Does the L1 have a role in the foreign language classroom?
A review of the literature

Abigail Bruhlmann[1]

INTRODUCTION

Recently, the powers that be at the English language school where I work posted signs in every classroom, advising that only English is to be spoken there. The signs feature a menacing-looking Uncle Sam, wearing a patriotic top hat and a scowl. His outstretched index finger points accusingly at the viewer and his catch phrase is altered to read, "I want YOU to speak English at (*name of school*)" The background of these signs is an ominous black, and above the image of Uncle Sam is a warning: "Caution: English Only Zone."

Is imposing an institutional ban on the native language in the classroom the best way to foster L2 acquisition? This question is one that has been debated in the ESL/EFL world for some time, and there is a wealth of literature on the subject. Much of the research on this topic suggests that using the native language as a tool to foster target language acquisition is beneficial, rather than detrimental, for the students. These signs, therefore, seem misguided. Missing from the debate in the literature, however, is a clarification of exactly what it means to use the native language in the classroom. Do these signs try to prohibit students from chatting in their L1 in between tasks, forbid students from using the L1 as an L2 acquisition tool, or warn the teachers not to use the students' L1(s) as a teaching aid?

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[1]Abigail Bruhlmann received her M.A. in Applied Linguistics at Teachers College in May, 2012, and is currently working as the Head Teacher at the Midtown location of Kaplan International Centers. In this professional position, she is applying much of what she learned at Teachers College by teaching, designing tests, and developing curricula. Her interests include heritage language learner identity, conversation analysis, pragmatics, and L1 use in the classroom.

In my own classroom, I am tempted to ignore those signs as my experience with the literature has helped convince me that using the L1 minimally and with a clear purpose is one of many beneficial language-learning tools. Nevertheless, I am faced with a daily conundrum: what is to be done when the teacher speaks the L1 of some of the students, but not all of them? In my diverse class of 15 students, I would be able to help any Spanish-speaking students by pointing out differences in grammatical structures and vocabulary between the two languages, but would be unable to do so the same thing with, for example, my Turkish or Japanese speakers. In a situation like this, does the teacher use only English to ensure that all students are treated equally, thus depriving some of the students of a valuable teaching and learning tool, or does the teacher use the L1 of some of the students, thus creating a situation in which some students are getting more and different help from others?

In the EFL world, the problem described above is usually nonexistent, as the students generally all have the same L1. If the teacher also speaks that L1, then it is relatively easy to use the L1 as a teaching tool (though in my experience, EFL schools prohibit the use of the L1, most likely because use of the L1 in the EFL classroom takes away from crucial opportunities for L2 input). In the diverse ESL classroom, the L1 issue becomes much more complicated for the reasons mentioned above. As this is an issue that I have to deal with at work every day, I had hoped to find some guidance from the research by doing this literature review. It was my intention to entitle this paper, "How to use the L1 in the diverse Adult ESL classroom: A review of the literature." I found myself unable to do so, however, due to the paucity of literature on the use of the L1 in the diverse L2 classroom. Teachers such as me, therefore, are left without theoretical, research-based guidance as to the question of L1 usage in our particular classrooms.

Though I will be unable to pursue my original intended focus in this literature review, the

research on L1 use in the monolingual foreign language classroom in the secondary and university levels is nonetheless illuminating, and it is this research on which I will report. The purpose of this literature review, therefore, is to try to discover: 1) if the L1 has a role in the foreign language classroom; and 2) if so, what the role of the L1 is in such an environment. In order to do this, I will first give a theoretical framework as to the origins (based on politics, pedagogy, and second language acquisition theory) of the L1/L2 debate. I will then describe some of reasons that are commonly given, in the context of the interactionist framework, against the use of L1 foreign language classrooms. This will be followed by a description of some of the positive aspects of using the L1 in the foreign language classroom, in the context of the sociocultural framework. Finally, I will synthesize all of the above in a discussion section, and then conclude with suggestions for further research.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Before describing the arguments for and against using the L1 in the foreign language classroom, we have to understand the origins of the debate. While theories regarding second language acquisition and pedagogy come to mind first, and have certainly been crucial in determining whether or not the L1 should be used in the foreign language classroom, there is perhaps an under-explored political dimension that also must be considered to fully understand where the mentality comes from that the L1 has no place in the L2 classroom.

