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**Interactions in the multilingual classroom:  
A case study of teacher beliefs and student attitudes on  
L1 use in multilingual classrooms**

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## **Abstract**

The subject of L1 use in target language classrooms has been the object of debate among practitioners of second and foreign language teaching. As second language learners are de facto speakers of another language, student use of L1 remains a core feature of second language (L2) or target language (TL) classrooms, making the L1 almost impossible to eliminate. Despite increasing literature supporting the L1 as playing instrumental cognitive and affective roles that enhance L2 or TL learning, the English-only approach has been preferred and prescribed by both official and non-official policies in English Language Teaching.

This thesis explores English language teacher beliefs and student attitudes about L1 use in multilingual classrooms in a New Zealand university language centre. A mixed method approach has been employed in order to obtain a more holistic view of the participants' beliefs and attitudes. Results indicate that despite an English-only rule, both teachers and students view L1 use in the classroom setting as a potentially beneficial language learning tool - especially at lower levels. However, teachers and students generally perceived English as the preferred in-class instruction language due to the students studying in a New Zealand university environment. Tensions emerged when the teachers perceived an over-reliance on student L1 use in the classroom most especially due to lack of English language proficiency and/or lack of interest to participate in classroom activities in English. The thesis concludes with recommendations on how the monolingual rule can be modified to reflect the multilingual classroom environment and how students could be made more aware of classroom expectations in a New Zealand university prior to arrival.

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## **List of abbreviations/acronyms**

ELT	English Language Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
TL	Target language
L1	First language
L2	Second language
IELTS	International English Language Testing System

## Chapter 1

# Introduction

### **The position of the first language in an English language classroom: The L1-L2 debate**

As a result of globalisation, the rise of English as a global language has led to the rise of English language education. This means that as migration between borders is becoming increasingly more fluid, English is not only taught as a foreign language but also as a second language in an increasing number of English language institutions in Western or English speaking countries to learners from different countries. As a case in point, in Western university settings, English language classrooms in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) settings are becoming increasingly multilingual and multicultural (Miles, 2004: 3). In both mainstream and English language classes in university contexts, multilingual learners from offshore (or generically referred to as international students as opposed to domestic students) do not necessarily share the same first languages (L1s) (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003: 761). This multilingual situation presents what Helot and O-Laoire (2011: xi) convincingly posit as “ample and creative openings for effective language learning” that could potentially include L1 use in the learning process. In fact, recent findings strongly suggest that targeted L1 use is useful in the learning of second or foreign languages (McMillan & Rivers, 2011: 252; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003: 760).

Yet one of the salient controversies regarding optimal learning opportunities in foreign and second language classrooms is the question of first language (L1)

versus second (L2) or target language (TL) use. Proponents of L2-only approaches argue that this provides learners with a TL-rich environment where learning opportunities are maximised via increased interactions between teacher-student and student-student (Jacobs & Kimura, 2013: 1; Tang, 2002: 36). English language teaching approaches that emphasise communicative learning in English language teaching contexts – not only EFL but also ESOL and EAP – have continually been dominated by beliefs and methodologies that “d[o] not fully recognise the value of L1 as a resource” (Cole, 1998). As such, an English-only approach has long been viewed by many as best practice (Lee, 2012: 139). So pervasive has the monolingual English-only approach been that the idea that the L2 is the “only acceptable medium of communication” in the classroom has continually been upheld by many second language practitioners (McMillan & Rivers, 2011: 251; Vanichakorn, 2009: 2). This implies that the language learners’ first language is of no value in classroom.

This prevalence of an L2-only approach can be attributed to two reasons. The first reason is the common belief that L1 use impedes or interferes with second language learning (Macaro, 2005: 65; Mouhana, 2009: 1; Swan, 1985 as cited in Cole, 1998). The other is more of a practical necessity where, in linguistically diverse classrooms, the teacher may not share their students’ L1, or where the Western English language teacher is monolingual (Cook, 2001: 405). In such cases, classroom instructions are by default in English only with students often expected to maintain an English-only environment. However, a third and perhaps more plausible rationale for adopting an English-only approach is the fact that in an otherwise multilingual classroom, “the issue of ... the mother tongue hardly arises” (Atkinson, 2010: 3) as English is the lingua franca; by employing a common language, no one student would be placed at a linguistic disadvantage.

Furthermore, L1 use is believed to interfere with the learning process of the TL (Macaro, 2005: 65). This is because errors in the L2 are believed to be the result of the 'transfer' of "tenacious and deeply rooted ... [L1] habits" (Mitchell & Myles, 2004: 19). Yet, in her re-examination of first language use in mainstream classrooms, Auerbach (1993: 5) argues that evidence from research and practice strongly suggests that the rationale to justify sole English use is "neither conclusive nor pedagogically sound." There was increasing awareness that the language produced by learners has "a linguistic system in its own right" as not all errors were the result of L1 transfer (Mitchell & Myles, 2004: 38). Consequently, this belief is difficult to justify especially as there seems to be insufficient supporting evidence (Lee, 2012: 138). Yet, L1 use remains contentious and many continue to believe that it should be avoided at all cost as, from a comprehensible input approach, authentic and meaningful communicative tasks structured in the TL can help acquisition of the TL while at the same time increasing the quantity of L2 exposure (Macaro, 2005: 66).

However, depending on levels of proficiency in the TL, even such structured linguistic input and output can arguably become artificial due to insufficient competence, leading to limited potential to enable communication, thereby contradicting the tenets of meaningful communication within Communicative Language Teaching approaches (Atkinson, 1993: 3)<sup>1</sup>. According to Cook (2001: 407) since second language learning is unlike first language acquisition, the

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<sup>1</sup> As an example, an English language teacher once shared an experience which they feel encapsulates the artificial reality of such an English-only policy. The school they taught at maintained a strict English-only rule which extended into the children's playground during break-time. The teacher, who happened to be on 'English patrol' duty, observed two young children, who were friends, attempting to communicate with each other in English using the functional language they learnt earlier that day as they were not allowed to interact in Thai:

*Student A: Hello, my name is A. Nice to meet you.*

*Student B: Hello, my name is B Nice to meet you.*

*(Significant pause)*

*Student B: Hello, my name is B. Nice to meet you.*

*Student A: Hello, my name is A. Nice to meet you.*

*(Silence)*

success of the second language learner should be “measured against the standards of L2 users, not those of native speakers” as the second language learner inherently draws upon their L1 to facilitate learning and communication in the L2. So rather than viewing it as a hindrance, this implies that L1 use should be viewed in more positive light especially as some form of judicious L1 use, whether from the teacher or student (or both), could be useful or at times a “necessary recourse” (Macaro, 2009: 35). Anton and DiCamilla (1998: 341) believe that such an approach will lead to a more natural acquisition of the TL since adult L2 learners are genuine speakers of another language (or of multiple languages) who unconsciously bring with them into the classroom their L1 as a potential learning tool. In fact, like structured L2, recent findings argue that judicious L1 use can be advantageous in L2 learning as it allows students to “transfer knowledge and skills” from their L1 into learning L2 (Coleman, 2012: 18).

As a result of the L1-L2 debate, there is an increasing volume of research into the potential L1 use can bring to the foreign or communicative second language learning environment (Auerbach, 1993; Buckmaster, 2000; Cook, 1999, 2001; Franklin, 1990; Miles, 2004; Nation, 1997) especially when and if “used at appropriate times and in appropriate ways” (Atkinson, 1993: 2). In fact, Chau (2007: 11) argues that by understanding how the L1 is used by language learners, it is possible to “tap into the potential of [the L1] to support English language learning.” Earlier studies investigating the roles of the L1 have documented its use by teachers for classroom management functions, checking comprehension and for quick explanatory purposes (Al-Dera, 2011: 152; Atkinson, 1987: 241; McMillan & Rivers, 2011: 255), and in some cases, the L1 is a preferred learner strategy especially for beginner and pre-intermediate students of English (Harbord, 1992: 351; Swain & Lapkin, 2000: 251). Equally exigently teacher tolerance of L1 use in the L2 classroom appears to be a

“humanistic and student-centred strategy” (Carless, 2008: 336) and therefore also “provides a sense of security ... allowing [L1 learners] to express themselves” (Auerbach, 1993: 19).

In view of the potential contributions that L1 can bring into the L2 learning process, Turnbull (2001: 531) critically proposes that instead of banning the L1, the L2 teacher should maximise L2 use but also ‘allow’ some degree of L1 use within reason to avoid over-dependence. Furthermore, Cole (1998) posits that the frequency of and/or the reliance on L1 use, which mainly includes what Ferrer (2011 as cited in Fortune, 2012: 80) describes as bilingual dictionary use (translation) and note-making, will eventually decrease with increased proficiency in the TL. Consequently, the monolingual L2-only teaching approach has furthermore been criticised as a monolingual fallacy (Ismail, 2012: 144; Phillipson, 1992: 185 as cited in Atkinson, 2010: 3) and in the light of its potential benefits to L2 learning if used judiciously, proponents of allowance of L1 use in classroom settings strongly argue for a reconsideration of the role of L1 (Cook, 1997: 49; Harmer, 2007: 132).

### **My interest in the L1-L2 debate**

In foreign language teaching environments, perhaps it can be asserted that the justification for a target language (TL) only approach (i.e. the language of choice for both teaching and learning being the language being learnt) is due to the fact that the TL is not commonly used outside the classroom; therefore the TL should be the language of choice to allow for maximum exposure in the classroom. By the same token, in a TL or immersion environment, a TL-only approach is arguably unnecessary as the students will continue to be exposed to the TL outside the classroom.

In my own experience of teaching English in New Zealand, I have encountered institutions where there is an informal 'English-only' policy in place. I say 'informal' because no explicit or formal descriptions of any such language policy could be found in the institutions' website or prospectus for international students; however, there were visual 'English-only' signs all over the common areas and classrooms (Figure 1 below). Perhaps it was due to the expectation that coming to New Zealand entailed an English speaking environment. Yet despite this, I have 'allowed' student L1 use in the TL/English language classroom, especially in the lower level classes. I noticed that the L1 was always present in all my ESOL classrooms and if the L1 can be a potentially useful tool, I think L1 use should be harnessed to its best potential.



**Figure 1: A notice board in a student common area delineating an 'English only' zone**  
(Source: The researcher's own).

