single word in a song, they can still understand the overall meaning or message of it. Cameron (2011) also highlights the benefit of young learners being able to communicate in a second language without constraints, despite their restricted proficiency level which becomes very useful when it comes to student talking time and pupil's ability to express themselves in the target language.

On the other hand, lower secondary school students, typically in their teenage years, possess visible differences from younger learners. Cameron (2001, p. 205) highlighted the eagerness of young children to communicate in a second language in the previous section. In contrast, teachers of teenagers should anticipate that these learners may be more reserved in using the L2 and less inclined to engage in communication and tend to switch to their mother tongue (Cameron, 2001, p. 205). According to Harmer (2001a, p. 39), while teenagers can demonstrate creativity and possess significant learning potential, they may also present challenges. The main advantage of working with these learners is their ability to think abstractly and learn directly, enabling them to concentrate on the subject matter being taught which is what young learners are lacking (Pinter, 2009, p. 7). Moreover, Harmer (2001a, p. 39) stresses the importance of teachers encouraging student engagement, intellectual stimulation, and self-esteem

enhancement, cautioning against merely providing answers to questions and engaging in abstract learning activities.

2.2. Balance between using the mother tongue and the English language

Based on the knowledge acquired in previous chapters, the use of the native language in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) has evolved with various instructional approaches. For instance, the Grammar Translation Method incorporates both the first language (L1) and the second language (L2), while the Direct Method, Audio-lingual approach, and Communicative Language Teaching method are more effective when minimizing or restricting the use of L1 (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, pp. 5-12). The use of students' mother tongue in ELT classrooms is a topic of ongoing debate in academic and practical circles. While it is generally agreed that the target language should be emphasized, opinions differ on the advantages of incorporating the mother tongue. However, several research-based arguments support the inclusion of the native language, as it has been shown to have a positive effect on the English language acquisition. On the other hand, these arguments challenge the idea of exclusively using the target language in monolingual classrooms. There is disagreement among ELT specialists on the complete elimination of mother tongue instruction from language classrooms. Many acknowledge that mother tongue has a function, although often a very little one (Nunan 1999, p.73, Carter 1987, p15, Brown 2000, p.138, Holliday 1994: 7).

Teachers can employ several strategies such as speaking more slowly, using gestures, repeating what was said in the target language, or miming the information. Teachers should also allow students adequate time to process the language, wait for a response from the students, and then repeat the process until they understand (Scrivener, 2005, p. 146). Pupils should be encouraged to think of other expressions or provide an explanation of a term when they are unable to recall or are unfamiliar with it in English. If this still does not work, they may be permitted to ask questions in their mother tongue by using the word's equivalent. They can ask, "How do you say...in English?" This will facilitate the lesson and motivate pupils to formulate the question in English. Teachers should only respond in English and utilize it as a teaching tool, even when students raise questions in their own tongue (Willis, 1991, pp. 3-5). Teachers will encounter situations where pupils are forced to utilize their mother tongue in the classroom, regardless of whether they use it or not. The teacher will have to determine how to handle it. Learning can

be increased if children are permitted to utilize their mother tongue to some amount while still being encouraged to use English as much as possible (Willis, 1996, p. 46).

The majority of English teachers across the world are also non-native speakers (Harbord 1992, p. 350), therefore it is sometimes regarded with scepticism when pupils completely avoid using their mother tongue in the classroom. Many native teachers agree, viewing the pupils' first language as a tool to help in the learning process (Rutherford 1987, Brown 2000: 95).

Basic classroom language should be taught from the start and should only be utilized in the target language to beginners. In order to ensure that there is no justification for not speaking L2, it might be useful to provide students with a list of phrases that will be used frequently and to have that list at hand. Speaking is the most important thing for all pupils, regardless of how quickly or slowly they learn. Even those who are hesitant can practice their language skills with coaching if the sentences and inquiries are written down. Educators should emphasize the value of use English exclusively so that students may see its advantages (Willis, 1991). According to Copland and Neokleous (2010), language educators often have a tendency to avoid using the mother tongue in their teaching, but in practice, it is commonly used in the classroom.

2.3. Use of the mother tongue or total omission

The utilization of the mother tongue in teaching English as a foreign language is a contentious issue that requires resolution. Numerous language educators are uncertain about how to address the matter of using the mother tongue in second language acquisition. Atkinson (1987, p. 241) shares a similar perspective on this issue, emphasizing that ELT teachers face a challenging position. Moreover, both experienced and unexperienced language teachers struggle with deciding whether to allow or strictly forbid the use of students' mother tongue during the teaching and learning process.

While Brown (2000) supports the use of the mother tongue in the classroom by stating that relying on the L1 system can assist learners in predicting the target-language system (p. 13), Krashen (1982) emphasizes the significant role of the first language in the overall acquisition of the second language. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that excessive reliance on the L1 or its misuse, such as when translation is employed (p. 75), should be avoided. Another factor that may contribute to the excessive use of the L1 is the teacher's limited oral proficiency in the target language (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2008, p. 85).

Schweers (1999) attempts to demonstrate the beneficial and important role that learners' native language can have in the process of teaching and learning. In his study titled "Using L1 in the L2 Classroom," Schweers (1999) conducted a research investigation on the utilization of the mother tongue by students and educators. He says that he is convinced of the positive impact of using the mother tongue (L1) in second language learning, both in terms of emotional and educational advantages. Additionally, he highlights the significance of incorporating the mother tongue while acquiring the second language as it aids in comprehending the similarities and distinctions between the two language backgrounds. The findings indicated that approximately 90% of the students expressed a preference for using their mother tongue in their English lessons. An equivalent number of students mentioned that utilizing their mother tongue helps in their English learning journey. The responses from the teachers who participated in the research study also revealed some interesting insights. The reasons provided for utilizing the native language in their classes were following:

- to facilitate the students' comprehension
- to enhance their report writing skills
- to ensure understanding of classroom language
- to demonstrate to the students the respect and significance of their mother tongue.

Nation (2001) presents additional reasons that impact students' inclination towards using their first language (L1). It is more instinctive to employ L1 when collaborating with individuals who possess a common language. Additional methodology specialists concur that there is insufficient proof regarding the impact of utilizing L1 compared to L2, which could inform effective pedagogical and policy choices. Macaro (2007), for example, asserts that no research has proven a direct link between the elimination of L1 and enhanced learning outcomes (p. 68).

On the other hand, Howatt (1984) emphasizes the need to move away from over-reliance on the mother tongue and instead adopt a more systematic approach to integrating it into the classroom environment (p. 289). Cook (2001) explores the negative consequences of using the native language (L1) in classroom interactions, as it prevents students from fully immersing themselves in the target language. The author emphasizes the significance of teachers giving instructions in the target language instead of resorting to the mother tongue due to concerns about student comprehension. To ensure effective communication, it is recommended to provide clear, pre-planned instructions and frequent demonstrations (Scrivener, 2005).

Some academics argue that excessive reliance on the use of the first language (L1) by teachers, especially when they are the sole source of target language input, does not benefit students. According to Polio and Duff (1994), the use of L1 prevents students from receiving input that they may encounter in social settings outside the classroom (p.322). Additionally, Larsen-Freeman (2008) highlights another reason for excluding the mother tongue from language learning. She asserts that the native language and the target language have distinct linguistic systems and should be kept separate to minimize interference from the students' native language in their attempts to acquire the target language (p. 42). Creating a purely L2 environment allows students to engage in genuine and authentic communication, motivating them to use only the target language in the classroom. Consequently, their pronunciation, fluency, and intonation improve, and they gain more confidence in using the target language. Another advocate for monolingual classes Robert Phillipson (1992) recommends that English classes should be held in a monolingual environment in order to uphold the quality of English, as the influence of other languages could result in a decrease in proficiency (pp. 185-186). Furthermore, he asserts that native speakers are the best choice for teaching foreign languages because they are able to avoid interference from other languages (ibid, p. 194). Phillipson also argues that younger learners have a higher ability to learn English, therefore it is unnecessary to rely on their first language even when instructing very young students (ibid, p. 209).

Atkinson (1987) claims that while many may argue against the use of the mother tongue as a basis for methodology, it actually fulfils a range of important roles across all levels that are frequently overlooked (p. 247). He also highlights the various risks associated with excessive use of L1 by both teachers and students. Firstly, students may rely on their mother tongue even when they are capable of expressing themselves in the target language. Secondly, students may not understand the importance of using the target language exclusively during classroom activities. Thirdly, there is a risk of becoming dependent on translation into the native language, resulting in a lack of true understanding of the language. Lastly, failure to distinguish between different aspects of language equivalence may lead to oversimplified and inaccurate translations (p.246).

Cummins (2009, p. 320) and Inbar-Lourie (2010, p. 353) present additional arguments against the monolingual principle in language teaching. They question the fairness of this principle, as it assumes, without any supporting evidence, that native speakers are inherently better teachers than non-native English-speaking teachers. Furthermore, they argue that this principle

disregards the abilities of non-proficient non-native learners and incorrectly implies that their first language (L1) is a significant factor in their lack of success.

There are many elements to consider when deciding whether the use of the mother tongue is appropriate in certain classroom situations. Language teachers must be able to recognize when it is acceptable to use the mother tongue during the teaching and learning process. Although English should be the main language used in class, the mother tongue can be used but only in specific situations when the learners can benefit from it.

2.4. Advantages of using mother tongue

In the language classroom, enabling pupils to speak their first language adds a "valuable 'humanistic' element" that facilitates clear and successful communication, as Atkinson (1987, p.242) agrees with Bolitho (1983). In such situation, the teacher is able to assist pupils in articulating their ideas in English once they have done so in their mother tongue.

According to Atkinson (1987, p.242), the main advantage of speaking mother tongue is that it aligns with the term of preferred learning strategies. Atkinson also suggests that it might be more efficient to provide students with the translations they need directly, as they are likely to look them up on their own anyway. This is particularly the case of beginners and intermediate learners. Furthermore, because the patterns used in the mother tongue are projected into the target language, the older the learner, the more the knowledge of the mother tongue influences vocabulary and grammatical understanding. Therefore, it is advised to speak in your native tongue rather than to avoid it (Khatai, 2012, pp. 42-43).

"The native language of the students is used in the classroom to enhance the security of the students, to provide the bridge from the familiar to unfamiliar, and to make the meaning of the target language words clear," according to Freeman and Anderson (2011, p.101–102). Speaking English may not be easy for learners because English is a foreign language in this country, thus learners may not have as many opportunities to utilize it outside of the classroom.