While gathering sources for this literature review, it struck me that many of the articles that I found on the topic of L1 use in the L2 classroom come from Canadian journals, and I started to think that this was not a mere coincidence. After all, Canada has two official languages, and thus the presence of two languages as a matter of course in daily life is much

more common there than it is in the United States. To my surprise, my suspicions were backed up by a claim made by Auerbach (1993), who takes a human justice stance in her article about L1 use. She convincingly argues that the origins of and trends related to "English Only" in the classroom are more political than pedagogical in nature. She says that one can look through history and draw parallels between the prevailing political attitudes to the popularity of "English Only" in the classroom. Auerbach makes the claim that during times when the Unitied States took an isolationist political stance, "English Only" prevailed, and in more pluralistic periods, educators in this country were more open to the use of multiple languages in the L2 classroom. Though interesting, Auerbach's work focuses on the politically charged notions of English as a Second Language in the United States, while this paper's purview is broader. Nevertheless, the perspective that she describes does play one role in the multi-faceted history of the debate.

When trying to truly understand the debate on L1 use in the L2 classroom, then, one must look beyond pedagogy and to political ideology in order to understand why the L1 is sometimes believed to have a role in the L2 classroom and sometimes not. This is, of course, a one-sided viewpoint. Different pedagogical methods have also influenced how ESL/EFL instruction has changed over time. Over the years, one method is replaced by another, which has eventually led to the current reluctance to use any one method at all (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). These differing methods have differing views on the use of the L1.

The Grammar Translation method ruled the classroom for much of the early history of language teaching. In this method, the L1 played a prominent role as students had to translate from the L1 to the L2. Students were not expected to be able to communicate in the L2, as grammatical accuracy, reading, and the ability to translate were the goals. Eventually, the lack of communicative ability led Grammar Translation to lose its popularity and led theorists like

Stephen Krashen to advocate a more communicative approach to language teaching. Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982), for example, postulates that students learn another language best when surrounded by "comprehensible input" in the target language. The less L2 input the students have, the more difficult L2 acquisition will be. Theories such as this helped to eventually replace Grammar Translation with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

As CLT was a reaction against Grammar Translation, a stipulation of this approach is that the L1 is to be avoided. Instead, meaningful interaction in the L2 is the goal, with the students using the L2 to "negotiate meaning" in order to understand what is being said in a communicative and real-world context (Savignon, 1987). Thus, the role of grammar is de-emphasized, and instead, the goal is for the students to produce the language via speaking in a way that mimics how language is actually used outside of the classroom. CLT plays a large influence on how many foreign language classes are conducted today, which can help explain why the L1 is often used in the classroom reluctantly, or not at all.

In addition to different methods of instruction, differing theories of second language acquisition also have affected how the use of the L1 in the L2 classroom is viewed. Ellis (2008) points out that the arguments for and against using the L1 in the classroom can be divided into two theoretical orientations: socioculturalism and interactionism. It is this way of framing the L1/L2 debate that I will follow most closely in this paper.

Ellis (2008) explains that in the sociocultural framework, the L1 can serve as a valuable source of background knowledge and information to prepare the students for L2 input. Anton and DiCamilla (1998) further explain the sociocultural framework, claiming that L1 use turns the students' native language into a powerful tool that can be used in student-student interaction in order for the students to better relate with one another, understand the directions of a task and,

complete the task. In other words, it is the L1 that taps into the cognitive processes of the students and helps them to more effectively complete the L2 task, while at the same time validating their social identities.

If one follows the interactionist framework, however, emphasis on being exposed to the maximum amount of the L2 is the key, as languages are best learned when students use them to negotiate meaning and make sense of what they hear (Ellis, 2008). Krashen (1982), adhering to Input Hypothesis based on negotiating meaning and emphasizing L2 input, praises interactionism. Anton and DiCamilla (1998) mention that those who favor a sociocultural viewpoint are very much at odds with those who work within the interactionist framework, implying that the views of the two perspectives taken in their pure forms cannot be reconciled. But the difficulty when viewing these two frameworks as oppositional, of course, is that one theory of second language acquisition cannot possibly give a complete picture of the L2 acquisition process. (How) Can it be that only the sociocultural framework or only the interactionist framework is true? Clearly, in a foreign language classroom, students have needs that stem from both of these frameworks.

As Grammar Translation and Communicative Language Teaching are polar opposites of each other both in theory and in their dictums regarding L1 use, and the sociocultural framework contradicts the isolationist framework, a more balanced approach is starting to emerge in the literature. It stipulates that the L1 does have a place in the classroom, but that it should only be used minimally, so that learners receive as much L2 input as possible. There has also been a call for the principled use of the L1 in order to ensure that it is being used with a clear purpose (Macaro, 2001). Though this suggestion has been with us for over 10 years, what L1 usage in the classroom actually looks like remains nebulous in the minds of individual teachers, students and

researchers. This lack of clarity on how to use the L1 in the L2 classroom could stem from the conflicting ideas that interactionism and socioculturalism present. Therefore, in the section below are arguments found in the literature that try to dissuade from L1 classroom use. These are based on the interactionist framework. In the following section are reasons for using the L1, with these arguments having their basis in socioculturalism.