In fact, the results collected from informal student evaluations I conducted on bilingual dictionary usage, illustrated that L1 use can be beneficial; my students reported that having access to their bilingual dictionaries in class helped them 'find word mean', have 'better communication' as well as 'understand English', and based on my teaching experience, this reliance on their bilingual dictionaries is much more apparent and observable in lower-level ESOL classes<sup>2</sup>. I have also noticed that students who share L1 tended to negotiate meaning in the L1 (although the more able or motivated ones tended to interact in English without much encouragement); this kind of L1 use seemed helpful and beneficial because it promoted peer interaction and collaboration especially at lower levels and in most instances, encouraged more able students to support less able students without the threat of loss of face – which I believe is a realistic and humanistic approach.

Yet despite this, it would appear that the 'permissibility' of L1 use in the English classroom is still a rather lively albeit contentious topic for discussion as the following excerpts of conversation statements with some of my colleagues will illuminate some of their beliefs about L1 use:

*"They [ESOL students] are here [in New Zealand] to learn English. If they keep chatting in [in their L1] how can we expect their English to improve?"*

*"I know they are here to learn English ... but you can't stop them from using their mother tongue, right? You can't just switch it off"*

*"If they don't know how to say it in English, I want them to ask me. That's why I'm there for. I don't like it when they open their electronic translators*

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<sup>2</sup> These responses are gathered from some of my past informal classroom surveys about how my students feel about using their bilingual dictionaries. These responses have not been corrected.

*and translate from their language to English – half the time they get it wrong anyway!”*

*“I think it’s OK if they use their mother tongues. That’s the point – it’s their mother tongue. Can’t expect them to speak in English with each other outside the task if they’ve been speaking [their mother tongues] all along ... that would be super weird”*

*(Personal communications, 2012)*

For me, while I found that student L1 use was helpful to many of my students to cope with their task, sometimes, I also felt that some of my students could have attempted the task in English especially as the task had been strategically scaffolded to provide the students with linguistic support. Due to these perceived different views and attitudes about student L1 use, my interest in the area of L1 use in the English language classroom can be summarised into two main aspects:

1. Personal experience as an adult second language learner of formal Mandarin Chinese.

English is one of my first languages; however, I am a heritage speaker of Mandarin. As a second language learner of Mandarin Chinese during my undergraduate years, I remember the constant yet uncontrollable need to ‘translate’ from Mandarin into English in order to better understand a particular concept, expression or word in Chinese. I relied quite heavily on my bilingual dictionary especially for vocabulary, and because of how English was my ‘lifeline’ it was impossible for me to not think in English to process my Mandarin Chinese. I wondered if this experience was the same for my ESOL students.

2. If it works, why not use it? Both teacher and student L1 use can be beneficial at particular times

In my ESOL teaching experience I have observed that, unlike higher-ability students, lower-ability students seem to struggle more with using English only. This could be due to the fact that they did not have enough English (e.g. comprehensible input is low and/or comprehensible output is relatively low, or that they might be shy because of their limited and/or faulty English). I observed that when they use L1 to complete their tasks, there seemed to be a more positive sense of achievement among the students. Thus, despite the informal English-only policy at my workplace, I have found myself 'allowing' more leniency towards these students to refer to their bilingual dictionaries in the classroom and/or to discuss in their L1 and translate into English in both written and spoken work as it encourages participation and peer collaboration.

In fact, a colleague and I (we both spoke Mandarin) who shared the same class of elderly Chinese migrants secretly made the decision to teach English in Mandarin Chinese, much to the relief and delight of the students. Ultimately, the goal of the lesson was for the students to be able to apply their English language skills and I believed that utilising the L1 was like a means to an end. If we use other forms of realia like pictures, gestures and words to enhance second language learning, then we should also be able to use some degree of L1 for the same reason. So it was this sense of conflict between my classroom practice driven by my personal experience and observation and institutional policy that led to my interest to investigate what the teachers and students believed about L1 use in the English language classroom, and how their beliefs are manifested in the classroom.

## **Chapter outline**

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. Following this introduction, the review of literature is presented in two chapters in order to discuss issues at length. Chapter Two highlights the background of English language education by reviewing literature which discusses reasons for the rise of English as a global language thereby reinforcing a widely held assumption that in cases of Foreign or Second Language Teaching, English should be the sole language in the classroom. This is followed by a discussion of how the L1 can be a valuable resource in the English language classroom thereby questioning the validity of the widely held assumption of English-only approaches as 'best practice'. This leads into a review of literature in Chapter 3 pertaining to teacher beliefs and student attitudes about monolingual or 'English-only' approaches viz-a-viz L1 use in the context of English as a Second Language education. It ends by leading into the key research questions for this study.

Chapter 4 provides a more extensive discussion of the research approach of this study by considering the benefits and potential limitations of a mixed method approach. The procedures involved in data collection are also identified.

The findings and responses are presented in Chapters 5 and 6. The responses from the teacher focus groups (and one interview) are presented in Chapter 5. Student participants' written responses are presented in Chapter 6.

Chapter 7 presents a discussion and interpretation of the research findings with reference to relevant literature. Chapter 8 concludes the thesis with a summary of research findings with reference to the research questions. It ends with an evaluation of the limitations of this study and recommendations for further research considerations.

## Chapter 2

# English language education

*"I want to study English because good status in my country."*

(From a conversation with an ex-ESOL student.)

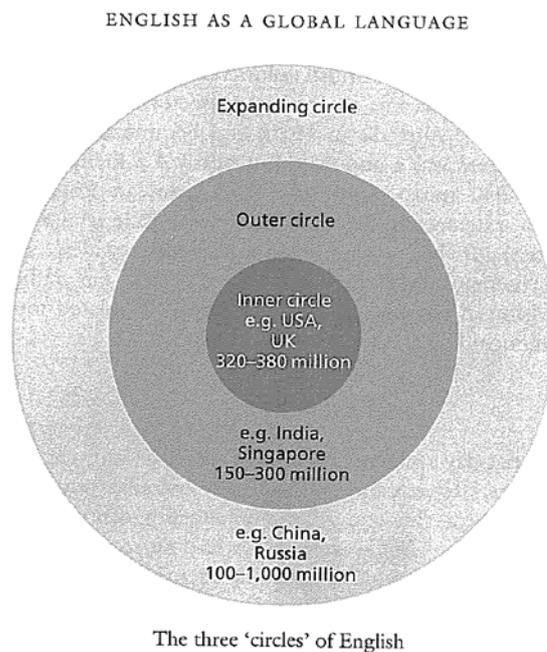
### **The rise of English as a global language**

English is increasingly more often spoken by speakers as a second language than as a mother tongue (Arva & Medgyes, 2000: 356; Llurda, 2004: 314). The rise of English as a global, international language (Crystal, 2003: 69) is mainly the result of two factors:

The expansion of British colonial power, which peaked towards the end of the nineteenth century, and the emergence of the United States as the leading economic power of the twentieth century. It is the latter factor which continues to explain the world position of the English language today (Crystal, 1997: 53).

In distinguishing between core and non-core English speaking countries, Kachru (1996: 137) summarised the spread of English around the world as three concentric circles (Figure 2) as a general representation of how English has been acquired and is currently used. According to Kachru, the inner circle is where English is the primary language and mother tongue: countries include the USA, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The outer circle includes countries where English, usually as a result of colonisation, has become a part of

the country's chief institutions and plays an important 'second language' role in a multilingual setting; countries include Malaysia, Singapore and India, and over 50 other territories. The expanding circle involves nations that recognise the importance of English as an international language even though they do not have a history of colonisation by members of the inner circle; English is also not given administrative status and often taught as a foreign language.



**Figure 2: Kachru's Concentric Circles**  
**(Source: Kachru, 1992 as cited in Crystal, 1997: 53)**

### The prestige of having an English arsenal

As a consequence of modern globalisation, English is increasingly viewed as the leading language of knowledge, education and progress (Evans & Morrison, 2011: 148). With this, the implications on English language and English medium education are significant as the English language is seen and perceived as having "a universal global currency" (McCrum, 2006), especially in countries located within the expanding circles (Evans & Morrison, 2011: 147). In other

words, being a speaker of English or having a qualification from a Western university is believed to enable individuals, especially those from the outer and expanding circles, to have “a passport to the modern world” (Ricento, 2000: 2) that could potentially enhance their future employment prospects (Warschauer, 2000: 518) especially in an international context (Gerhards, 2014: 57).

As a result, higher education institutions are increasingly involved in internationalisation by marketing their programmes as “internationally relevant” to attract international students (van der Walt, 2013: 103). This global demand has led to an increase of students, especially from outside Kachru’s inner circle, venturing abroad (i.e. to countries in the inner circle) for an English education. According to a recent British Council (2006: 2) review of the global market for English language courses, key English language learning ‘destination countries’ included the United Kingdom as the most popular “attracting the highest number of international English language students,” followed by the United States of America and Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, and lastly, Malta. Between 2000-2010, there has been a reportedly “truly stunning increase of 99%” of international students (i.e. students from different countries) globally preferring to obtain further or higher education at tertiary level in these core destination English speaking countries if they can afford it, or in cheaper campuses of native English speaking universities offshore i.e. within the outer circle (Quacquarelli Symonds, 2012). In fact, Hu and Jiang (2011: 221) claim that more and more Asian students, Chinese in particular, are going abroad to Western countries within the inner circle because of the prestige associated with having a Western qualification, and being able to speak English, i.e. possessing both symbolic (Bourdieu, 1990 as cited in Flynn, 2012: 228) and linguistic (Gerhards, 2014: 57) capitals, which are deemed useful for their prospective future careers. As a result of this influx of international students, English language education has become a “big business” (Alcock, 2007: 6) within the

university education sector in Western countries, as income generated from the increasing number of international students constitute a substantial contribution to the country's general economy (Hennebry, Lo & Macaro, 2012: 210; Smith & Rae, 2006: 27).

This perceived prestige associated with being a speaker of English or having a Western university degree is a possible result of a growing belief among some that the language is perhaps best learnt from a native speaker. Hodgson (2014: 115) describes the fact that many, including learners and education providers, have a static view of the native speaker as "a monolingual person who was born and educated in an inner circle nation" and as such, are considered by those within the outer and expanding circles as providing an "idealised" native speaker model and, according to Chomsky (1965 as cited in Moussu & Llorca, 2008: 315), "the only reliable [linguistic] source." Native English speaking teachers (NESTs) are perceived to be experts in their mother tongue (Davies, 2003: 179) and as such, are "perfect models" for imitation (Benke & Medgyes, 2005 as cited in Wardak, 2014: 126). As such, Romaine (1989: 1) contends that it is therefore rather difficult to challenge the identity of the native teacher as an expert English speaker.

In relation to that, due to the associated prestige that comes with having a "foreign face" (Hu & Jiang, 2011: 224), the practice of English language teaching – whether as a second language in nations within the outer circle or as a foreign language in countries within the expanding circle – still favours Westerners over local teachers (Wardak, 2014: 125). This is because having Western English language teachers is perceived by education providers to increase the marketable value of the institution (Phillipson, 1996: 24).