It is important to note that improving the bond between teacher and pupil may be achieved by speaking to them in their mother tongue (Khatai, 2012, p. 43). An additional crucial factor to consider is that utilizing mother tongue can provide certain students with additional advantages, such as stress relief. Consequently, in certain circumstances, it is advisable to allow students the option of using both mother tongue and target language based on their individual requirements. Furthermore, the decision to use or not to use L1 can influence the students'

willingness or unwillingness to collaborate with the teacher and stick to their instructions in a specific situation (Nation, 2001). If teachers ask students in their mother language what they need or desire, they will acquire more information, especially from lower-level pupils (Khati, 2012, p. 43).

Mother tongue has obtained a unique significance as a result of many foreign language learning techniques in the past, such as the Direct Method, which promotes the status of the mother tongue amount educators (Gabrielatos, 2001, p. 6). This effect caused that non-native teachers were portrayed as less prestigious because of at least some use of mother tongue in their lessons (Prodromou, 2002, p. 5).

2.5. Disadvantages of using mother tongue

Experts believe that the primary problem with allowing mother language usage in English classes is that both educators and pupils tend to overuse it. According to Atkinson(1996), there are several circumstances in which teachers tend to speak in their mother tongue excessively. A lot of teachers may unnecessarily switch to their native language because they worry that their students will not understand. Here, Atkinson emphasizes the importance of remembering that communication should always occur in English (Atkinson, 1996, p.15-17).

The most frequently mentioned defence offered by L2 teachers in favour of complete immersion in English, is that students should be exposed to the target language as much as possible in the classroom. As such, they believe that using L1 is ineffective. Atkinson (1996) says that if English is not the main used language, then learners are not to learn much of English in the classroom (p. 12). The "input hypothesis" put out by Stephen Krashen supports the ineffective use of mother tongue. The hypothesis states that students learn their second language by exposure to it in an intelligible manner (Harmer, 2007, p. 50; Wharton, 2007, p. 5).

It is thus clear that mother tongue serves a variety of purposes in teaching and learning practices. Furthermore, these functions vary significantly depending on the situation and context, as well as the effectiveness of the mother tongue using. Therefore, as was already said, it appears that the correct balance or a line does not exist.

3. Use of mother tongue in specific situations

It is commonly recommended to utilize the native language in order to save time, particularly when using L1 quickly is deemed more efficient than providing a detailed explanation in English. Atkinson (1996) states that these instances, which may arise during various parts of a lesson, involve clarifying lesson objectives, introducing complex grammar concepts or vocabulary, assessing learners' understanding, providing directions, and so on (p. 36). On the other hand, factors such as the level of proficiency, age, and other certain situations should be taken into account when stating whether or not the mother tongue should or should not be used.

3.1. Beginners and lower-level learners

The reliance on the mother tongue in second language expression increases as learners are at lower proficiency levels. The use of the mother tongue proves to be advantageous for teachers when explaining grammar concepts or providing complex instructions, or simply tasks that are often too challenging to explain in English. Atkinson (1987) suggests that discussions should be conducted either in a combination of both languages or exclusively in the students' mother tongue. Scrivener (2005) says that it can be beneficial for teachers to have learners, specifically lower-level students, summarize English text or the teacher's instructions in their native language. This practice can help ensure that the teacher is confident in the learners' thorough understanding (p. 309).

As learners advance in their language proficiency, they tend to rely less on their mother tongue. However, the use of the first language can still be influenced by students' learning styles, regardless of their proficiency level which is suggested by Jeremy Harmer (2001). While some students start using English mostly from the start, others may rely more on their mother tongue (p. 131). According to Copland and Neokleous (2001), it is argued that students cannot be prevented from transferring their pre-existing language knowledge, such as pronunciation and vocabulary. The authors propose that teachers should assist learners in their transfer of language knowledge by employing techniques that compare the similarities and differences between English and the learners' native language.

3.2. Grammar

The main reason for using the native language to teach grammar is that it helps students understand the concepts more easily and reduces the intimidation factor of learning grammar in a second language. Studies have shown that even advanced second language learners have a

harder time absorbing information when it is taught in their second language compared to their first language (Cook, 2001).

3.3. Vocabulary

There are multiple methods for elucidating the meaning of an unfamiliar word. These methods contain providing a definition in the second language, offering a demonstration, presenting a picture or diagram, using an appropriate object, utilizing second language context clues, or providing a translation in the mother tongue (Nation, 2001). The method of providing the mother tongue translation appears to be the most efficient for several reasons. Initially, first language translations are straightforward, concise, and recognizable. In certain situations, translating unfamiliar vocabulary serves as a quick time-saving technique. Moreover, when dealing with abstract vocabulary, translation emerges as the easiest and most dependable resolution (Atkinson, 1996, p.16). Utilizing the mother tongue to convey information not only improves understanding but also fosters a sense of authenticity in the second language (L2) learning environment within the classroom. According to Cook (2001, p.405), the meanings of the L2 cannot be isolated from the meanings of the L1 in the learner's mind, irrespective of whether they are stored together in the same vocabulary repository or stored separately but connected through a shared conceptual system.

3.4. Giving instructions

The use of the target language for giving instructions is an important issue because it allows learners to practice the foreign language in real-life communication situations. Instructions are a common way for people to interact, making them an effective method for teaching communication skills. Parrott (1993, p. 106) argues that using the learners' native language for instructions can prevent their learning process, so it is crucial to use the target language instead. However, this approach may not work as well for young learners or beginners who may not understand what is expected of them. Atkinson (1989, p. 92) suggests using the learners' native language at lower proficiency levels and gradually transitioning to the target language. Similarly, Prodromou (1995, p. 63) agrees that receiving instructions in English can be a valuable tool for learning the target language. However, teachers need to recognize that some complex tasks may require a higher level of English proficiency, which could be challenging for learners with lower proficiency levels.

3.5. Overall check for understanding

When evaluating comprehension using traditional monolingual techniques, teachers need to keep in mind that learners may not always be able to express everything they want or need to say. However, this does not necessarily mean they do not understand the material. Additionally, using the mother tongue for comprehension checks can save time and be more cost-effective compared to using the target language. (Atkinson, 1989, p. 91)

When students complete an assignment, such as essays or compositions, they frequently generate sentences or statements that lack coherence. In these instances, the most effective method for elucidating their errors is to translate the incorrect sentence into their mother tongue. Otherwise, they may remain oblivious to the mistake and fail to comprehend the issue. The presence of certain grammatical or lexical elements in a second language can pose challenges, such as English word order or false friends. This often leads to the need for translation into the native language in order to provide a more accurate explanation (Atkinson, 1989, p. 91-94). Prodromou (1995, p. 66) also recommends encouraging learners to compare the typical differences between the two languages by providing sample sentences in both their native language and the second language. Additionally, the native language can be helpful in clarifying any discrepancies between two grammatical components.

4. Translation as a didactic tool

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines translation as "*the process of changing something that is written or spoken into another language,*" which is similar to the definition given by the MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners. Although it may be a bit oversimplified, many translation theorists have adopted this perspective on translation that overlooks the extra-linguistic reality (Leonardi, 2010). Translation is also considered the "fifth skill" and is supported as an aim in the English language instruction nowadays (Leonardi, 2010, p.25).

Translation is another problem while using Czech, or any other mother tongue. According to Ellis (1985, p.7), L1 obstructs L2 because the mother tongue characteristics are carried over into the target language. Because every language has a distinct cultural history and words may not possess the same meaning when translated literally, translation errors become very common. As many sentences cannot be translated properly, using translation as a teaching tool can either result in oversimplification or incorrect language knowledge. Regularly assessing students' comprehension of a subject through translation can be beneficial, but it must be done with extreme caution (Cameron, 2001, pp. 85–86). As noted by Lynne Cameron (2001), providing pupils with an instant translation of unfamiliar expressions can be a major issue, in certain situations, it may lead to an increased dependency on the teacher.

Another discussed topic is the way translation theory is taught, or how much emphasis is placed on theory (Hrdinová et al., 2017, p.6). The attitude towards this topic is that teachers themselves have a problematic relationship with translation. In contrast, advanced students can believe that their prior knowledge of translation is sufficient because of their experience, and hence view the time spent on theory as unnecessary (Gentile, 1996 in Mracek 2015, p.101 in Hrdinová et al., 2017, p.6).

4.1. Advocates pro-translation

Translation activities are commonly utilized in English classes in Czech schools, despite students' lack of appreciation for this learning and teaching strategy. When employed correctly, translation can fulfil multiple objectives. It allows students to analyse the distinctions and resemblances between two languages, such as variations in grammar structures or word order, to concentrate on accurate formulation and spelling, and to rehearse new grammar concepts or vocabulary. To enhance the effectiveness of the translation method as a teaching approach, it is

advised to incorporate a range of authentic materials with genuine communicative intent, as well as a specific rationale that encourages learners' engagement.

Polio and Duff (1994) suggest that translation in the classroom helps develop three crucial qualities for language learning: accuracy, clarity, and flexibility. This practice trains learners to select the most suitable words to express their intended meaning. Similarly, Atkinson (1987) views translation as a valuable tool for reinforcing structural, conceptual, and sociolinguistic distinctions between the native and target languages. To enhance accuracy, students are advised to mentally translate as a form of self-checking. In terms of flexibility, Butzkamm and Caldwell (2009) recommend exploring alternative translations. Students should not feel obligated to use literal translations or exact phrases; instead, they should focus on using expressions that feel more natural to them.

Malakoff and Hakuta (as cited in Cummins, 2009) emphasize that translation serves as a valuable tool for enhancing linguistic awareness and fostering pride in bilingualism (p. 319). Šebestová (2011) suggests that utilizing translation activities can motivate learners to strive for excellence, as such tasks require the use of precise vocabulary and intricate structures that may not be utilized in other learning activities (p. 43). Additionally, Atkinson (1996, p. 53) asserts that through translation, learners are prompted to focus on meaning and engage in comparative thinking, enabling them to recognize the distinctions between English and their native language, thereby helping them avoid common errors. It is important to note that translation is a practical skill that learners may require in real-life situations, as they may need to translate between their first language and second language in their future endeavours (ibid., p. 54).