The Interactionist Framework

The classroom is often the only place that foreign language learners receive L2 input, as they live in a country where their L1 is spoken. As a result, one major argument for not using the L1 in the foreign language classroom is to maximize L2 input, given that the students have no other source from which to get this input (Cook, 2001; Ellis, 2008) This sentiment is at the heart of the interactionist framework. In an article that reviews much of the literature on the L1/L2 debate, Nation (2003) cautions against using too much of the L1, as this might cause students to lose their motivation to use the L2. He echoes Ellis's (2008), warning that overusing the L1 is to be avoided, especially in foreign language contexts, because the classroom is the only place where learners get exposure to the target language. He provides a list of techniques to help the teachers maximize L2 use in the classroom, such as reminding students of the benefits of using the L2 and managing the classroom such that learners focus on L2 use, as ways to ensure that the L2 is at the front and center of foreign language instruction.

Polio and Duff's (1994) empirical study backs up the claims of Nation (2003) and Ellis (2008), arguing that not using the L2 takes away valuable opportunities for the learners to hear and use the L2. This study provides further insight on Duff and Polio (1990), in that it used quantitative and qualitative analyses to show how and why teachers used the L1 in 6 different

university-level foreign language classes. The researchers argue that many university graduates are not proficient in using the L2 that they spent years learning because they did not use it often enough in class. Indeed, Turnbull's (1999) study on four French as a Second Language classes in a secondary school in Canada found that the students who performed the best were those who were exposed to the largest amount of French by their teacher. This conclusion was made based on a test that the students took at the end of the study.

The teachers in Polio and Duff's (1994) study reported using the L1 to help explain difficult words, aid in grammar explanations and provide explanations of technical concepts like the midterm or final exam. These reasons were mostly timesaving in nature, though other reasons the teachers gave for using the L1, such as building a rapport with the students, were more sociocultural in nature. Polio and Duff (1994) argue that while it is important to make the students feel comfortable in class, this is not the most important goal in the L2 classroom. Had there been more L2 use in the classroom, the researchers argue that there would have been more L2 acquisition on the part of the learners. Indeed, they argue that students are not expected to understand 100% of what a teacher says, so if the teacher uses the L1, the teacher is not giving the student the opportunity to "figure out" what is going on, not to mention that the teacher is robbing the students of valuable L2 input. This also goes back to Krashen's (1982) view that in the L2 classroom, students should negotiate meaning. The very act of negotiating meaning helps to strengthen a student's language skills; preventing opportunities for students to do this actually decreases their interaction with the target language.

Because of his interactionist bent, Krashen (1982) would most likely agree with the findings of Polio and Duff (1994). His Input Hypothesis states that students need to be exposed to the maximum amount of L2 possible in the classroom in order to provide an opportunity for

communication in the L2 that mimics interaction beyond the classroom walls. We must assume, therefore, that he would advocate for not using the L1 in the classroom due to the claims of his Input Hypothesis, though we must note that he does not specifically reference L1 use in his works. Krashen would probably also agree that one reason for maximizing L2 use in the foreign language classroom is to have students use the L2 as a means for authentic communication.

If the L1 is used in the classroom in order to facilitate interaction, then the students might not view the L2 as a legitimate way to communicate ideas (Polio & Duff, 1994.) The devaluing of the L2 as a legitimate means of communication in the classroom is a problem that has been recognized by researchers like Edstrom (2006), Polio and Duff (1994), and Turnbull, who in a 2001 study reported receiving praise after a semester of only speaking French to his university students, claiming that his students realized that it was not necessary for them to rely on their L1 in order to communicate ideas.

Another argument against the use of the L1 comes from the fact that the L1 is often used inconsistently or in unprincipled ways. If the L1 is not used with a good reason, then its use cannot be justified in terms of pedagogy or second language acquisition, as all it is doing is taking away opportunities for the students to use the L2. Macaro (2001) was interested in investigating how teachers choose to use the students' L1 in the classroom, and did a study where he videotaped 6 student teachers of French in a secondary school in England during their lessons. He then talked with the teachers to understand why they used the L1 in the classroom, and he found that while teachers could sometimes give an explanation (the L1 aided in comprehension of a difficult word, for example), the teachers could not always give a reason for why they used the L1. This calls into question the benefit of the L1. A further critique of the unprincipled used of the L1 comes from Turnbull's (1999) study on four French as a Second

Language classes in a secondary school in Canada, as the range of the percentage of French that teachers used ranged from 9% to 89% of total class time. Clearly those who had the misfortune of being in the 9% class were not being exposed to enough of the L2.