Furthermore, the English-only monolingual approach viewed as 'best practice' promotes the assumption that the L1 has no place or value in second language learning. This can be caused by the belief that using the L1 would impede or interfere with progress in the L2 (Ma, 2009: 59; Mitchell & Myles, 2004: 19). Arguments against L1 use in the FL classroom cite reasons of "depriving learners of valuable TL input" (Ellis, 1984 as cited in Turnbull, 2001: 531) and, through the act of translation between the L1 and TL, short-circuiting the process of understanding rich TL (Duff & Polio, 1990: 155). Based on this argument, full competence in the target language is believed to be best achieved "by means of the teacher providing a rich TL environment" (Duff & Polio, 1990: 154) in the execution of both teaching and non-teaching functions as it is believed that "more exposure to a TL will lead to a better learning outcome" (Lee, 2012: 139). This strongly implies the non-function of L1 in the foreign language classroom. In fact, the remnant of a monolingual approach still persists up to this day where it has been the preferred (both officially and non-officially) policy in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) (Kumaravadivelu, 2003 & Macaro, 2001 as cited in McMillan & Rivers, 2011: 251).

### **Background of the English-only approach**

This subscription to a monolingual approach is perhaps best appreciated with a summary of the evolution of language teaching approaches since the late nineteenth century. According to Richards and Rodgers (1986: 4), foreign language learning in Western countries prior to the nineteenth century was mainly limited to scholarly grammatical translations; but by the nineteenth century, the decline of Latin as "a living language to that of an occasional subject in school" saw the "justification" of teaching Latin grammar as "an end in itself" (p. 5). As a result, the introduction of modern languages adopted the same procedures used to teach Latin grammar and hence these foreign

language teaching approaches become known as the Grammar Translation Method (GTM). As the name suggests, the foreign language was learnt through translation with little consideration of the spoken variety of the language and, by implication, more emphasis was placed upon form and accuracy than on enhancing communicative ability or meaningful use (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 5).

As a reaction to the restrictions of GTM, the Direct Method was introduced towards the end of the nineteenth century (Brown, 2007: 15). It was also known as the Natural Method where the focus on language teaching was on active use in the classroom as this led to learners inducing the rules of grammar (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 11). This was followed closely by the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) in the mid-1900s, a methodology influenced by Skinner's behavioural psychology which emphasised on using positive reinforcement to optimise a conditioned response "by memorising dialogues and performing pattern drills ... to engender "good habits ... [of giving] correct responses" (Rivers, 1964: 22). As these methods relied on the sole use of the target language, it is implied that the L1 is avoided.

However as the focus of foreign language teaching shifted towards mastering conversation skills, recent language teaching methods like communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based learning (TBL) became extremely popular in the 1980s (Littlewood, 2014: 352; Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 61). Indeed, these methods seem to "have no necessary relationship with the L1" (Cook, 2001: 404) as they also heavily emphasised second or target language learning via a monolingual approach. The philosophy behind CLT approach varies (Littlewood, 2014: 350) but is generally accepted as "an eclectic blend of the contributions of previous methods into the best of what a teacher can provide in authentic uses of the second language in the classroom" (Brown, 2007: 18).

Contextually, CLT occurs within immersion in the target language as it is believed that being “members of a community” (Harmer, 2007: 69) can effectively maximise the learning of TL or L2 (Walker, 2004). Unlike its predecessors, CLT methods focus on promoting L2 use by emphasising meaning over form. This philosophy is heavily influenced by Krashen’s comprehensible input hypothesis where L2 input at the right level of difficulty “was all that was necessary for second language acquisition to take place” (Krashen, 1982 as cited in Mitchell & Myles, 2004: 20).

Nevertheless, Krashen’s theories of acquisition vs. learning through communicative practices has since been criticised for being vague and imprecise (Mitchell & Myles, 2004: 48). As Littlewood (2014: 353) notes, “the early euphoria that surrounded CLT ... has brought a more sober assessment” of the communicative method. This was especially pertinent in contexts outside the immersion environment where CLT techniques were criticised as an importation of Western imperialism (Hiep, 2007: 196). Meanwhile, in ESOL or immersion contexts, studies investigating the effectiveness of meaningful communication in CLT classrooms reported that “the so-called communicative classrooms ... were anything but communicative” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 62). In fact, Widdowson (2003: 26) claims that the representation of CLT approaches as “a radical break from traditional approaches” was not supported by evidence and, according to Kumaravadivelu (2006: 62), “even teachers who are committed to CLT can fail to create opportunities for genuine interaction” in the L2, especially at lower levels due to limited output.

As Cook (2001: 404) describes, the L1 was often viewed as unfavourable in the communicative English language classroom. When mentioned in pedagogical literature, it is when “advice is given on how to minimise its use” or, by portraying the ‘ideal classroom’, descriptions of teaching methods imply as little

L1 use as possible or none at all “by omitting any reference to it” (Atkinson, 1987: 241; Yavuz, 2012: 4340). Cook goes further to explain that so pervasive is the exclusion of L1 use in many language teaching techniques that in some literature it is listed as an item on a “list of problems” when students use their own languages (Scrivenor, 1994: 192).

Yet, the recognition that “the development of language teaching theory ... requires a reconsideration ... [of] methodological issues” has led to the shift from method-based pedagogy to postmethod pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 66). The position of eliminating the L1 from the L2 classroom has been critiqued because, in the words of Newton (2014), “of its association with out-moded methods” which devalue L1 use and its potential benefits if used judiciously. So in order for language teaching methods and strategies to work, scholars like Nunan (1991) and Pennycook (1989) argue that they must be “derived from classroom experience,” not based on idealised constructs “artificially transplanted into the classroom ... [becoming] far removed from classroom reality” (as cited in Kumaravadivelu, 1994: 29). Therefore a more holistic and context-dependent, postmethod approach would entail both teacher and learner autonomy as well as principled pragmatism which “should not be constrained by the practices of a particular teaching approach or method” (Richard & Rodgers, 1986: 341, 350).

### **The monolingual fallacy**

As mentioned earlier, in the field of ELT, non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) “are inevitably compared unfavourably with NESTs” (Borg, 2006 as cited in Walkinshaw & Doung, 2012: 3). However, following the argument that the L1 plays beneficial roles in the L2 classroom, not only is it reasonable to claim that English does not necessarily have to be taught in English only but

also that it does not have to be taught by native English speakers only. In fact Medgyes (1992: 346) and Wardak (2014: 127) make a compelling argument that trained NNESTs are in fact better language learning models and teachers, especially in localised EFL contexts (Xuan, 2014: 23), as they had experienced learning English as a second language. Therefore, unlike NESTs who “know the destination but not the terrain that has to be crossed to get there” (Seidlhofer, 1999: 238), NNESTs ‘know the terrain’ and can be equally as effective as native English speaking teachers to teach the language.

Since the question of ‘native-speaker is best’ is questionable, Phillipson (1992: 185) declared the belief that the second language was best taught entirely in the target language as a monolingual fallacy with numerous applied linguists providing theoretical support against the ‘native speaker fallacy’ (Hodgson, 2014: 114; Ismail, 2012: 147; Paikeday, 1985: 12). It is pertinent that new adaptations, which include heightening awareness of multiculturalism or multilingualism, or what Medgyes (1992: 340) termed as “international-mindedness” to reject discrimination of any kind, including the students’ mother tongue, are made “to move beyond the native speaker as the model in language teaching” (Cook, 1999 as cited in Llorca, 2004: 317).

### **In defence of the L1**

Thus, the continuing debate or discussion evolving around the issue of whether the L1 has a role in the English language classroom seems to suggest that the English-only approach as best practice is now questionable. The equation of ‘more target language input, better learning outcomes’ was criticised to be “too simplistic and ignorant of complicated TL learning processes” (Lee, 2012: 139) because the restricted monolingual L2/TL approach stifles reflective teaching practice (Macaro, 2001: 545 as cited in Ismail, 2012: 144; MacKinney & Rios-

Aguilar, 2012: 351). Furthermore, Cook (2010, as cited in Lee, 2012: 138) claims that “language teaching approaches that exclude or attempt to minimise learners’ L1 are generally built upon ... empirically untested assumptions.” These assumptions imply that the L1 is seen as a ‘negative’ influence which could “interfere” with the learning of the L2 or TL (Ma, 2009: 59; Mitchell & Myles, 2004: 19) and therefore all other languages except the target language should be altogether “rendered inactive” (Brooks, 1964: 143, as cited in Cook, 2001: 404).

Yet, the predictions of Contrastive Analysis that all errors made by second language learners were the result of interference from the L1 were, in fact, contradictory and unfounded (Al-Dera, 2011: 140; Mitchell & Myles, 2004: 38). Numerous research based on Error Analysis has strongly suggested that many of these errors did not originate from the L1. So while L1 transfer can still have both potentially positive and negative effects on L2 development, the term has been displaced by more recent terminologies like “language transfer” or “crosslinguistic influence” as a means to change negative attitude towards L1 use in second language learning (Ortega, 2009: 31). Therefore, following this line of argument, it would be unjustifiable to claim that the L1 has no role to play in a second language learning environment.

### **Reasons for allowing strategic L1 use**

More recent research into L1 use in English language classrooms suggests that it can be both pragmatic and beneficial in the learning of L2. L1 use is helpful as a “powerful tool” (Anton & DiCamilla, 1999: 234), especially for beginner and pre-intermediate students when dealing with more cognitively challenging tasks and content (Swan, 1985 as cited in Yavuz, 2012: 434). Although a monolingual English-only approach has been justified for pedagogical reasons i.e. increased

learning opportunities via TL-rich input environment (Jacobs & Kimura, 2013: 1; Turnbull & Arnett, 2002: 204), Auerbach (1993: 1) asserts that first language use or bilingual approaches are, in fact, necessary and effective “at all levels of ESL.” So although it is ‘practically impossible’ to avoid L1 use among learners, especially at lower levels, it is arguable that the use of L1 as a positive learning tool can be extended to learners at higher levels.

### Teacher L1 use as a pedagogical tool

Based on the understanding of how L1 use can aid learning, Atkinson (1987: 243) believes that in occasions where “the most lucid explanation or clearest inductive presentation by the teacher [in the L2] may fail for some students,” teacher L1 use could promote successful understanding (Cook, 2001: 418; Turnbull, 2001: 533). In fact, L1 has been observed to be selectively used by teachers in FL contexts “to teach grammar and abstract words” (Cheng, 2013: 1277) as it facilitated learning. However, proponents of L1 use caution that teachers should primarily adopt the TL to avoid in an overuse of the L1 which would deprive students of potential learning opportunities in the L2 (Swain & Lapkin, 2000: 251). Especially in immersion contexts, the L2 should still be the main language of instruction, but the students’ L1 should be acknowledged as a potential classroom resource (Turnbull & Arnett, 2002: 207).