4.2. Advocates against translation

Furthermore, there is significant opposition to the use of translation in language teaching, as highlighted by Newson (2004). He outlines several drawbacks of using translation as a tool for teaching and testing in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) setting. These include:

- the promotion of thinking in one language and transferring into another, which can lead to interference
- the lack of integration with the four language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) that characterize language competence
- missed opportunities for teachers and learners to exclusively work within one language
- the misconception that there is a simple word-for-word equivalence between languages

- obstacles in achieving common foreign language teaching goals such as initial fluency in spoken language, focus on specific structures or communicative strategies, and mastery of selected vocabulary items.

Translation is criticized for not aligning with communicative language teaching principles, learner-centred approaches, and the limited exposure to new language items in translation tasks, which hinders observable learning effects. Malmkjaer (1998), in her discussion of objections to translation in foreign language teaching, repeats some of Newson's points. Malmkjaer highlights that translation is independent of the four language skills defining language competence (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), extremely different from these skills, and consumes valuable class time that could otherwise be used to teach. Additionally, she notes that translation is considered unnatural, can mislead students into believing that expressions in two languages correspond one-to-one, prevents students from thinking in the foreign language, produces interference, and is not an effective test of language skills. Finally, Malmkjaer suggests that translation may only be suitable for training translators.

4.3. Translation as the Fifth skill

As it has already been mentioned in this thesis, translation has been considered as the fifth skill by Leonardi (p.23). Translation in language teaching is often criticized by some who view it as a unseparated entity from the four essential skills. Advocates against translation perceive it as a mere mechanical activity where a text is converted from one language to another. Randaccio's research (p.79) suggests that translation may differ in structure compared to the conventional four skills, and learners and educators may not have a strong understanding of translation techniques as they are often not included in textbooks. Teachers who do incorporate translation activities may have limited options to choose from. However, this does not mean that translation is fundamentally more different from the other four skills than they are from each other. However, translation is a much more intricate process and goes beyond being purely mechanical. In this context, Cook (p.54) regards translation as “a process” rather than just “a product”. The product of translation, which is a text in one language that is a translation of a text in another language, holds less significance in language teaching. The focus is more on translation as a process or product, which aligns with the differentiation between translation as a means and an end.

Malmkjaer (1998, p.7) adds that in order to translate properly, the translator is involved in a series of five activities before finalizing the translation process. These activities include

anticipation, resource utilization, collaboration, revision, and translation itself, which are commonly recognized as language learning tasks. These activities involve a significant amount of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. According to Malmkjaer, translation cannot be carried out effectively without these skills, as they are integral to the process. Leonardi (p.23) also agrees with this perspective. When it comes to reading, the source text must always be thoroughly understood before starting the translation process. The key difference between reading and translation lies in the level of attention required during each activity. Translation demands a higher level of attention to avoid misinterpreting the original message. While it may seem unlikely that a teacher would want their students to misinterpret a text, it is important to note that translation remains a valuable exercise for enhancing reading skills.

When connected with other skill, writing plays a crucial role in the process of translation. Translators often need to express their translations in written form and possess strong writing abilities. Additionally, Leonardi proposes various methods through which writing can be enriched by the act of translation. For instance, written reflections by students on the challenges faced during translation and the strategies employed to overcome them can be quite instructive. There are numerous other ways in which translation can enhance writing skills. For instance, when learners translate from their native language to a new language, known as L2 translation, it can be viewed as a unique form of second language writing. As a result, through the practice of translation, students can enhance their overall proficiency in English writing.

Empirical part

5. Aims and hypothesis

The empirical part of this thesis, titled "Benefits of Using Mother Tongue in EFL Classrooms," follows the theoretical section. It is based on quantitative research that focuses on English teachers.

The purpose of the thesis is to highlight the benefits of using mother tongue in English classrooms and to understand the situations where it is necessary to use the mother tongue instead of overcomplicated use of English. The main objective is to investigate the frequency, reasons, and situations in which English teachers use the mother tongue and their attitudes towards its use. The aim of this thesis is to identify the situations in which pupils benefit from using their mother tongue.

The hypotheses of this thesis are stated as follows:

1. The use of mother tongue in EFL classrooms is necessary and helpful.
2. Teachers use the mother tongue to maintain discipline and to explain grammar, vocabulary, and complex concepts.

6. Research methodology

The theoretical part of this thesis dealt with the theoretical background of using mother tongue in EFL classrooms, outlining teaching methods and their connections to mother tongue use, as well as the benefits, drawbacks, and situations where it is essential to use mother tongue. The empirical part is based on the results of a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire was created in the autumn of 2023 and distributed to participants in January 2024, targeting respondents in the Zlín region. The following chapters of this empirical part describe the data and information gathered from the survey. Analysis of questionnaire questions, methodology, data collection are further described in the subsequent chapters and subchapters.

6.1. Questionnaire methodology

As demonstrated in the theoretical part of this thesis, opinions on using the mother tongue in EFL classrooms vary. One group of experts supports using the mother tongue, arguing it is necessary and beneficial in certain situations, at specific levels, or for particular age groups. They generally agree that as long as pupils benefit from its use, it should be employed in the classroom. On the contrary, the second group of experts believes that using the mother tongue does not aid in second language acquisition. They argue that pupils should be immersed in the target language, even if their lower proficiency levels limit their understanding of language concepts, aiming to help them understand the context, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Given these differing perspectives, a qualitative research methodology was chosen to gather data and draw conclusions. This approach allows for a detailed description and explanation of the complex background (Gavora, 2000, p.31-32). The study aims to summarize the frequency of specific situations in which EFL teachers use the mother tongue, the associated difficulties, and the teachers' opinions on incorporating the mother tongue in the classroom. The survey also examines the frequency of mother tongue use in relation to the levels taught and years of teaching experience. To collect these data, a questionnaire was created using the survey tool at *survio.com*. It can be accessed both by the link at <https://www.survio.com/survey/d/I6M7A9S5U5E2B9B3R> and in the Appendix chapter of this thesis. The research questionnaire was created in English as English teachers are the main instrument of this survey.

The questionnaire is set to answer four aspects of language learning and using mother tongue:

1. *Teacher's frequency of using mother tongue*
2. *Teacher's reasons for using mother tongue*

3. *Teacher's attitude towards using mother tongue*
4. *Motivation towards using only English in EFL classrooms*

To gather data in these four areas, the questionnaire consists of a total of 14 questions. Nine of these questions are close ended with multiple-choice options, while the remaining questions are open-ended to obtain more in-depth responses, insights, and individual comments from the teachers.

6.2. Questionnaire questions

As previously mentioned, the aim of the research was to collect data in four specific areas by addressing the following questions:

1. *What classes/levels do you teach?*

The aim of this question is to map the level or class diversity among the teachers.

2. *How many years of your teaching practice have you had?*

The amount of year of teaching practice may influence the use of mother tongue or using only English in ELT classrooms but also may show more motivation at the early or later stages of teaching career.

3. *How often do you use your mother tongue in your EFL classes?*

The purpose of this question is to determine the frequency of mother tongue use, whether teachers use it *often*, *very little*, or *never*. Answering this question categorizes teachers into one of two opinion-based groups: those who incorporate the mother tongue and those who completely omit it.

4. *How often should mother tongue be used in EFL classes?*

This question is focused on the teacher's point of view and personal preferences of the mother tongue use. As described in the theoretical part.

5. *From your point of view, what are the benefits of using mother tongue in EFL classes?*

Opinion-based questions play a crucial role in this thesis, this question is designed to gather responses on the benefits of using mother tongue in the classrooms and most importantly asks the teachers if the use of mother tongue is necessary or not at all.

6. *From your point of view, what are the benefits of using only English in EFL classes?*

This open question is designed to contrast the previous question. It is also focused on the teachers who believe in the total omission of mother tongue in order to achieve second language acquisition.

7. *What are your reasons for using mother tongue in EFL classes?*

A diverse set of answers was provided to the respondents in order to map the wide variety of reasons why teachers switch from English to their mother tongue. Answers such as: *mother tongue is more convenient, insufficient knowledge on the part of pupils, use of Czech textbooks with Czech instructions, pupils are more responsive to mother tongue* and others were used to draw outcomes.

8. *In which situation do you use mother tongue?*

Another multiple-choice question which is crucial for this questionnaire and provides the insights of specific situations when teachers use mother tongue, and which also serves as an expansion of question n.7. Specific situations are provided such as *to give instructions, to explain a new piece of vocabulary, to explain grammar, to motivate pupils, to ensure discipline, to handle disobedience, to give feedback, to assign homework or test* and more to ensure the diverse complexity of each teacher's opinion.

9. *How do you feel when you use both languages in your EFL classes?*

This question focuses on the attitude connected to the teacher's self-reflection. The variety and frequency can make different impact on how the teacher portray their own skills and their attitude towards their profession.

10. *Do you think that an EFL teacher should stick to using only English?*

Using only English in EFL teaching states again the teacher's opinion on the omitting or accepting that there are situations in which a teacher is obliged to use mother tongue.

11. *Do you think that using mother tongue in EFL classrooms helps to learn English language?*

Incorporating this open-ended question focuses on the teacher's opinion whether using mother tongue is actually helpful and may make English lessons easier when it comes to English

comprehension. The diversity of responses reflects on each one's beliefs and how they perceive using both mother tongue and the target language in the classrooms.

12. Is there a specific situation where you would like to use English, but you are forced to use mother tongue instead?

This question is for the teachers who use mother tongue in their classrooms. Additionally, it looks for teachers who believe English could be used for other situations as well.

13. What is your motivation to avoid the use of mother tongue in your EFL classrooms?

These last two questions answers give us the insights of teacher's motivation and how they are encouraged to avoid the use of mother tongue. The motivation goes hand in hand with the portrayal of how teachers view the educational values of EFL.

14. What would help you to teach your classes only in English?

The last open-ended question gives the respondents the possibility to elaborate on the other factors, facts, or a change of a situation which would make them use mother tongue less frequently and incorporate English only classes.

6.3. Participants

For research purposes, it was necessary to target only English language teachers. Several schools were contacted via email and asked to forward the questionnaire to their English teachers. The survey link was sent to both state and alternative schools in the Zlín region. Unfortunately, due to the high volume of questionnaires school directors receive, only 55 teachers completed the survey. It took several weeks to gather these 55 responses. Although this number may be seen as a limitation, it still provides sufficient data to draw meaningful conclusions from the survey.