Similarly, Duff and Polio (1990) sought to quantify exactly how much of the L2 is actually used in the L2 classroom. They conducted their empirical research in 13 foreign language classrooms in a university in the United States where English was the L1 of the learners. Echoing Turnbull (1999), they found that actual L2 use varied wildly between classrooms; the range was 10%-100%, even though most of the teachers gave very similar estimates to the amount of the L1 that they thought they used in their classrooms. Thus, Duff and Polio (1990) discovered a lack of self-awareness among the teachers of their L1 use, as their perceptions were often at odds with the data collected. These findings complicate the claims of those who argue for a principled use of the L1, which may sound good in theory, but does not always happen in the classroom.

A related pitfall of L1 use in the classroom is that there are multiple interpretations as to what L1 use entails, and there are no research-based guidelines to help teachers and students decide if and how to use the L1 in the classroom. This is a problem that nearly all involved in this debate have acknowledged, including those who take a generally favorable view of L1 classroom use. Macaro (2001), for example, cautions against the dangers of not having any research that gives guidelines as to how the L1 should be used. He suggests that if the L1 is to be used, researchers need to be clear about what using the L1 means and how much or little is beneficial for the students. If there is no clarity concerning the use of the L1, then such use can become unprincipled and random, as Duff and Polio (1990) showed in their study.

To give another example of the drawbacks of unprincipled L1 classroom use, Macaro (2001) cites the studies of Gearon (1998) and Cain, Braine, and Morgan (1998). These studies warn that allowing the L1 in small doses in the L2 classroom would be too hard to control, and would invariably spread to an uncontrolled and unprincipled use of the L1 in the classroom. Indeed, it would be difficult for the teacher to communicate (and enforce!) the idea of a small but principled use of the L1 to his or her students. Once given a little opportunity to use the L1 without penalty, the students may have trouble differentiating between L1 use as a useful second language acquisition tool and L1 use as a distracter from classroom work. Though Levine (2003) is generally positive about using the L1 in the L2 classroom, he mentions in his internet based study of teacher and learner perceptions of L1 use in the university classroom that the L1 is almost always used by the learners after the task is completed, which is surely not the intended pedagogical use of the L1. Thus, if the L1 is used in the classroom, but in an unprincipled way, any pedagogical value it could have had becomes lost.

To further illustrate how the unprincipled use of the L1 in the L2 classroom produces undesirable effects, let us turn to Hellermann and Pekarek Doehler (2010). Their study was conducted on a group of native speakers of Swiss-German who were learning French in a secondary school in Switzerland. The interaction was videotaped and 3 male students were seen working on a task in their French class. Much of their interaction was in Swiss-German and the students did not use their native language to their advantage. One student in particular continually made jokes and side comments in his L1, which distracted his classmates and prevented his group from being able to concentrate on the task at hand, which was to give someone directions. Such a use of the L1 was clearly not beneficial for any of the students as it precluded them from completing their work. However, as Macaro (2001) mentions, there is a

fine line between L1 use that augments L2 learning and L1 use that detracts from it. In the following section, we will view another example of L1 use from Hellermann and Pekarek Doehler (2010), but with completely different end results, plus other examples of beneficial L1 use.

The Sociocultural Perspective

While there are multiple convincing arguments against using the L1 in the classroom, there are also many for the use of the L1. While the perspective against L1 use often stems from an interactionist framework, the sociocultural framework guides many of the arguments in favor of L1 use. One of the main reasons that researchers give in favor of using the L1 in the L2 classroom is that the L1 is a natural part of the students and no amount of pretending the L1 does not exist will make it disappear (Anton & DiCamilla, 1998; Auerbach, 1993;; Cook, 2001). The L1 is one of the many resources that the students bring with them to the classroom and they can't help but think in their native language. A learner's thoughts are inherently connected with the words that the learner produce,s and it does a disservice to the students if one fails to recognize this (Anton & DiCamilla, 1998). As the L1 is so much a part of the language learner, the two cannot be separated from each other; this recognition should be made explicit so that the L1 can be channeled as a way to aid L2 acquisition.