### Student L1 use as a cognitive language learning tool

In fact, studies investigating student L1 use found that as a learner-preferred strategy in second and foreign language classrooms (Atkinson, 1987 as cited in Harbord, 1992: 350), L1 was observed to be used to “comprehend the new structures of the L2 by trying to find the equivalent in [the students’] L1” (Swan, 1985: 96 as cited in Yavuz, 2012: 4341). Translation was observed to enhance

comprehension by decoding the L2 in L2 reading texts (Goh & Hashim, 2006: 44); it was also a learning resource to negotiate and complete tasks (Chau, 2007: 18). Behan and Turnbull's (1997: 41 as cited in Swain & Lapkin, 2000: 252) observation of L1 (English) use of French immersion students concludes that:

L1 use can both support and enhance L2 development, functioning simultaneously as an effective tool for dealing with cognitively demanding content.

### L1 use as a communicative / social tool between students-students and teacher-students

In the context of teaching English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) in the target language community, Chau (2007: 12) reports that the first language was used as "a learning resource [as well as] communication and learning strategies" among adult migrant learners in Australia. When learners worked collaboratively in groups in a communicative setting, L1 use was reported to encourage livelier interaction between learners (Walker, 2004) through scaffolded help (Anton & DiCamilla, 1999: 234) – a key feature in Vygotskian socio-cultural theory. Furthermore, McMillan and Rivers (2011: 252) assert that learners' L1 "play[s] important cognitive, communicative and social functions in L2 learning." Dornyei and Kormos (1998 as cited in Tang, 2002: 37) find that L2 learners employ L1 use as a communication strategy to "compensate for deficiencies" in the L2. Saito (2014: 16) notes that L1 use between teachers and students helped foster a positive learning atmosphere for social purposes.

### L1 as an affective tool for students

Duff and Polio (1990:1 63) note that although the TL or L2 should be encouraged, it is equally important that teachers are aware that low level

learners “should not be forced to produce L2 prematurely.” Hasty or demanding L2 output could lead to what Levine (2003: 344) describes as “target language use anxiety” among L2 learners as they feel uncomfortable and threatened to use the L2 when they are not ready or confident. In the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), Fortune (2012: 75-77) reports how student L1 use was an effective and useful tool to learn English in a Bogota university especially in groupwork as it encourages cooperation with their peers; Karimian and Talebinejad (2013: 608) similarly report that translation encourages a cooperative atmosphere in learning English in Iran. Arguably therefore, L1 use among learners could help lower anxiety levels and Walker (2004) also reports that L1 use through “purposeful codeswitching” promotes positive affective outcomes such as increased confidence in using L2 as well as help to foster learner autonomy.

### L1 use as a representation of identity

Teachers believe in the importance of “respecting [their] students’ languages and cultures” (de Jong, 2008: 354) and are increasingly mindful of the fact that the L1 is inherently present as part of the identity of L2 students (Goh & Hashim, 2006: 30; Carless, 2008: 333). Belz (2003: 209) defines the identity of an individual as how they “align themselves with groups [of people] ... or sets of interests, values, beliefs and practices”, including linguistic code. Interestingly, Kim (2014: 93) posits that intentional L2 resistance could be a learner strategy to express a “particular social identity and position in relation to others.”

Furthermore, as part of adherence to a group identity, bilinguals may choose to interact in any language or register within their repertoire. The phenomenon of codeswitching – the ability to switch from one language to another or using two languages (or more) in a sentence – is commonplace amongst bilinguals (Goh &

Hashim, 2006: 37) and in fact, strategic translation or “expert codeswitching” is believed to increase and improve L2 (Macaro, 2005: 72) due to its schematic potential. Consequently, Belz (2003: 209) notes that denying the use of one language could be “interpreted as a truncation of one’s linguistic identity.”

## The L1-L2 continuum

Therefore in light of the positive benefits of L1 in the target language classroom, Goh and Hashim (2006: 30) argue that L1 use in the ESL class is not as contentious as it used to be. Cook (2001: 403) suggests that the question of L1 use should be viewed as a continuum: At its strongest end, the issue can be phrased as ‘Ban the L1 from the classroom’ and at its weakest, ‘Minimise the L1 in the classroom’ or ‘Maximise the L2 in the classroom. This end of the continuum suggests a more positive view of L1 as potentially having a place in the L2 or TL classroom. Turnbull (2001: 532) advocates that language teachers should “maximise ... TL use without avoiding the L1 at all costs” as eliminating the L1 is not believed to be “theoretically justified and does not lead to maximum language learning.”

## Overview

So where does this leave the L1? Given such demands to ensure that the international students perform in English and expectations that studying in New Zealand means an international but English-speaking environment, how do English language teachers and their students view L1 use in the multilingual English-medium classroom at university in the New Zealand context? Recent Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and sociolinguistics research (e.g. Cook, 2008; Levine, 2011) reveal evidence of learners’ L1 use, translation and/or codeswitching practices in multilingual classrooms where learners (and possibly

teachers) share a language (Hall & Cook, 2012: 277). So in terms of the situatedness of ELT institutions, the predominantly monolingual (i.e. English) environment in New Zealand could be strong predictor of the establishment of an English-only institutional policy; however, would teacher beliefs and student attitudes play any significant roles with regards to L1 use in the classroom scenario?

The following chapter aims to review literature on the subject of teacher beliefs and student attitudes about L1 use. Rather than being “mere implementers ... [teachers] are active constructors of educational policies ... within their own context, personal experience, and knowledge and skill base” (de Jong, 2008: 351). Because their constructs are guided by their beliefs, it is my hypothesis that language teachers practise what de Jong (2008: 351) termed as “policy appropriation” (as opposed to “policy implementation”) through teacher autonomy (Macaro, 2005: 66) in order to integrate what they believe to be ‘best approaches’ to maximise learning opportunities regarding L1 use in the multilingual English-medium classroom in a context where English is the expected language of choice. Likewise, investigating student attitudes about L1 use in the L2 learning context can provide valuable insight from their perspective. Ultimately, this understanding can potentially inform second language practitioners about any sources of tension between teacher and student perceptions about L1 use which will hopefully benefit classroom practice.

## **Beliefs and attitudes about teaching and learning L2**

*"What is your teaching philosophy?"*

*"Whatever works."*

*"But that's not a philosophy!"*

*"Why not?"*

(From a conversation overheard between two language teachers.)

### **Teacher education and teaching experience: Constructing teacher beliefs**

Although teacher education programs can be described as excessively theoretical and at times irrelevant to real world or actual classroom issues (MacDonald, Badger & White, 2001: 949), teaching is a practical yet demanding social profession, requiring the teacher to employ both subject matter knowledge and craft knowledge to respond to, manage and teach a group of learners who are all individually unique in their learning abilities and needs (Calderhead, 1996: 720). In the context of language teacher education, beliefs are a significant element as they inform teachers' classroom practice (Phipps & Borg, 2009: 380). Pettit (2011: 124) posits that teacher beliefs could be inferred from teacher behaviour in the classroom and research has investigated how teacher beliefs affect classroom practice (Nishino, 2012; Nespor, 2006; Fang, 1996) and grammar teaching (Phipps & Borg, 2009), learner autonomy (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012), curriculum reform in language teaching approaches (Mohammed Saad Orafi & Borg, 2008), codeswitching (Cheng, 2013; Tien, 2009;

Farrell & Tan, 2007) as well as first language use in the target language classroom (Levine, 2003; McMillan & Rivers, 2011; Vanichakorn, 2009).

Besides affecting classroom practice, teacher beliefs are arguably key in the construction of “self-direction”, defined by Brockett and Hiemstra (1991: 29) as “the characteristics of an individual that predisposes one toward taking primary responsibility for personal learning endeavours.” Although they did not provide a description as to how teachers can foster self-direction, it can be inferred that this is a quality where teachers ‘self-direct’ – as opposed to being inflexible or impractical – by responding to classroom situations using their discretion for the main purposes of promoting a positive learning experience. It is possible then to infer that teacher self-direction and self-development or “expertise” (Calderhead, 1996: 717) can be acquired through teaching experience which informs, challenges and changes existing beliefs which the teachers are not satisfied with.

Therefore in such a cognitively demanding profession, how language teachers think and make decisions in the classroom are vital components to their practice (Nespor, 1987: 317). In other words, although teacher education may equip a teacher with a set of skills to teach, different teachers may have different ways to teach based on what they believe to be the best approach for any given context (Pajeras, 1992: 311), where these approaches are “constructed by [teachers]’ underlying thoughts and beliefs” which involve a complex system of factors including programs, learners and knowledge about teaching and learning (Nishino, 2012: 380). Indeed, so multifaceted is the construct of beliefs that “belief does not lend itself easily to empirical investigation” (Pajeras, 2012: 308) especially as teachers may not always act on what they necessarily believe due to the tacit and intangible nature of beliefs. In fact, research on the impact of teacher education on language teachers’ beliefs conducted in pre- and post-service contexts report mixed findings of both stability and changes in teacher

beliefs (see Borg 2011: 371 for a detailed discussion of these studies). This could be due to what Phipps and Borg (2009: 381) distinguish as a tension or inconsistency between core and peripheral beliefs, where they define core beliefs as being “stable and exert[ing] a more powerful influence on [teacher] behaviour than peripheral beliefs.”<sup>3</sup> So, if teachers’ practices appear to contradict their stated beliefs, this could be due to the fact that they have reported their peripheral beliefs – a distinction which is reported to be complex in nature (Nishino, 2012: 380) and warrants further examination in future research.

## **Teacher beliefs**

So how do teachers actually operate? According to Clark and Peterson (1986 as cited in Fang, 1996: 49):

Teachers’ thought processes have been categorised into three fundamental types: 1) teacher planning, 2) teachers’ interactive thoughts and decisions and 3) teachers’ theories and beliefs.