6.3.1. Ethics of the thesis

As for the ethics of this work, the ethical considerations regarding the questionnaire were of paramount importance. To ensure the privacy and confidentiality of all participants, the survey was designed to be completely anonymous. No personal identifiers such as names, sex, age, or specific positions at the school were collected. The only demographic information requested was the number of years participants had been practicing their teaching profession. This approach was adopted to maintain the anonymity of respondents and to protect their privacy, while still allowing for relevant

analysis of the data. The anonymity of the survey guaranteed that individual responses could not be traced back to any specific person, ensuring that participants could provide honest and uninhibited feedback without any concerns about repercussions or breaches of confidentiality. This ethical framework was followed to uphold the integrity of the research and the trust of the participants.

6.4. Data collection

When addressing the respondents, they were first provided with basic information about the survey and the aim of the research. Participants were assured of their anonymity, as discussed in the previous chapter on the ethics of the thesis. They were also encouraged to ask any questions regarding the questionnaire or the upcoming results via the author's university email.

The questionnaire was created in autumn 2023. The final version of the questionnaire was then rewritten into an online survey tool and distributed to participants in January 2024. The survey remained open for responses for four weeks.

6.5. Limitations of the study

One of the main limitations of this study is the relatively small sample size, which may affect the validity of the findings. With a limited number of respondents, the results might not fully represent the broader population of EFL teachers. Moreover, the study focuses primarily on teacher perspectives, which overshadows valuable insights from students who directly experience the educational methods. This teacher-centred approach may not capture the full impact of using the mother tongue in EFL classrooms on student learning, engagement, and overall language acquisition. By not including student perspectives, the study lacks a critical dimension that could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of using the mother tongue in language instruction.

Furthermore, relying on self-reported data introduces potential biases and limitations. Self-reported data is subjective and may reflect respondents' perceptions rather than objective reality as Gavora states (2008, p.33).

Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data introduces several potential biases and limitations. Self-reported data is subjective and may reflect respondents' perceptions rather than objective reality. Respondents may provide answers they perceive to be desirable in the society they live in or aligned with what they believe the researcher expects.

These factors combined suggest that while the findings offer important insights into the role of the mother tongue in EFL classrooms, they should be interpreted with caution. To address these limitations, future research should involve larger and more diverse groups of participants, include student perspectives, and use more objective data collection methods. This will help validate and expand on the initial findings.

7. Data analysis

7.1. Question 1 and 2

1. What classes/levels do you teach?

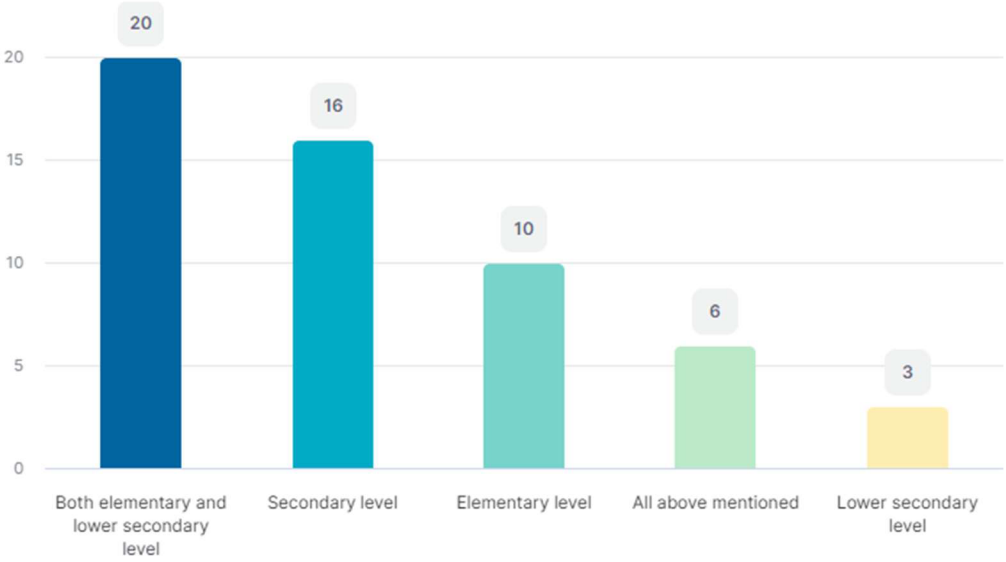


Figure 1 - level taught

Levels Taught

The first table provides insight into the teaching levels covered by the respondents. The data shows that 20 teachers (36 %) are involved in teaching both elementary and lower secondary levels, indicating a broad range of expertise across different age groups. Secondary level teachers make up the second largest group with 16 respondents (about 29 %). This is followed by 10 teachers (around 18 %) who exclusively teach at the elementary level. Six teachers (about 11 %) reported teaching at all mentioned levels, demonstrating their ability in handling a wide range of student age groups and educational stages. The smallest group, with only 3 teachers (5,5%), is focused solely on the lower secondary level.

2. How many years of your teaching practice have you had?

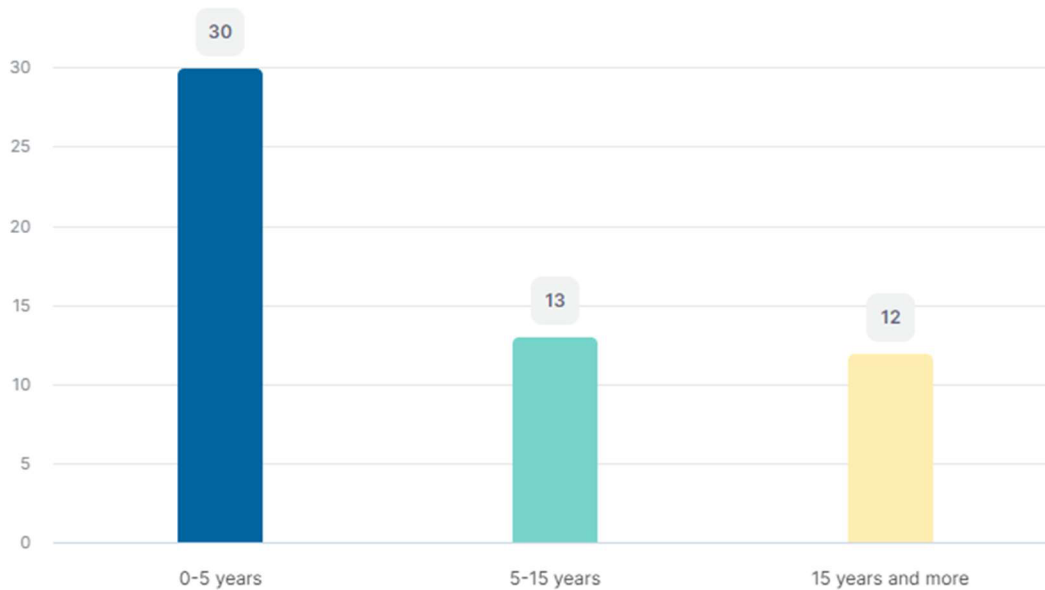


Figure 2 - teaching practice

Teaching Experience

The figure highlights the number of years of teaching practice among the respondents. It reveals that a significant majority, 30 out of 55 teachers (approximately 55 %), have between 0-5 years of teaching experience which indicates teachers who are in the early stages of their careers. The second largest group of 13 teachers (about 24 %), has 5-15 years of experience and then 12 teachers (around 22 %) have been teaching for more than 15 years, representing a group of experienced teachers.

7.2. Question 3 and 4

3. How often do you use your mother tongue(MT) in your English Language Teaching(ELT) classes?

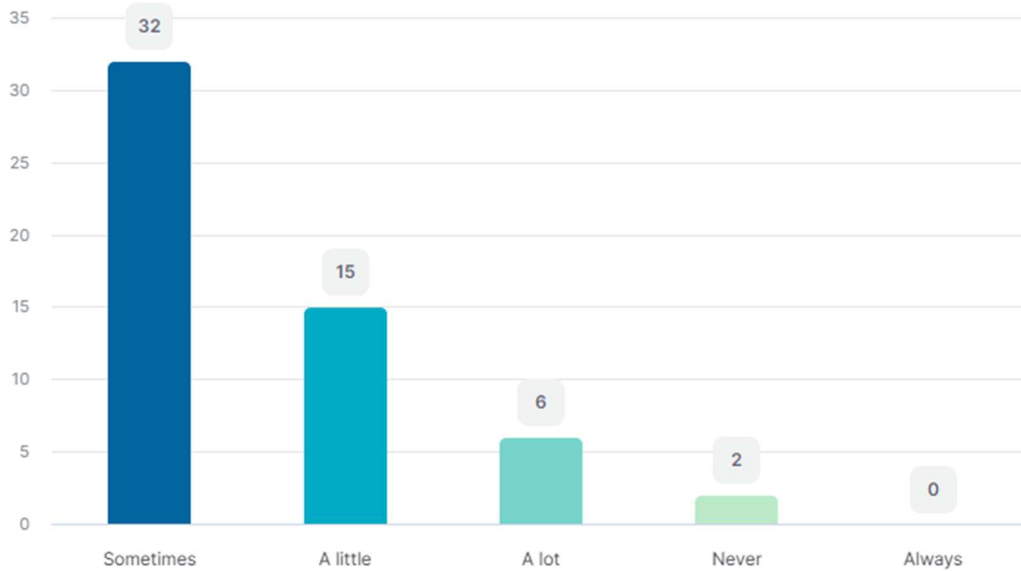


Figure 3 - frequency of using mother tongue

	Never	A little	Sometimes	A lot	Always
Never	2	3	1	0	0
A little	0	12	14	2	0
Sometimes	0	0	17	4	0
A lot	0	0	0	0	0
Always	0	0	0	0	0