Related to the sociocultural argument above, L1 use can foster a feeling of connection between the teacher and the students. A well thought-out use of the L1 can help the teacher develop and maintain a relationship with the students by putting them at ease and they are better seen as the individuals that they are. Edstrom (2006) evaluated her own use of the L1 (English) in a university-level Spanish class in the United States and mentioned that in the L1 classroom,

one must also evaluate the goals of the class in order to be able to justify or not the place of the L1 in it. She mentioned that she sometimes used the L1 with her students even if they would have understood the L2 as she wanted to be able to make a deeper personal connection with the students. After all, in a language classroom, L2 acquisition may not be the only goal that the teacher and the students have.

Indeed, though Edstrom (2006) agrees with interactionists like Polio and Duff (1994) that using as much of the L2 is a necessary and positive element of the L2 classroom, she says that there is another dimension to the classroom, which is connecting with the students personally and making them feel comfortable, something that is sometimes better achieved in the L1. Though warning that her results may not be able to be applied to other contexts as hers was a self study of L1 use, Edstrom (2006) channels socioculturalism to convincingly argue that if part of the goal of the class is to connect with the students and see them as the individuals that they are, then the use of the L1 can certainly be a beneficial tool in this aim.

Related to the above point of the teacher connecting with the students on a personal level, an argument that Cook (2001) makes in her general analysis of L1 classroom use focuses on the role that identity plays in the foreign language classroom. She says that when students are speaking in a foreign language, they do not feel like their true selves, and the use of the L1 can help them connect with their L1 personality and identity. It, therefore, is important to remember that identity matters in the classroom. While students want to be able to use the L2, they also want to be recognized as complete human beings with complex emotions and thoughts.

To take another example of identity in the classroom, let us refer back to Hellermann and Pekarek Doehler's (2010) study. In the previous section, we showed an example of students who used their native language in class ineffectively as it distracted them for the task at hand. In the

same study, however, the native language was used successfully by two native Spanish speakers in order to manage and complete a task in their English class. They used humor as a way to make the task more comfortable for them and to make their personalities present in the classroom. The students' task was to give someone walking directions and they used their L1 (Spanish) to joke around about the task, suggesting that they tell the person to take the bus instead. Their way to solve the task ended up stemming from this very joke and their innovative solution to the problem probably would not have come to be had they not used their L1 as a primary means of assessing and making sense of the task. Since the students in these studies were able to put each other at ease by joking in their L1, it can be argued that this use of the L1 was very beneficial for them as it helped them produce a better end product in the L2.

Codeswitching can, therefore, be a way to capitalize on one's identity, and it can also serve as a way to express meaning when the L2 proves insufficient. The examples from Hellermann and Pekarek Doehler (2010) in this and the previous section come from the field of conversation analysis, a field that seems to generally view codeswitching between the L1 and L2 as a positive addition to the L2 classroom. conversation analysis is a field that studies, among other things, how the altering of pitch, intonation, speed and volume influence communication (Wong & Waring, 2010). Codeswitching is just another of these natural, normal tools that learners have at their disposal in order to convey meaning in the language classroom (Liebscher & O'Cain, 2005), so there is no reason to ban the use of the L1 as not using the L1 may actually hinder progress in the L2 acquisition process. The researchers may indeed have a point here. For example, in the real world that is outside of the classroom walls, it is highly unlikely that students will not codeswitch as they try to negotiate meaning, especially in a city like New York, where most students have little difficulty finding interlocutors who speak their native language.

To further illustrate the above point, let us consider in more detail the study of Liebscher and O'Cain (2005.) They discuss the use of codeswitching in an advanced class of L2 German at a university, where English is the common L1. They mention that codeswitching between German and English was one of the natural conversational techniques that both the teacher and the students used, in addition to changing pitch, volume, speed and intonation to be able to communicate their ideas to their peers. It would seem unrealistic and unnecessary, therefore, to take away such a natural way of communicating without a rational theoretical basis. The students and the teacher expressed in interviews with the researchers that using the L1 was a useful way to engage with the material. One important thing to note about this study is that it addresses the central concern of Macaro (2001), who, as mentioned in the previous section, stated that L1 use in the classroom is often ineffective as it is often used haphazardly and does not follow any discernable principles. In this German class, the teacher made the guidelines for using the L1in her classroom very clear, and it is this clarity that most likely turned the use of the L1 in this classroom into a positive learning experience. Had the guidelines for L1 use not been clearly established, then the instances of codeswitching might not have been nearly as effective.