On the one hand, teacher cognition or the way teachers think and make decisions about how to teach may be the result of their training, but on the other hand, their beliefs – what teachers hold or view to be true – about language teaching and learning are equally important. It would seem that belief and cognition are strongly intertwined as Kagan (1992: 65) defines teacher belief as “tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms and the academic material to be taught” while Borg (2003: 81) defines teacher cognition as the “unobservable dimension of teaching which include what teachers know, believe and think.” Teacher belief is also commonly referred to as “evaluative propositions which teachers hold consciously or unconsciously

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<sup>3</sup> However, Phipps and Borg (2009: 381) note that the lack of close attention to core and peripheral beliefs in general and language education research has meant that there is a lack of evidence as to what constitutes a core belief.

and which they accept as true" while recognising and accepting the fact that other teachers may have different or opposing views on the same issue (Borg, 2001 as cited in Basturkmen, 2012: 282).

In fact Beattie (1995 as cited in Fang, 1996: 49) suggests that the "personal practical knowledge" of teachers – a cumulative knowledge of students' learning styles, needs and strengths as well as a repertoire of pedagogical techniques and classroom management skills – is crucial to guiding and informing teachers' thinking and beliefs. In certain situations where existing beliefs lead to unsuccessful outcomes in the classroom, this 'negative' experience may challenge their beliefs, leading to a change and adjustment in their existing beliefs (Phipps & Borg, 2009: 381). Nevertheless, on the whole, most teachers react to "what goes on in the classroom" (MacDonald, Badger & White, 2001: 949) in ways which they believe will create an optimal classroom climate to enhance learning. For the purposes of this study, teacher beliefs are defined as what English language teachers perceive (know, think and believe) to be influential regarding their decision on first language use in their classrooms.

### Factors influencing teacher beliefs

Teacher beliefs can be influenced by many factors. Nishino (2012: 381) and McMillan and Rivers (2011: 253) attribute language teacher beliefs to teacher education or teaching training, as previously discussed. This means that the way teachers select content and therefore the approach to deliver the content can be influenced strongly by what they perceive to be the best way to teach a particular lesson to a particular cohort. Borg (2003: 81) notes that teachers' previous experiences as learners, including as second language learners, may also shape their cognition and beliefs about the language learning process. Teachers may transfer successful learning experiences into their practice

presumably out of belief that if it worked for them, it would work for their students as well. Other contributing factors include personal values (Petitt, 2011: 124), influence from other colleagues or teaching mentors (McMillan & Rivers, 2011: 254) as well as language policies (Farrell & Tan, 2007: 383). Because language policies are usually issued as a top-down directive, they could hold sway and strongly influence both teacher and student beliefs about language choice in the target language classroom.

### **Language teacher beliefs about first language use in the English classroom**

Literature on the topic discussed strongly refers to how teacher belief informs teaching, content and classroom management skills (Fang, 1996: 49; Kagan, 1992: 67). This is achieved when teachers are context-dependent and flexible in order to anticipate, plan and improvise as required by the situation<sup>4</sup> (Hattie, 2002: 11). Similarly in second or foreign language teaching where English/target language-only policies are in place, teacher beliefs play influential roles in determining whether the use of the students' first language (L1) or mother tongue is 'allowed' or 'tolerable' or not. For example, Harmer (2007: 132) notes that ESL teachers "believe that it would be a natural reaction" to adopt the students' L1, if they were able to, despite the presence of an English-only policy. So, if they believe that judicious L1 use can be beneficial despite the existence of prescriptive language policies, language teachers who discretionarily interpret these policies within their own teaching contexts "are not mere executors of policy but ... active constructors of practices" (de Jong, 2008: 353). Therefore teachers have power and influence in determining whether L1 is used or not because if they believe that this can be potentially useful, they may decide to over-ride policy for the benefit of their learners (Cheng, 2013: 1281).

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that these are qualities identified in experience or expert teachers as opposed to trainee or novice teachers (Hattie, 2002: 8).

## Teacher beliefs about negotiating English-only policies

In both foreign language and second language teaching contexts, it would not be uncommon to expect certain language policies to be in place for a variety of reasons. Monolingual language policies are often a result of monolingual ideologies and are usually enforced in a hierarchical top-down fashion (de Jong, 2008: 353; Saxena, 2009: 168) with the expectation that the teachers would enforce them and the students would adhere to them i.e. both teachers and students instructed not to use the first language (Duff & Polio, 1990: 161). Fortune (2012: 70) acknowledges that language teachers may face confusion or anxiety when presented with the issue of whether or not use of the first language is acceptable or not, especially if their views conflict with policy.

However if there are mismatches between policy and belief, teachers may choose not to enforce the policy (Nishino, 2012: 380) because of their belief that it may not be conducive to the holistic learning process. A case in point is in the context of teaching English as a foreign language where such a prescribed English-only policy is present; both students and teachers are prevented from using or instructed not to use the first language. In their study of teacher attitudes towards the 'English only' policy in Japan, McMillan and Rivers (2010: 253) report the enforcement of this policy was a result of the preponderance of problematic English language education in Japan. To solve this problem, an 'English-only' policy was believed to be "a cure for all that ails the English education system." However this approach has not been as successful as anticipated. This is because the Japanese English language teachers in their study discovered that targeted use of Japanese enhances the effectiveness of English language teaching. So instead of strictly or blindly adhering to the English-only rule, these teachers made the conscious decision to include the students' Japanese language selectively because they believed this would enhance the overall learning experience (p. 257).

Furthermore, Saxena (2009: 169) claims that top-down one language policies “often create conflict and tension” in multilingual (and/or bilingual) classrooms. For example, Farrell and Tan’s (2007) study on teacher beliefs about Singapore Colloquial English (SCE or Singlish) reveals how nation-wide language policies favouring one dominant mainstream model of English over another (usually viewed or positioned as a lower variety) can affect teachers’ beliefs. The teachers who participated in the study reported beliefs that British English or Standard English (without defining either of these) “was the only appropriate model of English” to be used in the classroom – a view seemingly instigated by the government and reinforced through media propaganda as “Speak Good English Movement” (Farrell & Tan, 2007: 383). Although the teachers also noted the positive uses of Singlish (i.e the vernacular) to establish rapport and solidarity, they still believed that Singlish could lead to detrimental effects especially in impeding the students’ written work (p. 384). So unlike the previous example where the Japanese teachers consciously and actively negotiated imbedded ideologies in the policy, the teacher participants’ decision to discourage the use of Singlish was partially based on their reported personal negative views of the colloquial variety as being “deficient” but this pessimistic attitude could be due to pressure to conform to the nation-wide drive to promote the use of ‘Standard English’.

### **Student attitudes about first language use within a university context**

Student attitudes towards L1 use are equally important as they contribute towards the classroom context. Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney (2008: 250) contend that understanding students’ views is crucial as it can predict potential areas of conflicts between teacher and student perceptions regarding the question of L1

use. For example, a teacher may choose to promote an English-only environment in the classroom; however if they become aware that their students view the L1 as instrumental in the learning process, they may tolerate some student L1 use as opposed to no L1 use at all. First language use among language students include spoken interaction, written notes, translation as well as bilingual dictionary or translator use (personal observation).

Studies on language learners' attitudes about first language use reveal mixed responses, which could be due to several overarching reasons. One of these is identified by Saxena (2009: 168) as the position of English in socio-cultural contexts: is English viewed as the dominant or 'other' language? They report on how students in Brunei schools "resisted" the institutionalised English-only ideology by positioning English as the 'other' language presumably because English was perceived as a threat to the traditional Muslim way of life (Saxena, 2009: 171). On the other hand, the teacher in the study viewed their students' use of Malay as a problem. Therefore, when students in this study responded to the teacher's English instructions in Malay, they in turn responded to their students' use of Malay with either "remind[ers] ... of the 'no Malay rule' ... or refu[sal] to acknowledge such responses" as well as a monetary fine.

Similarly, another study conducted among young adult English language learners in Iran reported first language use in favourable light by students who generally "accepted [L1 use] ... as a helping strategy" (Karimian & Talebinejad (2013: 607). This could be attributed to the lack of positioning of English as the 'other' language, but perhaps the lack of resistance from the language teacher regarding L1 use may be a contributing factor as well.

However, Fortune's (2012: 82) study investigating L1 use in an EFL programme at a Colombian university and an international ESL programme in a university in

England suggests that the students held quite contrasting views. Generally, there was no official English-only rule but there was general agreement at the institutional level that the classrooms should be an 'English-only' environment in the EFL programme. Despite that, EFL teachers reported inclinations of using the L1 (Spanish) if the class was homogenous, and many students viewed the L1 as useful and used it in class "due to lack of ability or knowledge in the L2" (p. 81). Although the EFL student participants did not attribute L1 use negatively, they nevertheless felt that overall, the L1 "should not be used in the classroom" as it can impede their L2 and such believed that it should "only be allowed in extreme cases" (p. 83). Meanwhile, due to an institutional enforcement of an English-only rule in the ESL context, the teachers reported using varying techniques to enforce this rule. ESL students also reported feeling quite strongly against using the L1 (possibly as a result of the English-only rule) even though most were observed to have flouted the rule. It would seem that these discrepancies are a result of the nature of the courses.

Another factor impacting on why student attitudes about L1 use is undecided is due to their level of competence in English as well as their motivation. It is generally observed that lower level language learners tend to rely more on L1 to understand L2 (Franklin, 2007: 21). As a case in point, in their study in English-medium instruction contexts about the attitudes of Hong Kong Chinese university lecturers towards English (the medium of instruction) and Cantonese (the L1), Flowerdew, Li and Miller (1998: 215) describe a tension they observed where due to the fact some students only "manage to achieve a 'C' on entering [the university or any other] Hong Kong universities, most having only a grade 'D' or 'E' and some being accepted without a pass at all to fill quotas," exceptions were made where despite the official English-only policy<sup>5</sup>, lecturers

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<sup>5</sup> The upper echelons of Hong Kong society has enjoyed the benefits of English-medium education since its British colonial era as a result which has led to fluent bilinguals of Chinese

have the discretion to “explain or clarify particular points” in Cantonese (City University of Hong Kong, 1995 as cited in Flowerdew, Li & Miller, 1998: 208) in order to accommodate the lower level of English. However the researchers report that a teacher was explicitly asked by their students to “switch to Cantonese” entirely. It can be inferred from what the lecturers reported that students who had weaker English abilities preferred to be taught entirely in Cantonese as “[the students] don’t understand the content ... can’t actively participate ... and don’t know how to ask questions [in English].”

In fact, Canagarajah (2004: 120) notes “safe-houses” as constructs where students can adopt “discourses and behaviours that are not authorised or rewarded by the teachers” (p. 121). The fact that the lower level students in Flowerdew, Li and Miller’s study reportedly preferred Cantonese over English seems to strongly suggest that they may feel “embarrassed at using English ... in front of the whole class” and therefore “not feel confident enough” to use English. So in this case, it can be concluded that teacher and student L1 use offered a ‘security-blanket’ to these students as it removed the threat of being marginalised.