Table 1 - correlation of question 3 and 4

4. How often should mother tongue(MT) be used in ELT classes? (your point of view)

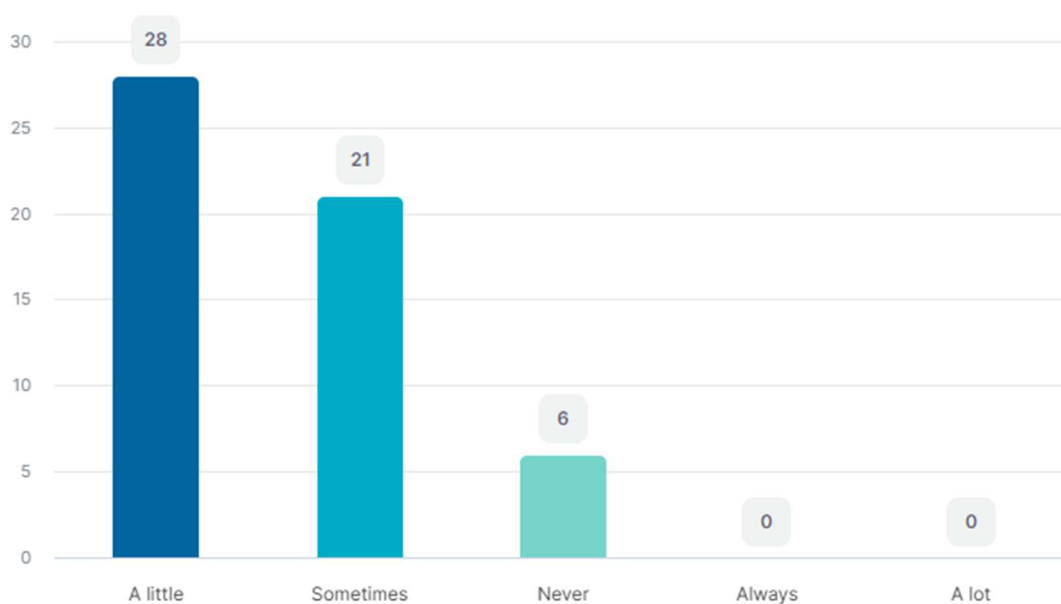


Figure 4 - ideal frequency of using mother tongue

A significant portion of teachers use the mother tongue *sometimes* (32 teachers) and believe it should sometimes be used (21 teachers), indicating a general agreement on its occasional usefulness in language instruction. While 15 teachers currently use mother tongue *a little*, a larger group of 28 teachers (approximately 51 %) believe mother tongue should ideally be used *a little*, showing a preference for limiting mother tongue usage more than is currently practiced. Very few teachers use mother tongue *a lot* (6 teachers), and none believe it should be used extensively, which indicates a clear preference against relying heavily on mother tongue in the classroom. Similarly, a small number of only two teachers *never* use mother tongue , which aligns with the 6 teachers who think mother tongue should *never* be used.

7.3. Question 5

An open-ended question: ‘*From your point of view, what are the benefits of using mother tongue in ELT classes?*’ asked teachers to state their opinions on the benefits of this issue. The responses from 55 teachers highlighted several key benefits. Altogether, the responses can be classified into 6 categories:

1. Improved understanding and comprehension (19 responses)
2. Explaining grammar and complex concepts (14 responses)

3. Reducing student anxiety and increasing comfort of classroom climate (6 responses)
4. Efficiency and timesaving (5 responses)
5. Checking understanding and avoiding misunderstanding (6 responses)
6. Situational use for specific scenarios (5 responses)

Around 60 % (33 teachers) of respondents noted that using mother tongue helps improve understanding and comprehension, especially when explaining instructions, questions, and complex concepts. They mentioned that students grasp grammar rules and difficult ideas better when mother tongue is used for explanations. Approximately 11 % of teachers highlighted that using mother tongue can reduce student anxiety and create a more comfortable classroom environment, particularly for beginners and weaker students. Only 9 % (5 teachers) mentioned that mother tongue can save time and make lessons more efficient by providing quicker explanations and ensuring clarity. Additionally, about 11 % of teachers pointed out the importance of using mother tongue to check students' understanding and avoid misunderstandings. Lastly, 9 % of responses indicated that mother tongue is useful for specific scenarios, such as organizing activities or addressing disciplinary issues. These insights suggest that while the use of mother tongue should be balanced and strategic, it can significantly enhance the effectiveness of ELT, especially for beginners and weaker students.

7.4. Question 6

Another open-ended question aimed to find out teachers' opinions on the benefits of using only English in ELT lessons. These responses can be characterised into groups with similar features such as:

1. Increased exposure and immersion (18 responses)
2. Improved thinking and cognitive skills (14 responses)
3. Enhanced listening and communication skills (9 responses)
4. Faster progress and better language perception (6 responses)
5. Building confidence and reducing anxiety (8 responses)

A significant number of 18 respondents (around 33 %) emphasized increased exposure and immersion. They mention that constant use of English helps students get used to the language, improves their listening skills, and makes them more comfortable with English. Another group of 14 teachers (25,5 %) focused on improved thinking and cognitive skills, suggesting that using only English encourages students to think in English and enhances their cognitive abilities.

Better listening and communication skills were highlighted by 9 teachers (16 %), who state that exclusive use of English helps students develop better listening comprehension and communication abilities, with teacher stating. *"They start thinking in English and automatically speak English when they meet me, even out of school"* or *"Students get used to the language, start to think in the language, building communicative skills"*. Six teachers mentioned that using only English leads to faster progress and better assimilation and better perception of the language as a whole, with comments such as, *"Exposure to English as much as possible allows for faster learning through hearing. It improves pronunciation and makes the student more comfortable in the setting."*

Lastly, 8 teachers (14,5 %) highlighted the role of using only English in building confidence and reducing anxiety, with one respondent mentioning, *"After some time students get used to it and when they know there is no way of using mother tongue, they try harder, focus more, use creative thinking and later might become more confident in their English skills."* These results suggest that while using only English can be challenging, it offers significant advantages in developing students' language proficiency, cognitive skills, and comfort with using English in various contexts.

7.5. Question 7

7. What are your reasons for using MT in ELT classes?

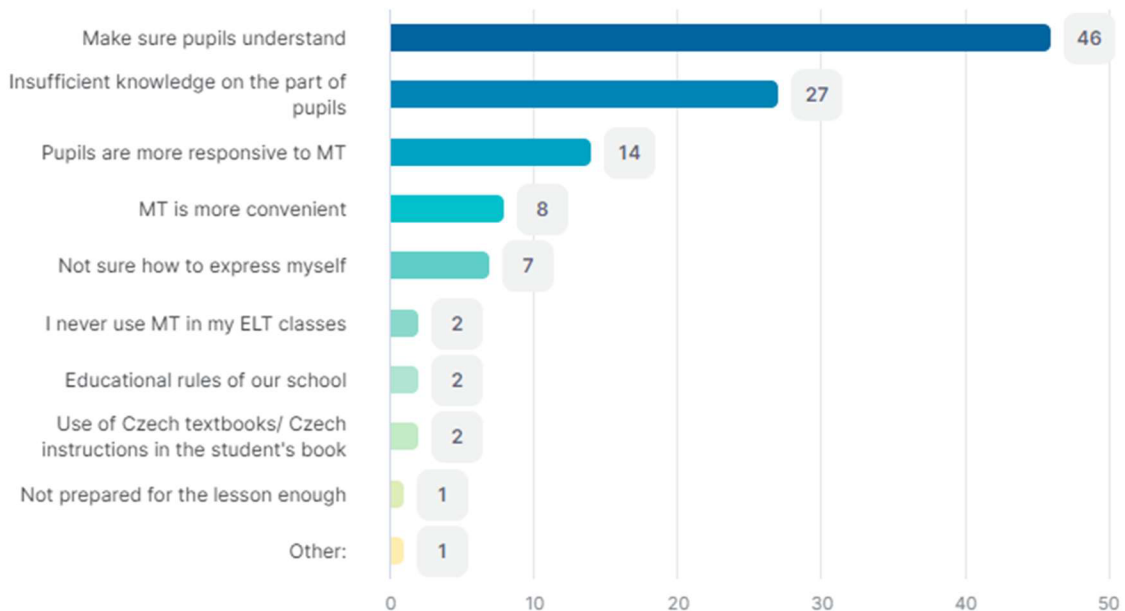


Figure 5 - reasons for using mother tongue

This multiple-choice question asked respondents to identify their reasons for using mother tongue in English Language Teaching classes. The responses from 55 teachers revealed a variety of reasons, providing valuable insights into the practical challenges and difficulties of language teaching. The most common reason, chosen by 46 respondents (83,5 %), was to ensure that pupils understand the material. This shows a strong emphasis on comprehension, especially when teachers teach complex concepts or instructions, as noted in previous question analyses.

Moreover, 27 respondents (49 %) believed that students have insufficient knowledge to comprehend the lessons exclusively in the target language. This suggests that a significant number of teachers encounter pupils with multiple levels of English proficiency. Fourteen respondents (25,5 %) indicated that pupils are more responsive when mother tongue is used, they also highlight the role of mother tongue in maintaining student engagement and participation in the classroom.

Convenience was noted by 8 respondents (14,5 %) as a reason for using mother tongue, which might reflect the practical advantages of switching to mother tongue for quick explanations or

managing classroom dynamics. Seven respondents (around 12 %) admitted they use mother tongue because they are unsure how to express certain concepts in English, which reflects potential areas for professional development in language instruction techniques.

Moreover, a small number of respondents (3,6 %) cited educational rules of their school or the use of Czech textbooks and instructions as reasons for incorporating mother tongue . This underscores the influence of institutional policies and available resources on teaching practices. Interestingly, 2 respondents mentioned that they never use mother tongue in their ELT classes, suggesting a commitment to English-only instruction despite the challenges. One teacher (1,8 %) mentioned using mother tongue due to inadequate preparation for the lesson, which shows adequate lesson planning can impact the reliance on mother tongue .