Codeswitching may be especially beneficial for lower level learners. Indeed, it is often for the benefit of the lower level learners that L1 is cited as being a positive addition to the L2 classroom. The L1 can also be helpful for lower level learners as a way to make sure that task instructions are clear and that they understand classroom management procedures (Cook, 2001). Anton and DiCamilla (1998) also highlight lower level learners as those who benefit from L1 use in the classroom as they especially need the L1 for assistance to cognitively process the L2 and develop a social relationship with their classmates. Related to this point, Levine (2003), who collected data on learner and teacher attitudes regarding the use of the L1 in the university-level

foreign language classroom via an online questionnaire, found that lower level learners experience much more anxiety in L2 classrooms than higher level learners. L1 use can be one way to lower the affective filter (Krashen, 1982) of lower level students.

Anton and DiCamilla (1998) made the further point that L1 use can help lower level learners be more productive at the task at hand because the learners negotiate the task instructions and grammatical metalanguage in their L1 until they are clear on what to do, rather than left guessing and confused in their L2. It goes without saying that being confused about instructions is a situation that occurs more frequently with lower level learners than higher level learners due to their still developing language proficiency. In Anton and DiCamilla's (1998) qualitative study of adults completing a writing task in pairs in their beginning level Spanish as a Foreign Language class, the student interactions were audiotaped, and it was found that the students used the L1 in order to help each other understand the task, organize the task, and search for the vocabulary and grammatical structures necessary for the task. For example, students used their L1, English, for the expressions like, "Let's say…" and "I don't remember" to keep the conversation going, but used the L2 for content words related directly to the writing task.

Without using the L1, Anton and DiCamilla (1998) argue that the students would not have been able to complete the task as efficiently as if they had not been using the L1 as the learners were able to use their native language to facilitate cognitive comprehension of the task at hand and remember L2 vocabulary words that they otherwise might not have. Thus, when students receive some L1 reinforcement, they end up producing a higher quality product, because they are clear on what the intention of the task is and they are better equipped to find a solution to the task. This contrasts with the interactionists, of course, who claim that negotiating meaning and not understanding everything in a language class is a natural part of language learning.

In recognizing the stress and frustration that often accompany learning a foreign language, especially in the case of lower level learners, we should not forget about Krashen's (1982) notion of the affective filter. His idea is that the classroom needs to be a supportive space where the learner feels at ease. If the learner is not comfortable in the classroom environment, the affective filter will rise, which means that language acquisition will not be able to occur. Conversely, when the students are comfortable, the affective filter is lowered, which aids in language acquisition. To give an example, Rolin-Ianziti and Brownlie (2002) conducted a study on a French class in a Canadian University and audio recorded the classes in order to understand why the teachers used the L1 (English), even though it was departmental policy not to use the L1. One striking example that the authors describe of the potential, but almost paradoxical, benefits of using the L1 is when the teacher switches from French to English in order to try to coax the students to speak French. The L2 was perceived as threatening in this case, so the teacher sought a sociocultural solution to the problem: using the students' L1. One could argue that had the L1 not been used in this situation, L2 communication would have been impeded, as the students would have been too reluctant to participate.

Thus, one can view use of the L1 as a way to make the students more comfortable and lower the affective filter, which can in turn foster language acquisition as Krashen (1982) states that the lower the affective filter, the more L2 language acquisition can take place. It is important to note, however, that Krashen (1982) himself never explicitly details L1 use as one of the ways to lower the affective filter. As mentioned previously, one group that often feels more vulnerable in a foreign language classroom than others is the lower level language learners, as they have difficulty expressing themselves and understanding basic ideas. It is for them that L1 use to make

them feel at ease is perhaps the most important (Anton & DiCamilla, 1998) and for whom sociocultural ideas play an important role in the classroom.

DISCUSSION

There are multiple arguments both for and against the use of the L1 in the L2 classroom, each of them compelling. Some main arguments against using the L1 include: uncontrolled and unprincipled use of the L1, the view of the L2 as an illegitimate means of communication, not enough L2 input, and fewer opportunities to negotiate meaning in the target language. These arguments stem from the interactionist framework. Some main arguments for using the L1 include: lowering the affective filter, making input more comprehensible, connecting with the students' identity, and better understanding the task to ensure successful task completion. These arguments stem from the sociocultural framework. As interactionism and socioculturalism have two different ways of analyzing classroom discourse, it is no wonder that they produce two different conclusions regarding the use of the L1 in the foreign language classroom.