On the other hand, in a study conducted in EFL classes among university students and English teaching professionals in China, it is reported that student motivation is a strong indicator of how they perceive the use of English (Pan & Block, 2011: 396). The students reported more favourable use of English (as opposed to their mother tongue) because they believe “English ... can bring more opportunities to [their] career,” “improve [their] status ... [to feel] more modern, international and connected with the world.” Students in this study also

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(Cantonese but more recently to include Putonghua) and English. However despite the problems of mediums of instruction as a result of its historical background with China and Britain, English has remained the preferred choice of Hong Kong parents who “perceive that the future successes of their children depended on proficiency in English” (So, 1987 as cited in Flowerdew, Li & Miller, 1998:205).

reported consistent views of English being the language of empowerment and status, in line with Bourdieu's (1991, as cited in Pan & Block, 2011: 398) concept of linguistic capital.

Therefore, it would seem that student attitudes about L1 use versus English use is largely dependent on how English and their first languages are positioned within the socio-economic landscape and this also includes the context of English language teaching. In other words, whether English is taught as a foreign language in a country where little English is spoken or spoken as a main (e.g. official) language is pertinent to how students view language use. Second, students' proficiency in English is also significant in determining how they perceive English use; if they feel threatened they may resist or become non-cooperative when it comes to using English. Finally, how students negotiate L1 versus English use is also dependent on their personal motivation, whether extrinsic or intrinsic. As these attitudes are observed in the studies above, they could be similarly discerned in a study of foreign university students studying in New Zealand.

### **Internationalisation: Multilingual classrooms in New Zealand universities**

As a result of increased student mobility across borders, higher education institutions are becoming even more 'international' (van der Walt, 2013: 120) or multicultural. Ranta and Meckelborg (2013: 2) define international students as "those who have decided to pursue a degree programme in a country where a different language is used for instruction and within the community." For the purposes of this study within the New Zealand context, international students are defined as "someone who has crossed borders [from other countries into New Zealand] expressly with the intention to study" (Infometrics, 2013: 1).

Tertiary education has, according to Smith and Rae (2006: 27), become a service industry which generates “large export earnings” for New Zealand. This is because of a New Zealand government policy change in 1989 which resulted in international students being charged full fees by public education institutions (Smith & Rae, 2006: 28). Like in many Anglophone countries, Ker, Adams and Skyrme (2013: 236) note that many international students arrive on New Zealand shores in search of a tertiary qualification in English and the number of international students studying in New Zealand is generally increasing. Based on a historical comparison of international students from 2001/02 – 2012/13, 68,217 full-fee paying international students enrolled in New Zealand universities in 2001/02, and this number rose to a peak in 2003/04 to over 112,000 students.

“As universities charge the highest fees” it would appear that New Zealand universities stand to gain much economic benefit from them (Infometrics, 2013: 1). According to the Economic Impact of International Education 2012/13 report for Education New Zealand, full-fee paying students from the tertiary sector alone make up about 35% of the composition of international students studying in New Zealand, and this group generated NZD2,309 million in 2013, which is about 89% of the total gross output of international education (Infometrics, 2013: 2). According to the latest data at the time of writing, New Zealand universities managed to reap a reported NZD308.9 million from international student tuition fees in 2012 (Education New Zealand, 2013; Infometrics, 2013). As a result of these figures, the tertiary education sector in New Zealand has indeed become an important profit-generating industry.

Given the fact that these international students arrive in search of an English experience and qualification, the need for English to be the language of choice

is arguably stronger in English-medium classrooms. In their research about the teaching and learning of foreign languages and ESOL in New Zealand, Ker, Adams and Skyrme (2012: 237) suggest that it is pertinent that ESOL and/or EAP students, in preparation for university study, develop adequate mastery and fluency in English due to the underpinning demands of reading and writing required at university level.

Generally speaking, minimum English requirements for eligibility into most first year undergraduate study in New Zealand is an IELTS<sup>6</sup> (International English Language Testing System) band score of 6, and for most postgraduate courses, a minimum of an IELTS band score of 6.5 (Universities New Zealand, 2013). However, obtaining the minimum English language proficiency score does not necessarily imply that the international students are adequately prepared for the academic demands of university study especially as Read and Hayes (2003 as cited in Hyatt & Brooks, 2009: 23) report that “even students who gained the minimum IELTS band score for tertiary admission were likely to struggle to meet the demands of English-medium study in a New Zealand university.” Therefore, Ker, Adams and Skyrme (2013: 237) advocate that it is pertinent that ESOL and/or EAP students, in preparation for university study, develop adequate mastery and fluency in academic study skills due to the underpinning demands of reading and writing required at university level. That means if these international students are not adequately prepared for the English language (and academic) demands expected at university level, they may experience difficulty and stress trying to cope.

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<sup>6</sup> International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is a globally recognised, high-stakes English proficiency testing system. It is used “to assess the capability of candidates wishing to enter programmes in institutions of higher education and for immigration or professional purposes in English-speaking countries” (Hyatt & Brookes, 2009:21).

This has led to an increasing trend of offering alternative and “flexible pathways” for pre-university entry, presumably to extend opportunities to students whose English language proficiency was slightly below the accepted minimal level (Hyatt & Brooks, 2009: 22). Basically this means that as alternative academic university bridging pathways are designed to accept students with slightly lower English proficiency levels, there is an implication that first language use may be inevitable in these classrooms. As a point in fact, Massey University introduced an alternative university-bridging academic pathway to target a specific niche of international students who may already have “relevant university entrance qualification but don’t meet the English language or literacy admission requirements for degree study”. Called the Direct Entry English Pathway (DEEP), it was designed to “help [students] meet the English language and literacy admission requirements for degree study” (Massey University, 2014) at a lower IELTS score of 5.0 with a conditional offer by the university.

### **Research questions**

As discussed in the review of literature (Chapters 2 and 3), previous studies investigating first language and target language use in the context of second language learning were mostly focused in foreign language classrooms where the target language is not commonly spoken outside the language classroom. Examples include learning Japanese in Australia (Lee & Ogi, 2013), learning French or German in New Zealand (Crichton, 2009), learning English in Brunei Darussalam (Saxena, 2009), and learning English in China (Kunschak, 2014). Similar studies were also conducted in immersion contexts, e.g. English-speaking students learning French in Toronto (Swain & Lapkin, 2000) and Chinese-speaking students learning English in Australia (Chau, 2007). Besides investigating learner use of first language, literature also pointed to research into implications of teacher use of both first and target language use (e.g. Kim

& Elder, 2008), resulting in an argument for a general reconsideration of L1 use in language classrooms due to its role as a learning tool (see Anton & DiCamilla, 1999; Swain & Lapkin, 2000).

In relation to that, the question of L1 use in the New Zealand university context has been investigated. Walker (2004) researched L1 use in multilingual ESOL and EAP classes in a private New Zealand tertiary college and her study highlighted the potential linguistic and affective benefits of L1 use in the ESL or second language classes; however it did not explore teacher beliefs about L1 use. More recently, Newton (2014) presented a keynote address at the WATESOL mini-expo in Wellington in 2014 about how optimal L1 or own language use can enhance learning in the English language classroom. While citing studies by Lameta-Tufuga (1994) and Laufer and Girsai (2008) on how L1 use (i.e. translation) enhanced L2 learning, his presentation did not focus on teacher beliefs about L1 use either.

To this end, the scope of my study sought to explore the views and perceptions of teachers and students about first language use in the context of EAP/university bridging courses in a New Zealand university. Being an English-speaking university environment, what do the teachers believe about L1 use in this context? Similarly, how do the students in the English language and university bridging courses regard L1 use? This study does not seek to elicit or provide definitive answers about whether an English-only policy within a target language context is 'best practice'; however it endeavours to understand what factors influence teachers' and students' decisions regarding first language use in the multinational classroom using the following research questions:

1. What do English language teachers believe about first language use while teaching the second language (i.e. English) in a university bridging context?

2. How do ESOL and university bridging students perceive the use of first languages in the English medium classroom?
3. What are the factors that influence these (teachers' and students') beliefs?
4. How are these beliefs enacted in the classroom?

## Chapter 4

# Methodology

This chapter outlines the rationale for the methodology framework adopted to explore teacher and student beliefs about first language use in the English medium classroom within ESOL and university bridging courses at a tertiary institution. The research design, which includes the research approach, procedures and instruments employed for data collection for this study, will be discussed with relevant references made to the strengths and limitations of the study. This chapter ends with a description of my data collection process.

### **A case study approach**

As this study is contextually specific to exploring the beliefs of English language teachers and attitudes of offshore English language students from a centre placed within a tertiary New Zealand institution, a case study is appropriate as case studies have been used in contextual education research to gain a deeper insight into participants' views and perceptions on a particular topic (Litosseliti, 2003: 8) as well as capturing and enhancing our understanding of the surrounding and deeper issues of contexts, communities and individuals in small groups (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013: 3). Besides that, case studies are also interpretive in nature as they "zer[o] in on a particular case" (van Lier, 2005: 195) by allowing researchers to adopt a holistic approach to understand real-life events which include, according to Yin (2009: 4), small group behaviour. Within the case of the language centre, this study explored a small group of potential teacher participants (i.e. fewer than 10 teachers), and a reasonably small group of fewer than 50 students. A case study approach would limit the scope of this research specifically to exploring teacher beliefs and student attitudes on the

subject of first language use in multilingual classrooms of pre-university courses offered at a Centre affiliated to a New Zealand university.

## Research context

This case study explores teacher participants teaching English to speakers of other languages in General English and university bridging courses at Professional and Continuing Education (PaCE), hereby referred to as the Centre<sup>7</sup>, at Massey University. The courses offered at the Centre were designed to cater for international students in preparation for university study as they either lacked English language requirements or academic requirements, or both for eligible entry into their desired university programme. The General English course (i.e. ESOL), designed to improve students' general English communicative skills, accepts international students with IELTS band scores of below 4.5 where students are streamed into levels ranging from Introductory to Upper Intermediate. Depending on their academic pathway or confirmed conditional offers of their university programme, upon successful completion of their ESOL course, students can then staircase into one of the four university bridging courses, which were designed to scaffold students' entry into both undergraduate and postgraduate study at the university.

Due to changes in the New Zealand education system i.e. the introduction of the current examinations system National Certificate of Education Achievement (NCEA), senior high school students are now required to achieve certain standards in their subjects. If they do not successfully meet these standards, they would not achieve the required credits/levels for their subjects, thereby requiring further study and delaying direct entry into university study in New

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<sup>7</sup> PaCE was previously known as the Centre for University Preparation and English Language School (CUPELS) and before that, Massey University English Learning Centre (MUELC).