7.6. Question 8

8. In which situations do you use MT?

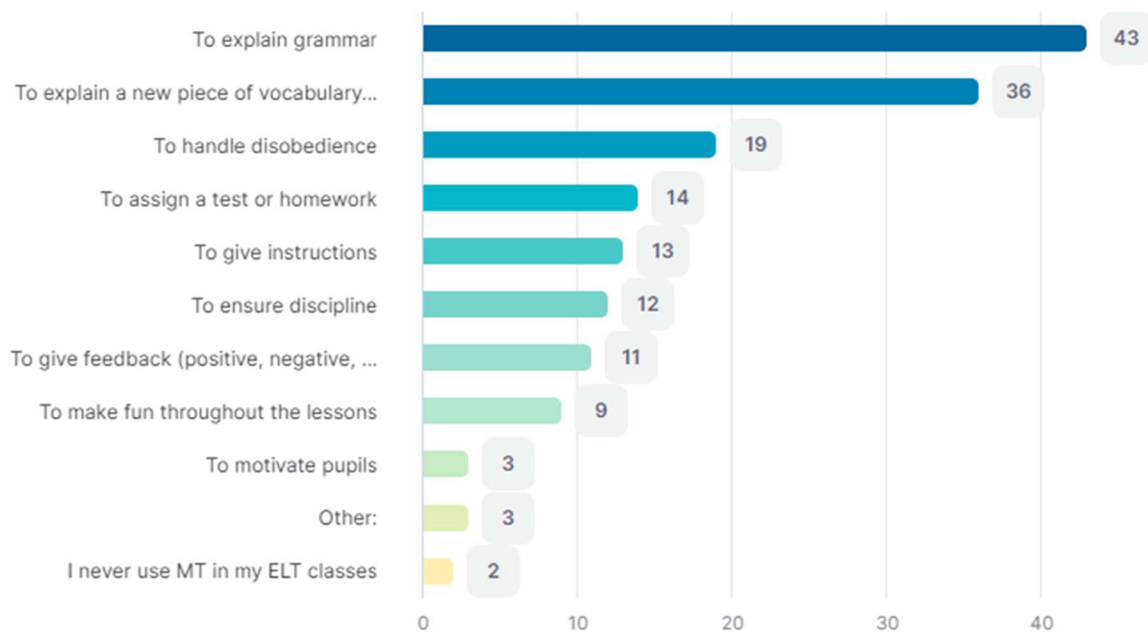


Figure 6 - situations that require the use of mother tongue

The figure illustrates the various situations in which teachers decide to use mother tongue in EFL classrooms. This multiple-choice question allowed respondents to select all situations in which they find mother tongue useful. The most common use of mother tongue is to explain grammar. This option was chosen by 43 respondents (78 %). Then, 36 respondents use mother tongue to explain new vocabulary. Nineteen teachers (34,5 %) say that they use their mother

tongue to handle disobedience. Fourteen teachers (25,5 %) use mother tongue to assign tests or homework, while 13 respondents (23,6 %) use it to give instructions. Ensuring discipline is a reason for 12 respondents (approximately 22 %), and 11 teachers (20 %) use MOT mother tongue to give feedback. A smaller number of teachers use mother tongue to make lessons fun (9 respondents, 16,4 %) and to motivate pupils. Around 3,6 % respondents stated that they never use mother tongue in their ELT classes. This data shows that there is a small group of teachers who resorts to English-only approach and that large group of respondents highlight the importance of using mother tongue.

7.7. Question 9

9. How do you feel when you use both languages in your ELT classes?

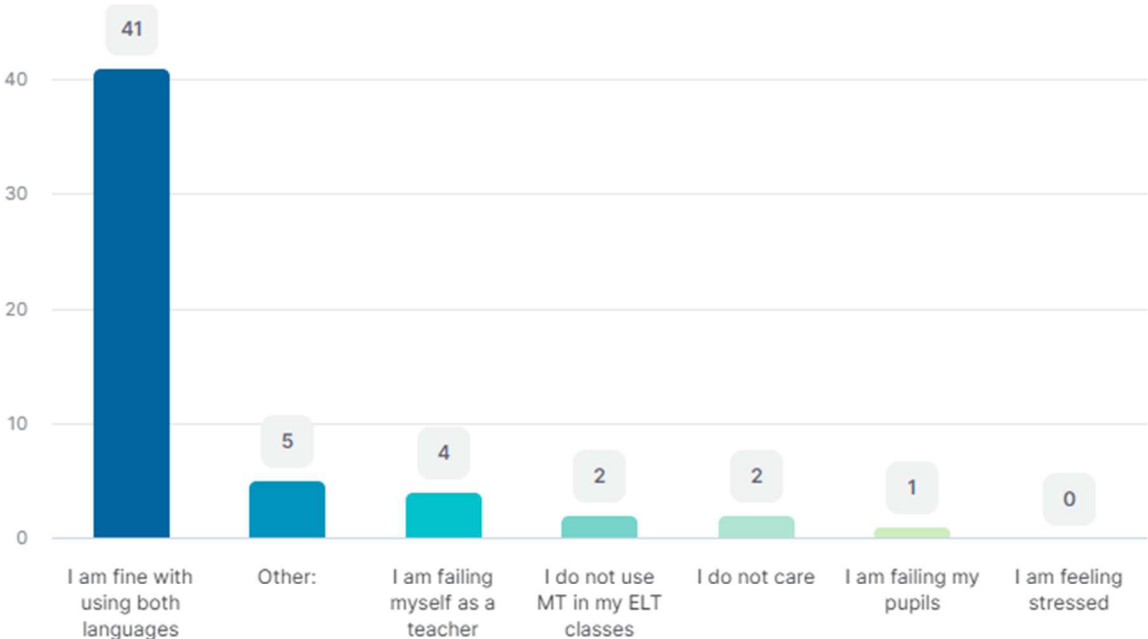


Figure 7 - feeling in connection with using both languages

This figure shows how teachers feel about using both mother tongue and the target language in their classes. This multiple-choice question allowed respondents to select more than one option regarding their feelings. The majority of teachers, 41 respondents (approximately 74,5 %), indicated that they are fine with using both languages. This suggests a general acceptance and comfort with bilingual instruction in the classroom. In contrast, four teachers (7.3 %) expressed that they feel they are failing themselves as teachers when they use both languages, which may indicate the conflict with their teaching philosophy.

Other 2 teachers (3,6 %) stated that they do not use mother tongue in their ELT classes, saying that they strictly stick to using the target language. Another 2 teachers (3,6 %) mentioned that they do not care about using both languages. Only 1 teacher (around 2 %) felt they were failing their pupils by using both languages. Interestingly, none of the respondents reported feeling stressed by using both languages.

7.8. Question 10

10. Do you think that a teacher of ELT should stick to using ONLY English?

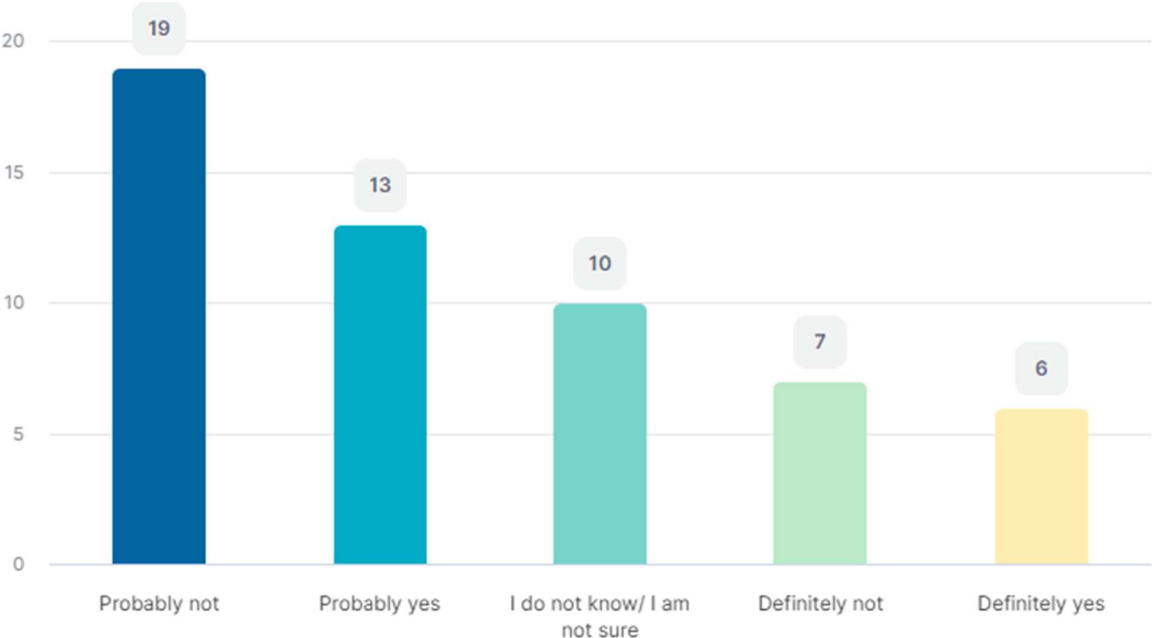


Figure 8 - using only one language in language teaching

The figure illustrates the responses to the question of whether an ELT teacher should use only English in the classroom. This question is a single-choice type, as the respondents selected one option that represented their opinion.

Around 34,5 % answered "Probably not." This data indicates that teachers lean towards flexibility in language use rather than strict English-only lessons. This is followed by 13 respondents (23,6 %) who answered, "Probably yes," showing a significant percentage of teachers who use English mostly but with some exceptions. Then, 10 respondents (18,2 %) expressed uncertainty, selecting "I do not know/I am not sure," which may reflect the ongoing debate and mixed opinions in the field of ELT regarding the use of the mother tongue.

Interestingly, 7 respondents (12,7 %) answered "Definitely not," strongly opposing the idea of using only English. Thus, these teachers see clear benefits in incorporating the mother tongue. Conversely, 6 respondents (around 11 %) chose "Definitely yes," supporting the strict use of English in ELT classrooms.

7.9. Question 11

11. Do you think that using MT helps pupils to learn the English language?

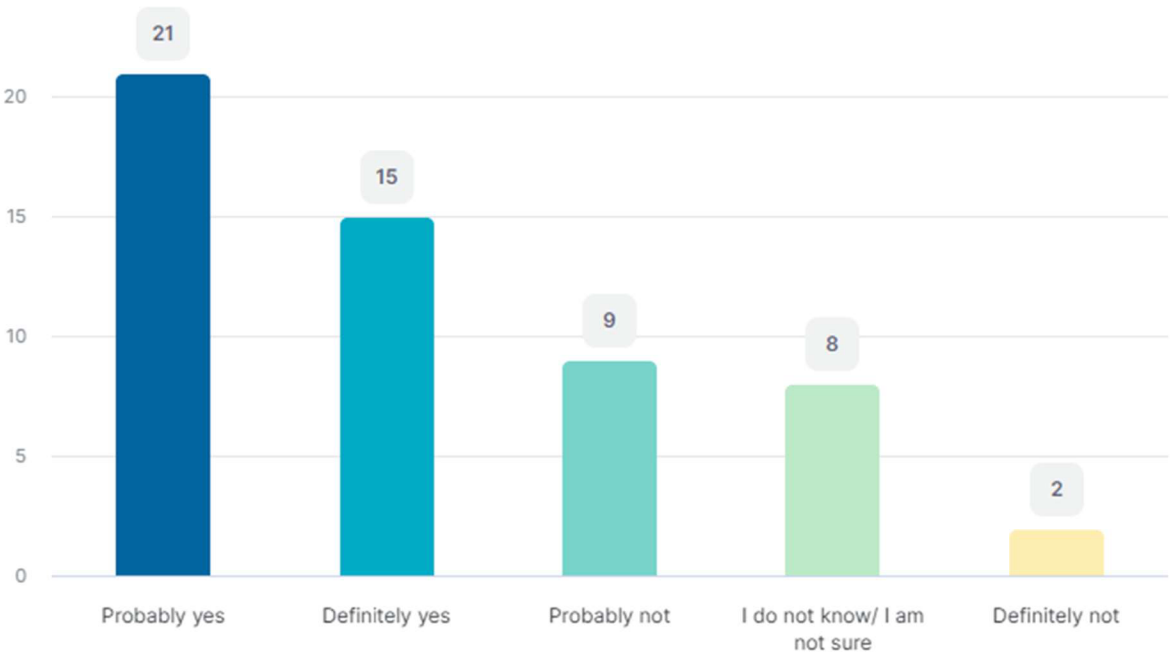


Figure 9 - helpful use of mother tongue in ELT

This figure represents teachers' opinions on whether using mother tongue helps pupils learn the English language. The data suggests that most teachers have a positive view of using mother tongue for learning English. Twenty-one respondents (38,2 %) believe that using M mother tongue "probably yes" helps pupils learn English, while 15 respondents (27,3 %) are more certain, who answered "definitely yes." On the other hand, a smaller group of the respondents share a negative view, with 9 respondents (16,4 %) indicating "probably not" and 2 respondents (3,6 %) stating "definitely not." Furthermore, 8 respondents (14,5 %) are not sure or do not know if using mother tongue helps pupils learn English.