Many researchers have differing opinions as to the use of the L1 and these differences of opinion seem to stem from the framework used to judge L1 use. What the teacher and the language school must do is familiarize themselves with the available research on the L1/L2 debate and then decide which framework, interactionism, or socioculturalism, is more important for them to use in their classrooms. If they decide on the interactionist framework, then the L1 should not be used in the classroom. If they decide on the sociocultural framework, then the L2 should be used. A principled use of the L1 in the classroom, or a principled decision not to use the L1, comes from an understanding of SLA theory and the history of methods within second language pedagogy. As no two classrooms are the same (Edstrom, 2006), and different learners

have different needs and preferences, it is up to the language teacher and the language school to determine what the most beneficial use of the L1 is in the local environment.

While teachers can certainly pick which framework better fits their course objectives and their students' needs, is it necessary to view interactionism and socioculturalism as mutually exclusive? In other words, is it possible to blend interactionism and socioculturalism together by viewing neither in its pure form? In his Input Hypothesis, Krashen (1982:28) makes the claim that, "real acquisition comes from comprehensible input," a statement that falls firmly into the camp of interactionism. He goes on to say that a good language teacher is a person who has the skills to turn something difficult to understand into comprehensible input, but nowhere in his treatise on input does he make any mention of the native language of the learners. He lists a few strategies to make input more comprehensible as detailed by Hatch (1979), which include using simpler language, slowing down the rate of speech and making the language less complicated by using shorter utterances.

Of course these are very useful tools, but why limit the students to having access to just these ways of making input more comprehensible? Why not also give the students the benefit of a judicious use of the L1, which could also serve to make the input more comprehensible and at the same time provide an avenue to lower the students' affective filter and an opportunity to validate their L1 identities? Krashen himself mentions that his ideas about input have not been empirically tested and that they need further development. Perhaps one such further development, therefore, can be the addition of the native language to the repertoire of devices to make input more comprehensible, and thus blend socioculturalism together with interactionsim.

Those in the camp supporting a limited and well-reasoned use of the L1 often argue that the L1 serves to make the input that the students receive more comprehensible, and thus fostering

acquisition. As stated above, it, therefore, seems reasonable that we add L1 use onto the list of resources available in order to make input comprehensible. And, as with any tool, it is important to recognize that L1 use in the foreign language classroom is not always appropriate. Though interactionsim and socioculturalism are both useful and insightful ideas, it is not likely that only one or only the other holds the one and true answer for L1 use in the classroom.

As we have already established, there is no one correct use for the L1 given the diverse nature of language classrooms and of the lessons within those classrooms (Edstrom, 2006). Therefore, future research might want to consider the competing roles that interactionism and socioculturalism have in the classroom. In the future, instead of separating the two, it might be necessary to try to blend them together in the classroom, advocating an interactionist perspective for some classroom activities and a sociocultural perspective for others. In this way, it will perhaps be possible to channel the best of both perspectives so that the students are able to use (or not use) their L1 to their maximal benefit.

Though there is an ongoing debate regarding the role of the L1 in the L2 classroom, and interactionism remains firmly at odds with socioculturalism, the reality is that we still know very little about how languages are actually acquired and as there have been few, if any, studies that have detailed the effect of L1 or L2 use on language acquisition (Ellis, 2008; Macaro, 2001). It is therefore difficult to draw definite conclusions about which method is more effective, which perhaps gives even more support to a blended approach between interactionism and socioculturalism. When surveying the research, one can certainly say that using the L1 in the classroom does not detract from L2 acquisition, as long as it is not used too much and is used in a principled way. As the L1 can also serve to make the learners more at ease and can better help them focus on their tasks, there seems to be no need to ban it from the classroom.

Something to remember is that though much of the L1/L2 debate has focused on the *quantity* of L1 use in the classroom, Turnbull (2003) makes the excellent point that it may be more beneficial for researchers and teachers to focus on the *quality* of L1 use. This supports Macaro's (2001) position that the use of the L1 needs to be used with a purpose. In classrooms with beginning learners, for example, the amount of the L1 may be higher than in the classroom of higher-level learners, and also the way that the L1 is used may be different. Therefore, teachers should spend less time fretting on the amount of L1 use in the classroom, and more time analyzing exactly *how* and also *why* they are using the L1 as language learning tool, how it relates to the classroom goals and the needs of the students, and how it affects the learners.

CONCLUSION

Some teachers say that they do not allow the L1 in their classrooms. What they may not appreciate, however, is that the L1 is already there. The L1 is a part of the L2 learner that cannot be separated; the L2 learner can't help but think in the L1 and make connections with the L1, because the learner's native language is at the core of his or her identity (Cook, 2001). Rather than pretending that the L1 does not exist, is it so unreasonable to add its use to a list of diverse techniques and strategies that teachers can draw upon in order to make input more comprehensible and facilitate L2 acquisition? As the language classroom is a highly artificial setting, what is the use of making it more so by pretending that the L1 does not exist?