Zealand. In other words, together with international students, domestic students are now enrolled in university bridging courses like Foundation Studies in order to achieve university entry criteria.

As this study was initially designed with the intent of recruiting international student participants, domestic students were initially not considered. However, during the administration of the written student questionnaire, New Zealand students were invited to participate (a total of seven participated) as I felt that their contribution regarding first language use in the classroom could add another dimension to triangulate the data. Please refer to Table 1 for a summary of the English language and university bridging courses offered at the Centre.

**Table 1: Summary of English language courses offered at the Centre**

Course	General English	University bridging courses			
		Foundation studies		Direct entry pathway	
		<i>Fast track</i>	<i>Foundation</i>	<i>Undergrad</i>	<i>Postgrad</i>
Duration	4 – 12 weeks	1 semester (12 weeks)	2 semesters (24 weeks)	16 weeks	16 weeks
Entry & English language requirements	<u>International students</u> IELTS 4.5 or below	<u>International students</u> IELTS 6 (no band less than 5.5) A valid conditional offer of place for a programme from Massey University <u>Domestic</u>	<u>International students</u> IELTS 5.5 overall (minimum 5.0) Successful completion of Upper Intermediate English or the undergraduate level pathway <u>Domestic students</u>	<u>International students</u> IELTS 5.0 A valid conditional offer of place for an undergraduate programme from Massey University	<u>International students</u> IELTS 5.5 (5.5 across all bands) A valid conditional offer of place for a postgraduate programme from Massey University

		<u>students</u>	NCEA Level 2		
		Successful completed of Year 13 in a NZ secondary school	Successful completion of Year 12 in a NZ secondary school		
		A valid conditional offer of place for a programme from Massey University	A valid conditional offer of place for a programme from Massey University		
Content	General English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic study skills</li> <li>• Academic English</li> <li>• 2 Elective/academic subjects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic study skills</li> <li>• Academic English</li> <li>• 4 Elective/academic subjects</li> </ul>	4 Academic English skills papers	4 Academic English skills papers
Criteria to pass	Successfully completing the appropriate level	Pass all 4 papers	Pass all 6 papers	Average of an A- grade (75% minimum) across all 4 papers.	Pass all four papers
				Students who average a B or C grade may opt for Foundation or repeat the course again.	
Enrolment	Any time	Semesters 1 & 2		Semesters 1, 2 and 3	

NB

1. A 'Pass' is an achievement of 50% minimum.

While the number of teachers at the Centre experiences little change, the number of students enrolled in the courses offered is much more fluid as student enrolment depends on the flexibility of the intake dates. At the time this research took place, there were up to 16 fulltime English language teachers employed and an approximate of 50 international students enrolled across both General English and university bridging courses at the Centre.

Although most of the English language teachers at the Centre are New Zealanders, some are from North America, Australia, Singapore and Malaysia. The teachers are highly trained in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) and experienced in teaching multilingual groups. While the General English (ESOL) course focuses on intensive English language classes designed to improve students' general English skills, the university bridging courses are designed to offer English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in the English language component to help prepare students for undergraduate and postgraduate studies at university level.

However, the teachers/lecturers who teach the electives or academic subjects in the Foundation Studies programme consist of university lecturers who are not classified as English language teachers, but as content lecturers instead. Likewise, they also have experience teaching multilingual groups of students. The content lecturers may consist of both native English and non-native English speakers, and may or may not also share their students' first language. The main reason for including a non-language teacher dimension in the study is to explore whether their views and beliefs about first language use in the classroom contrasted with the language teachers' or not as language teaching is not a core aspect of their teaching. Therefore, the boundary of this case study is limited to the teachers/lecturers and students of the two programmes offered at the Centre.

## Research design

### From one instrument to three

In order to explore teacher beliefs about L1 use in multilingual classrooms, I decided on the implementation of a qualitative instrument as beliefs and attitudes are highly subjective, personal and difficult to measure scientifically or empirically using tests and statistical methods. However, relying solely on one qualitative instrument could also potentially increase the bias and weakness of the data; but data could be enhanced or strengthened through convergences from a second qualitative instrument.

However, I was also interested in exploring whether there was any convergence with the students regarding the question of L1 use in the multilingual English language classroom. For this, I decided to adopt a quantitative approach as, after careful consideration, it would be a more time-effective approach (as compared to most qualitative methods e.g. interviews). So in effect, I decided to employ a mixed method approach as it can potentially reduce the weakness and bias of individual instruments (Dornyei, 2007: 43).

Although a paradigm contrast of incompatibility may still be thought by some to exist between qualitative and quantitative methods (see Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), there is an increasing volume of work in linguistics and social sciences highlighting the value of a mixed method approach (e.g. Creswell, 1994; Greene et al. 1989). In fact, Angouri (2010: 30) contends that adopting a mixed method approach is both valuable and pragmatic as such a design could lead to the elicitation of "comprehensive accounts" and, according to Lazarson (2005: 210, as cited in Angouri, 2010: 32) "beneficial in revealing different aspects of 'reality'."

## **Justification of instruments**

### Focus groups

One of the aims of this study is to explore the beliefs that teachers have about first language use in the context of teaching in a multi-ethnic or multilingual English-medium classroom. There were two main groups of teacher participants involved in this study: English language teachers and content lecturers. Their beliefs and views about first language use in the context of teaching and learning in a multicultural classroom represented the primary focus of the study while their workplace – an English medium classroom in a New Zealand tertiary institute – and their past experiences, are both recognised as significant influences on their beliefs.

As this study was interested in understanding the beliefs and views about a focused topic of a group of teachers who share the same work context, it was felt that a focus group approach was most appropriate. One of the main rationales for utilising focus groups, rather than individual interviews, was that they were more pragmatic and time-efficient as they are perceived as being expedient to elicit relevant data from a group of subjects (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013: 3). Furthermore, an informal group discussion approach would promote less formality as opposed to an individual interview (Wilkinson, 2004: 177).

This leads to the next reason: because focus groups tend to be more informal in nature, this kind of approach would enable the researcher acting as a moderator or facilitator to adopt both direct and indirect approaches in the questioning style to engage the participants. Prompts were used to direct the conversation flow with more flexibility without 'leading' the participants where the conversation could reveal insight on multiple views without direct elicitation,

however at the same time there was also the risk of the conversation becoming off-tangent and 'lost'. The point here is that unlike most interviews where the response can be potentially less dynamic due to limited interaction, with a focus group, the discussion can dynamically evolve as a result of participant interaction (Edley & Litosseliti, 2010: 158; Litosseliti, 2003: 16). The researcher acting as facilitator can improvise their questions appropriately depending on how the conversation evolves while at the same time having the advantage of "structured eavesdropping" (Powney, 1988 as cited in Wilkinson, 2004: 181) to listen to and observe the interaction, thereby having the vantage point of picking up any nuances or previously neglected or unnoticed phenomena.

### Student written questionnaires

The rationale behind utilising written questionnaires was mainly a practical one. At the intended time for data collection, there were approximately 60 students enrolled across all courses offered at the Centre. I wanted to be able to capture student perceptions and attitudes about first language use in the English language classroom as effectively as possible. Due to the fact that there was a larger pool of students (compared to teachers) and, more significantly, as the students had varying levels of English language ability, questionnaires would allow me the benefit of accessing more participants in a short or limited amount of time in a consistent and uniform manner as the students would be asked the same questions both in terms of content and quantity, thereby minimising potential discrepancies and bias of data.

### Classroom observations

Although the presence of an outsider may affect both how teachers and students behave, one of the most effective and valuable ways of monitoring

behaviour is through observation. Unlike questioning, which relies on self-reported accounts, observation is regarded as a useful tool in the field of research as “it provides direct information” (Dornyei, 2007: 178) as it reflects what is actually happening, in this case, in the classroom. This view is similarly echoed by Freeman and McElhinny (1996: 262) who posit that students’ and teachers’ self-perceptions of what happens in the classroom do not always play out in reality especially when their core and peripheral beliefs come into contact with the realities of classroom situations.

To this end, in these classroom observations, I would be a non-participant observer and the observation itself would be structured. This meant that I would not be participating in the classroom activities, and my observation was structured to be limited to only phenomena which involved interactions in the first language where I took notes from a structured template. Informal follow-up discussions using my notes were also considered with the teachers of the observed class to extrapolate further reflection and response as part of a more complete view of the observation process.

### Triangulation of instruments

Due to the intangible nature of beliefs and convictions, a multiple instrument approach was also advantageous because it provides a platform for a triangulation of methods. Triangulation is viewed as “high on the list of key features of good research designs” (Cohen & Manion, 1994: 233) as, according to Bryman (2006 as cited in Angouri, 2010: 34), such an approach benefits from using different instruments on the same phenomenon, especially in terms of strengthening and enhancing convergence of findings, leading to the corroboration of research results. However, a multiple instrument approach could also reveal possible divergence in the results; but this could still bear the

potential of promoting better understanding of the context (Dornyei, 2007: 165) and in fact, any potential divergence could lead to further exploration of the phenomenon.

Certainly, the triangulation of focus groups, observations and follow-up sessions allowed me to explore their beliefs in more depth to obtain better understanding of how and why these divergences or tensions exist. Similarly, the written questionnaire may capture self-reported accounts of the students' beliefs about first language use in the English language classroom but relying on the results from this perspective alone may limit the findings of this study. Therefore by employing both written questionnaires and classroom observations, I was able to explore how students' self-reports of L1 use may manifest differently within the realities and dynamics of a classroom context, and this in turn provided me with further opportunities for follow-up with the teachers afterwards.

## **Ethical considerations and ethics approval**

### **Avoiding conflicts of interest at work**

Due to the fact that my research environment was also my work environment, I applied for a full ethics application to avoid any potential complications related to any potential conflicts of interest. To avoid this, I endeavoured to not involve my immediate colleagues teaching on the same course as I; my own students were also not involved in this study. Second, in order to avoid any potential bias in terms of participant selection, the recruitment process was conducted through a third party who is a non-teaching administrative staff member. This person assisted in circulating the invitation amongst all the English language and content teachers and agreed to be the point of contact for the teachers to

return their signed Consent Forms. They also agreed to help collect completed written student questionnaires from the respective classrooms. Permission from the Academic Co-ordinator and the Director of the Centre was also sought and granted to conduct my research at the Centre; data collection did not commence until ethics approval was granted by the ethics committee.