These results reveal that the majority of teachers, specifical 36 out of 55 (65,5 %) think that using mother tongue is beneficial for learning English to some extent. This suggests that many

teachers see practical advantages in incorporating mother tongue in order to enhance the comprehension and support the learning process. However, a minority of 20 % respondents, either do not see the benefit or are unsure about the impact of mother tongue on English language acquisition. This division in opinion highlights again the ongoing debate within the ELT community regarding the role and effectiveness of mother tongue in language instruction.

7.10. Question 12

Teachers were asked in this question if there are specific situations where they would prefer to use English but are forced to use mother tongue instead. The responses from 55 teachers revealed several common themes such:

1. Insufficient student proficiency (12 responses)
2. Explaining grammar and vocabulary (12 responses)
3. Classroom management and discipline (8 responses)
4. Specific needs and special circumstances (6 responses)
5. Indecisive or negative responses (8 responses)
6. No response (9 responses)

A total of 12 respondents highlighted that students' lack of English skills is the main reason for using their mother tongue with comments such as "*When the kids don't have the level of English I am speaking*" and "*We have different ability classes. In some of them, it is difficult to use just English.*" Another common reason, also mentioned by 12 respondents (around 22 %), was explaining the grammar and vocabulary. Statements like "*Typically grammar explanation, when they don't get it from the inductive approach*" and "*When giving instructions for the test - I teach young pupils (7-8yo) and they are often very stressed and unsure and ask for the translation,*" directly support this reason for using mother tongue.

Classroom management and discipline issues were mentioned by 8 (14,5 %) teachers, with responses such as "*When I have to calm down students who are disobeying the rules*" and "*When dealing with discipline problems.*" Six respondents pointed to specific needs and special circumstances, like "*Students with special needs - sometimes they need as simple an explanation as possible - in mother tongue*" and "*My lower secondary students aren't used to getting instructions in English. I have to translate often, but it's getting better step by step.*"

Finally, 8 teachers indicated no need for mother tongue or were indecisive, with answers like "No," "None that I can think of," and "Not sure." The rest of the respondents decided not to fill in this question.

7.11. Question 13

One of the last questions of this questionnaire aimed to find out teachers' motivations for avoiding the use of the mother tongue in their English classes. Responses shared similarities that were able to classify into these criteria:

1. Maximizing exposure to English (20 responses)
2. Encouraging English thinking and communication (15 responses)
3. Enhancing learning outcomes and progress (12 responses)
4. Personal and professional beliefs (8 responses)

A total of 20 teachers (36,4 %) emphasized the goal of maximizing exposure to English. They provided comments like "*To surround the students with English environment*" and "*Children should be exposed to as much English as possible.*" Another common motivation, which was mentioned by 15 respondents (27 %), was encouraging students to think and communicate in English more with Examples including "*To force students to think more in English*" and "*Motivate ss to communicate in L2.*"

Enhancing learning outcomes and progress was another key reason, cited by 12 respondents with the comments supporting this reason "*To teach them better English*" and "*Positive impact on students' learning*". Eight respondents pointed to personal and professional beliefs for preferring English-only instruction, with statements such as "*Why should I use mother tongue when teaching another language?*" and "*I hated when my teacher in grammar school always used the mother tongue. I want the pupils to make as much progress as possible.*"

7.12. Question 14

Teachers were asked what would help them make their ELT classes conducted in English only. Since this question was open-ended, it provided several insights that could be characterised into these categories:

1. Smaller groups or grouping according to the proficiency level (12 responses)
2. Improved student motivation and behaviour (10 responses)
3. Teacher support and development (8 responses)

4. Enhanced teaching materials and methods (6 responses)
5. Realistic expectations and flexibility (6 responses)
6. Current practice and success (5 responses)
7. Indecisive or no answer

The largest portion of responses counting, approximately 22 %, highlighted the need for smaller class sizes and grouping students by proficiency level, with comments such as "*To have smaller groups of students, to have more time for individual work with students*" and "*Teaching students at the same level.*" Improved student motivation and behaviour were mentioned by 18 % (10 respondents), with statements like "*Will of the pupils to learn English*" and "*Pupils would obey more and listen more.*"

Teacher support and development were also important, cited by 8 respondents with a statement: "*Self-improvement, my better knowledge of English*". Enhanced teaching materials and methods were noted by 6 respondents, about 11%, with suggestions like "*Visual aids - if they see the word/situation, there's usually no need to use mother tongue*" and "*Videos they would understand - explaining grammar.*"

Some teachers emphasized realistic expectations and flexibility, with 6 responses indicating that sometimes using mother tongue is necessary, as reflected in comments like "*To be honest, I'm not sure. Some of my classes are entirely mended in English, however, if we cover a topic, which is very hard to understand in depth, I think it's more convenient to use mother tongue*" and "*Nothing, I believe mother tongue has its place, although severely limited.*" Lastly, 5 teachers mentioned they already successfully conduct their classes in English or need no specific changes, such as "*They are in English only*".

8. Discussion

The previous sections of *Chapter 7* presented the data gathered via an online questionnaire filled in by English teachers at various levels of EFL. While the interpretations of this data have already been mentioned, this chapter will further be discussed the questionnaire findings.

This thesis aimed to discover the benefits of using mother tongue in EFL classrooms, as well as the mother tongue frequency, reasons for use, situations in which it is used, teachers' attitudes, and motivations. The research provided several insights and conclusion.

The first two questions explored the teaching levels and years of practice of the participants. Many teachers with 0-5 years of experience teach both elementary and lower secondary levels. This indicate that new teachers often need to be flexible and capable of teaching various age groups. In contrast, more experienced teachers tent to specialise in either secondary or elementary education. This trend is evident from the fewer teachers with over 15 years of experience, who are more likely to have settled into specific teaching roles over time.

The data from questions 3 and 4 shows the frequency of using mother tongue and the teacher's ideal frequency, which diverse a little. While many teachers use it occasionally, it is visible that teachers tend to reduce the use of mother tongue slowly. The lack of support for extensive use of mother tongue shows a preference for maximizing exposure to the target language with the correct use of teaching methods and approaches. Overall, teachers recognise the need for occasional mother tongue using but prefer it to be limited and strategically used.

Improved understanding and comprehension were the most frequently mentioned benefits for using mother tongue in the classrooms. It was cited by 60% (33 teachers), which indicated that mother tongue is useful for explaining instructions, grammar rules, and complex concepts. Furthermore, 14 teachers (approximately 25%) said that mother tongue helps in explaining difficult ideas. The data also showed that teachers use their mother tongue to reduce student anxiety and create a more comfortable classroom environment. This was emphasized by 11% (6 teachers). Another insight from this survey showed that mother tongue can be especially beneficial for weaker students and for those who are at the beginning of their language learning journey. Efficiency and timesaving were mentioned by 9% (5 teachers). Mother tongue thus allows the teacher to quickly explain and to have greater lesson clarity. The high percentage of teachers emphasizing comprehension and anxiety reduction emphasize the importance of mother tongue in making ELT more accessible and less intimidating for learners.

Teachers were also asked whether they believe that English should be used exclusively as the target language. Participants emphasized that constant use of English helps students get used to the language, improves listening skills and increases comfort within English classrooms. The teachers noted that it encourages students to think in English (33 %), enhances cognitive abilities (25 %), and develops better listening comprehension and communication skills (16 %). Additionally, teachers mentioned that immersion leads to faster learning, better language perception, and builds confidence. These findings suggest that although the use of English-only approach in ELT classes is challenging, it brings significant benefits in developing students' language proficiency, cognitive skills and overall comfort in learning English.

Responses from 55 teachers highlighted several reasons for using the mother tongue in ELT classes. The most common reason, chosen by 46 respondents (83,6 %), was to ensure pupil comprehension, especially complex concepts or instructions. In addition, 27 respondents felt that students' lack of English proficiency required the use of mother tongue, because classes are mostly mixed ability classes. Fourteen respondents (25,5 %) stated that mother tongue maintains student engagement. Seven respondents (12,7 %) admitted using mother tongue because of their uncertainty in expressing certain concepts in English. These insights emphasize the importance of mother tongue using in ensuring comprehension, addressing proficiency gaps, and maintaining engagement, while also highlighting teacher's ability to explain concepts in the target language clearly.

The most frequent use of the mother tongue among teachers is to explain grammar (78,2 %), followed by new vocabulary (65,5 %). Mother tongue is also used significantly for handling disobedience (34,5 %), assigning tests or homework (25,5 %), and giving instructions (23,6 %). Other reasons include maintaining discipline (21,8 %), providing feedback (20 %), making lessons enjoyable (16,4 %), and motivating students (5,5 %). These findings indicate that mother tongue is primarily used to enhance comprehension and manage classroom behaviour, Furthermore, most teachers (41 out of 55, or 74,5 %) felt comfortable using both mother tongue and the target language in their classrooms. This fact indicates a general acceptance of bilingual instruction. These results highlight a comfort and acceptance among teachers in using both the mother tongue and the target language in their classrooms.