For most students, when they are out in the real world, their L1 will play a role in their interactions with the L2. It seems shortsighted, therefore, not to educate the students as to how to use their L1 in an effective manner so that their use of the L2 can be facilitated. To see the above in another light, when presented with the interactionist arguments against using the L1 in the

classroom and with the sociocultural arguments for using the L1 in the classroom, the sociocultural framework seems more convincing as it is this one that provides the students with more language tools to work with. However, more powerful than the strong versions of either framework is a blend of the best elements of each: a blend that can be modified based on the particular classroom and the particular activity to best fit the needs of the students.

The caveat here is that although embracing sociocultural elements in the classroom allows for L1 use, this does in no way mean that the L1 should roam freely in the L2 classroom with no boundaries or rules. Of course the interactionists are right when they say that one needs a large amount of L2 input in order to foster acquisition. What we need now, therefore, is a more concrete definition of what L1 use in the L2 classroom should look like and what kind of variables should affect its use so that teachers have guidance and empirical research upon which to base their decisions.

The advice to neither encourage nor prohibit the L1 (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003) seems vague and unhelpful for teachers and students alike. Additionally, much of the current research mentions that using the L1 in a limited and principled way is beneficial for L2 acquisition, but these guidelines seem too vague to give appropriate guidance for the teacher and students. Interpreting this vague advice puts administrators, teachers, and students in a difficult position as there many ways to interpret what "limited" and "principled" mean. Therefore, researchers should follow the advice of Macaro (2001) and start to establish more concrete guidelines that those most closely connected with the classroom can follow. While this research is developed, one must also take into account Edstrom's (2006) and Ellis' (2008) caution that as language classrooms are diverse places, one cannot make a set of rules that applies to every context. Just as the students in Liebscher and O'Cain's (2005) study benefited from the use of

their L1 in the classroom due to the clear guidelines that their teacher had established for them, so should researchers try to determine similar ones for a variety of different L2 classes and activities within those classes.

Another avenue for further research is to start investigating L1 use in classrooms that have diverse student population, rather than continuing to largely focus on classrooms with homogenous student populations. The issue of the role in the L1 in an L2 class with a diverse student body seems not to have been touched on in the literature at all. This seems to be a large omission, as teachers and students who are in diverse classrooms are left without theoretical guidance to advise them regarding the use of the L1 in the classroom. It is my recommendation that in the future, the body of research regarding L1 and L2 be expanded to include the L2 classroom made up of diverse learners where the teacher does not speak the L1 of all of the students. This kind of classroom certainly presents a complicated situation and it is perhaps no wonder that researchers have not focused on it as of yet. However, it is time to start paying attention to this population, as the literature on populations of students and teachers who all share (or know) the same L1 is very thorough. For guidance in this area, researchers can look to the work of (Liang, Mohan, & Early, 1998) who wrote a literature review of cooperative learning in which they also called for more research on the socio-cultural effects on students when peers in their classroom use an L1 that they themselves do not speak.

The last and perhaps most important area that needs to be addressed in further research is how L2 acquisition is actually affected by L1 use (or non-use) in the classroom. Ellis (2008) notes that there are no studies that currently address this issue, and this is much to the detriment of the field. Those who follow the interactionist viewpoint will remain at odds with those who favor the sociocultural viewpoint, as the views of neither will be validated without empirical

research that can show a clear benefit of one or the other method. As the actual effect of L1 use on L2 acquisition is not known, we will have to continue to offer vague advice as to its use as we have no empirical evidence to best guide our ideas.

Though there are certainly more discoveries to be made in the area of L2 classes where the students all have the same L1, it is time that the diverse L2 classroom also gets some attention from the research. Additionally, what L1 use in the classroom looks like should be more clearly defined, and that effects of L1 use on L2 acquisition need to be further explored. On the basis of this literature review, it does indeed seem that the L1 can play an important role in the classroom, especially if the interactionist and sociocultural perservtives are blended together so that the most powerful elements of each work to the benefit of the students. However, the specific details as to what L1 use should look like in the classroom are still missing, so to truly answer the question of L1 use in the L2 classroom, more research must be conducted. With the aid of additional empirical research, teachers and students will be better able decide the role that the L1 should play in their classroom and in their language learning. Additionally, they will know what to do when they are confronted with a sign in their classroom that pictures Uncle Sam prohibiting them from using the L1.

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