When asked if they should stick to using only English, the responses revealed diverse perspectives. About 34,5 % of teachers chose to not believe in English-only classes, indicating a preference for flexibility over strict English-only instruction. Meanwhile, 23,6 % of

respondents were inclined to use English only. The data from this question highlights the ongoing debate and mixed views in ELT regarding the mother tongue's role. Additionally, 12,7 % strongly opposed exclusive English use, recognizing clear benefits to incorporating the mother tongue.

When asked if there are specific situations where teachers prefer to use English but are forced to use the mother tongue instead, insufficient student proficiency was the primary reason for 12 teachers (22). Similarly, 12 teachers also mentioned the need to explain grammar and vocabulary, especially in stressful situations for young pupils. Classroom management and discipline were cited by 8 teachers. Specific needs and special circumstances, such as students with special needs, were mentioned by 6 teachers. While teachers use English predominantly, practical considerations such as student proficiency, classroom management, and specific educational needs often require the strategic use of mother tongue to ensure effective communication and learning outcomes.

In response to whether there are specific situations where teachers prefer to use English but are forced to use the mother tongue insufficient student proficiency was a key reason for 12 teachers (22 %). Another 12 teachers mentioned the need to explain grammar and vocabulary which aligns with the answers in question concerning the situations and reason for mother tongue using. Classroom management and discipline issues were cited by 8 teachers (14.5%). Specific needs and special circumstances, such as students with special needs, were mentioned by 6 teachers.

In one of the final questions of the questionnaire, teachers were asked about their motivation for not using mother tongue in English classes. The teachers' responses revealed that the majority of the 20 responses preferred maximum exposure to English. Further, promoting English thinking and communication (27%), improving achievement and progress in teaching (12 responses) and personal and professional beliefs (8 responses) were highlighted. Personal and professional beliefs led some teachers to favour teaching only in English. These data suggest that teachers aim to create an immersive English environment, while balancing their personal teaching philosophies and experiences.

Finalising the last question of the research, participants stated that smaller class sizes or grouping by proficiency level would make the lessons English-only. Improved student motivation and behaviour (18%) were also noted as key factors. Enhanced teaching materials and methods, such as visual aids and videos, were suggested by 11% of respondents. Overall,

these insights suggest that achieving English-only instruction in ELT classes requires a combination of structural adjustments, improved resources, and a focus on student engagement and teacher development.

Conclusion

The diploma thesis titled *Benefits of Using Mother Tongue in EFL Classrooms* consisted of two parts, theoretical and empirical part. The theoretical part focused on the theory behind using mother tongue in EFL classrooms to provide a base for the empirical research which consisted of data analysis from a questionnaire survey.

The theoretical part aimed at outlining the theory of the use of mother tongue in both modern and traditional methodology. The role of mother tongue in language learning was described as well as its role connected to balancing the use of mother tongue and the target language. Additionally, the theoretical part includes subchapters describing the advantages and disadvantages of using mother tongue. Another chapter focused on the use of mother tongue in specific situations such as giving instruction, explaining grammar and overall checking for understanding in the comfort of English classrooms which were reflected in the questionnaire survey of the empirical part. The last chapter of the theoretical part aimed to outline the issues connected to translation and its use in ELT.

The empirical part aimed to uncover several insights regarding the use of mother tongue in ELT classrooms. The focus of the questionnaire was to explore the opinions, attitudes and views on this subject. The participants of this research shared their personal experience with the frequency, reasons, and situations when they decide to use their mother tongue, as well as their opinions on English-only classes and the difficulties they encounter when teaching English on multiple levels. The main purpose of this empirical part was to analyse the data and identify new outcomes related to this topic, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of the issue. The analysis of the questionnaire responses highlights the complexity and diversity of MT use in ELT classrooms.

Responses gathered from 55 English teachers revealed interesting insights. The first and second questions indicated that new teachers, with up to five years of experience, need to be flexible enough to teach across multiple levels. In contrast, more experienced teachers tend to specialize in certain levels. This trend suggests that starting teachers must adapt to various age groups, while seasoned educators can focus on specific teaching roles.

While many teachers use their mother tongue occasionally, they generally prefer to minimise its use in the classroom. This approach reflects a strategic balance between immersion in the target language and the reality of teaching. Teachers acknowledge the need for using the mother

tongue in specific situations where it proves to be particularly beneficial. There is strong support among English teacher for maximising exposure to English. However, teachers also recognise the practical benefits of using the mother tongue to ensure students' understanding and comprehension. Using mother tongue can prevent confusion and frustration in certain context and make the learning process more efficient. It allows teachers to clarify points quickly and efficiently, which might otherwise take much longer to explain in English.

The benefits of mother tongue use were clearly stated, particularly in helping pupils understand and comprehend on various levels during the lesson. The main advantages include explaining instructions and explaining grammar (78,2 %) followed by new vocabulary (65,5 %). Mother tongue is also used to assign a test or homework and to maintain discipline. The reasons also varied based on the pupils' proficiency levels and the teacher's ability to maintain pupil's engagement. These insights suggest that the mother tongue can significantly enhance the effectiveness of ELT, particularly for beginners and weaker students. Another benefit of mother tongue using is timesaving and efficiency. These insights suggest that mother tongue can significantly enhance the effectiveness of ELT.

Furthermore, this questionnaire also analysed the teachers' attitudes towards incorporating their mother tongue in ELT classes. The overall results indicated that they do not feel pressured by incorporating both languages because most of them stated that it is necessary to use their mother tongue in certain situations. Teachers believe that goal of language classes is to maximise the exposure to the target language while strategically incorporating mother tongue.

In another question, the survey participants expressed their motivation for teaching in English-only classroom. They suggested that creating smaller class sizes for language classes or grouping students according to their proficiency levels would help achieve monolingual classes. These changes may result in making lessons more comprehensible and less stressful in order to reduce pupil's anxiety.

To conclude this topic, the findings of this research provide a comprehensive understanding of the role and impact of mother tongue usage in EFL classrooms. The hypotheses of this thesis were confirmed by the results of the survey. The first hypothesis, that the use of mother tongue in EFL classrooms is necessary and helpful, was validated through the teachers' feedback. Additionally, the second hypothesis, that teachers use the mother tongue to maintain discipline and to explain grammar, vocabulary, and complex concepts, was also supported by the survey results. Teachers recognize the benefits of using the mother tongue and apply it strategically

and in specific situations. However, there is a clear preference for minimizing mother tongue use to maximize exposure to English, which is seen as crucial for language acquisition. The insights gained from this study highlight the need for a balanced and strategic approach to mother tongue use in ELT, considering the specific needs and proficiency levels of students.

Further research about the use of mother tongue in EFL classrooms may explore the same issue but from the pupil's perspective in order to understand not only the teacher's reasoning and difficulties but also the attitude and motivation of the pupil. Also, larger scale studies can draw more thorough insights and correlations between the strategic use of the mother tongue. Other than that, this study created a new insight into this issue and provided certain scenarios and situations when English teachers find it necessary to use their mother tongue. Achieving a balance between the target language and the use of mother tongue requires structural adjustments and most importantly focus on the situations when it becomes beneficial to use the mother tongue instead of using English.

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Appendix

Hello everyone!

My name is Martina Chvátlová, and I am attending the University of Palacký, Faculty of Education.

In this questionnaire, I would like to collect the necessary data for the empirical part of my diploma thesis - Benefits of using mother tongue in ELT classes.

This questionnaire focuses on:

- How often the teacher uses mother tongue in ELT classes
- What are the reasons for using mother tongue in ELT classes
- Teacher's attitude towards using mother tongue in ELT classrooms
- Motivation towards using only English in ELT classrooms.

Even though this questionnaire is short, I would be more than grateful if you would take some time and answer my open questions with specific examples (or simply mention real situations from a teacher's point of view) which would help me to draw interesting outcomes out of this research.

If you have any further questions, please, do not hesitate and contact me via my email: martina.chvalova01@upol.cz.

Thank you for your time!

Kind regards

Martina Chvátlová

1. What classes/levels do you teach?
 - a. Elementary level
 - b. Lower secondary level
 - c. Both elementary and lower secondary level
 - d. Secondary level
 - e. All above mentioned
2. How many years of your teaching experience have you had?
 - a. 0-5 years
 - b. 5-10 years
 - c. 15 years and more
3. How often do you use your mother tongue in your ELT classes?
 - a. Never
 - b. A little
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. A lot
 - e. Always
4. How often should mother tongue be used in ELT classes? (your point of view)
 - a. Never
 - b. A little

- c. Sometimes
 - d. A lot
 - e. Always
5. From your point of view, what are the benefits of using mother tongue in ELT classes?
 6. From your point of view, what are the benefits of using ONLY English in ELT classes?
 7. What are your reasons for using mother tongue in ELT classes?
 - a. mother tongue is more convenient
 - b. Not sure how to express myself
 - c. Not prepared for the lesson enough
 - d. Insufficient knowledge on the part of pupils
 - e. Pupils are more responsive to mother tongue
 - f. Make sure pupils understand
 - g. Use of Czech textbooks/Czech instruction in the student's book
 - h. Educational rules of our school
 - i. I never use mother tongue in my ELT classes
 - j. Other
 8. In which situations do you use mother tongue?
 - a. To give instructions
 - b. To explain a new piece of vocabulary (a word, a phrase, a sentence)
 - c. To explain grammar
 - d. To motivate pupils
 - e. To give feedback
 - f. To assign a test of homework
 - g. To handle disobedience
 - h. To ensure discipline
 - i. To make fun throughout the lessons
 - j. I never use mother tongue in my ELT classes
 - k. Other
 9. How do you feel when you use both languages in your ELT classes?
 - a. I am fine with using both languages
 - b. I am feeling stressed
 - c. I am failing my pupils
 - d. I am failing myself as a teacher
 - e. I do not care
 - f. I do not use mother tongue in my ELT classes
 10. Do you think that a teacher of ELT should stick to using only English?
 - a. Definitely yes
 - b. Probably yes
 - c. I do not know/I am not sure
 - d. Probably not
 - e. Definitely not
 11. Do you think that using mother tongue helps pupils to learn the English language?
 - a. Definitely yes
 - b. Probably yes
 - c. I do not know/I am not sure
 - d. Probably not

e. Definitely not

12. Is there a specific situation where you would like to use English, but you are forced to use mother tongue instead?

13. What is your motivation to avoid the use of mother tongue in your ELT classes?

14. What would help you to make your ELT classes in English only?