### Maintaining confidentiality

To assure my teacher participants that their identities would remain confidential, I was careful to emphasise that any dissemination of information from my study would be anonymous. Pseudonyms of the teachers' choice were adopted for this purpose; where a non-gendered pseudonym was preferred, I referred to these teachers in my thesis in the plural form. The teachers were also sent a copy of the summary of the focus group discussions for member-checking. This allowed the teachers the opportunity to contribute further comments on whether they agreed with my interpretation of their opinions and, more importantly, allowed the teachers the opportunity to correct my interpretations if they were inaccurate.

### Design of the written student questionnaire

I took careful consideration in the design of the written student questionnaire. In terms of the linguistic concerns for the written student questionnaire, I decided to utilise English (i.e. the target language) for time effectiveness as having to design questions in multiple languages and having them translated would take up much more considerable time. Due to the variety of English language proficiency among the students, language level of the questionnaire was also designed for simplicity to avoid any potential difficulty in comprehension. To ensure that the students were not completing the

questionnaires under time pressure, they were allowed to take their written questionnaires away with them for a day to complete; they were also explicitly told that they could discuss the questions with other people and that they could consult their dictionaries if they wanted. Written reminders were also placed at the end of the questionnaire booklets to remind students to return them to class the following day. Lastly, to assure the students anonymity, they were not required to indicate their names or classes on their questionnaires, and these were collected from them in class on the next day. They were also assured that their participation (or not) did not have any influence on their performance in the course.

### Distribution of the questionnaires

Finally, as detailed in my ethics application, rather than using the non-teaching staff member to introduce my study and distribute the written questionnaires to the students in the classroom, I decided to do both in person as I felt this would make the process more convenient for both the teachers and the students. The justification behind this was mainly to avoid doubling up questioning time as, if the non-teaching staff member circulating the information were not able to answer questions from the students about my study, this would cause inconvenience to them and both the teachers and students involved as I would risk wasting the teachers' time if the introduction and invitation process dragged on for longer than necessary due to lack of information. This was a risk I was not willing to take as it could affect the goodwill of the teachers who had kindly allowed me access into their classrooms.

## **Implementation of the instruments**

Data collection only commenced when ethics approval was granted in November 2013. This outcome impacted on my proposed timing and consequently I started on data collection procedures later than originally planned. However, this delay was offset by the opportune timing of the end of the second semester in November where most teachers were concluding their teaching sessions. The proposed sequence of my data collection instruments was for the teacher focus groups to occur first, followed by the classroom observation and written student questionnaires. This was mainly to allow me to establish prior contact with the teachers before I asked for their permission to observe their classes at the conclusion of the focus groups. It also enabled the teachers to feel more comfortable with my observing interactions in their classes after talking about my research topic in the focus groups. Similarly, the justification of conducting the classroom observation prior was to introduce my study to the students first before inviting them to participate in completing the questionnaire voluntarily.

As such, invitations to participate (which included information sheets about my research, participation consent forms and confidentiality agreement forms for teachers (Appendices A, B and C) were circulated by the non-teaching administrative staff member to potential English language teachers from both the General English and university bridging courses in late November. Nevertheless, all best laid plans went awry as no elective papers were offered in Semester 3 (which generally runs from the end of November – February). This meant that there was a delay in engaging the content teachers and while waiting for full acceptance from the English language teachers, I decided to pilot my focus group questions with another group of teachers who were not involved in the study.

## Piloting the focus group questions and written student questionnaire

The questions intended for the focus group were, after consultations and direction from my supervisors, designed to be as non-directed as possible with the main intention of avoiding primed responses (Appendix D). They ranged from semi-structured to open-style prompts using scenario-type questions would perhaps best achieve this objective as they would be open-ended enough to generate discussion amongst the teacher participants which should reveal relevant data without explicit and direct prompting. The list of scenarios included the most common domains in the classroom: teaching (vocabulary, grammar), discipline and administration.

Changes and revision were made to the focus group prompts so that there were fewer but more precisely worded questions to avoid confusion or uncertainty (Appendix E). I also decided to be more resolute in my facilitation of the discussion to maximise the teachers' contribution within a limited time frame of 60 minutes. Also, perhaps the most significant reason why my pilot was not as successful as anticipated was the fact that there were too many teachers in the group (six teachers participated in the pilot). With this in mind, I decided to minimise the actual teacher focus groups to no more than four participants per group for contribution to be more interactive and manageable.

With regards to the student written questionnaire, a draft questionnaire was trialled by both a group of English language students and also English language teachers who were not potential participants in this study for their feedback regarding comprehension and the pitch of language. Ambiguity in the language was minimal and modified in order to ensure that the language in the actual questionnaire (Appendix F) was pitched appropriately.

## Focus groups for English language teacher participants

Six English language teachers kindly indicated willingness to participate in my study. However due to the workload demands and different scheduling (the teachers were teaching on four different courses full-time i.e. up to 17.5 contact hours, and had different timetables), it was quite challenging to arrange a mutually agreeable time to meet for a focus group discussion. In fact, I had to postpone one of the focus group meetings to a later date; however, it was a risk I was prepared to take as I was prepared to conduct individual semi-structured interviews with the teacher participants if this became necessary due to scheduling constraints.

Two separate focus group meetings were organised – one with four teachers and the other with two. These discussions were audio recorded and transcribed for analytical purposes. The questions used in these discussions were not sent to the teachers prior to the focus group meeting as the rationale was to obtain the most candid and frank (as opposed to carefully scripted) impressions about the subject. After that, brief summaries of each group discussion were drafted and presented to the teachers individually for member checking where informal follow-up discussion sessions (Appendix G) were also held afterwards to procure richer data. In these subsequent follow-up discussions, the questions were sent to the teacher participants in advance for the purposes of efficiency. Two teachers who were unable to make their follow-up meetings kindly provided written responses. At the conclusion of these meetings, permission was obtained and suitable times were also arranged with the teachers for me to conduct classroom observations (Appendices H & I).

## Content lecturers

While I was concluding the summaries from the focus group discussions with the English language teacher participants, invitations to participate (Appendices A, B & C) were circulated via email through the non-teaching administrative staff member to a group of seven content lecturers who were teaching on the elective subjects for students enrolled in the Foundation Studies programme. However, the responses from the content lecturers were disappointingly low. The first response from one of the lecturers expressed inability to contribute or participate:

'Hi Cindy, I don't actually teach any classes in the Bridging paper. Each week a different lecturer teaches the class. I just coordinate everything so I don't think I will be of much use to you' (email correspondence dated April 15, 2014).

Another lecturer responded in early May 2014 to indicate their willingness to participate. Interestingly it was through this lecturer that I was made aware of the fact that many of the content lecturers were, like them, part-time or contracted lecturers and therefore may not necessarily be based on campus "since I [this particular lecturer] really don't have an office and I won't be on campus that day" (email correspondence dated May 9, 2014). This could very well explain the lack of responses as the lecturers could be pre-occupied with other commitments or work outside the university. So we agreed on a mutually agreed time to meet and, as I still had not heard back from the remaining 5 content lecturers I had no other alternative but to press on with just one academic lecturer as content teacher participant due to time constraints.

A semi-structured interview format was adopted as an alternative to a focus group discussion with the content lecturer as it was "less time-consuming than ... formal interview[s]" (Broughton & Hampshire, 1997:61). The questions

were mainly based on the prompts used for the focus group discussions but adapted to suit content/academic teachers, allowing flexibility to explore items of interest which may surface during the interview (Appendix J). This interview was audio-recorded with the lecturer's permission and a workable time was agreed for me to observe their class which they taught twice a week. Please refer to Table 2 for a summary of the seven teacher participants.

**Table 2: Summary of teacher participants (in no particular order)**

Teacher	Session observed	Highest qualification	Years of teaching English language at the Centre	Years teaching in total (if different)
WSJ	English for Academic Purposes (Foundation)	MATESOL	12	20
Dr. S	Biology (Foundation + Fast track)	PhD in Microbiology	3	
Margaret O'Connor	ESOL (Upper Intermediate)	DipSLT	19	25
Thelma	ESOL (Lower Intermediate)	PGDipSLT	6.5	
Robyn	Advanced academic English (Advanced direct entry pathway)	MA Applied Linguistics	12	18
Grace	Advanced academic English (Advanced direct entry pathway)	MA Applied Linguistics	22	25
Mary	ESOL (Lower Intermediate)	PGDipSLT	12	35

## Classroom observations

I was aware that teachers may feel obliged to commit to a classroom observation after participating in the focus group, so to allay their concerns, I emphasised both verbally and in writing that participation was again voluntary (Appendices H & I). Furthermore, the teachers may feel uncomfortable with outsiders observing their teaching practice so to address this, I emphasised that the purpose of the observations was for me to observe any first language use within classroom interactions.

I was fortunate that all my teacher participants kindly agreed to allow me to observe a session of their class. I observed a total of seven sessions: these included three from the General English course as well as the three university bridging classes and one elective lecture session. Upon agreed times, I introduced myself (as researcher, not teacher) and my study to the classes in person so that I could ask for their permission to observe a session of their class (Appendix K) and their participation in completing the written questionnaire (Appendices L & M). I answered queries from the students about my study during this time.

As stated previously, observations were between 30 minutes to an hour. These were not recorded but I took notes on a structured template (Appendix N) – which the teachers were welcome to preview. Written notes of significant phenomena regarding first language use were made during these observations which I later analysed and summarised. The teachers were also invited to an informal individual follow-up discussion about any potentially pertinent observed phenomenon where they had the opportunity to contribute their thoughts further to the study. In fact this contributed to richness and enhancement of my data.

## Written student questionnaires

To avoid non-participation among the students, I explained that their participation would be valuable because their responses would help me in my research about their beliefs and attitudes towards first language use in the English language context when I introduced my study to them. A total of 45 students, enrolled in either university bridging or General English courses at the Centre, participated in completing the written questionnaire. All international students from all seven sessions surveyed participated and in the Foundation Studies class; seven New Zealand students voluntarily participated by completing Part 2 of the written questionnaire. As discussed earlier, the rationale for including New Zealand students was that their responses could provide a complementary native-speaker dimension regarding student attitudes about first language use in the multilingual English language classroom, distinct from non-native or second-language speakers.

Finally and perhaps the most concerning aspect to me was the reliability or validity of the students' written responses. The reliability of the responses could be compromised due to 'blanket' responses (e.g. students answering 'Yes' or 'Not sure' to every question without reading the questions and considering their answers with care). If this happened, I was prepared to disregard those particular responses; however the students appeared to have taken considerable care in writing their responses which contributed to my data.

## **Summary**

My data collection experience was fraught with complicated factors which were mainly caused by practical issues like timing constraints as a result of different teaching schedules which meant difficulties in arranging for suitable and mutually agreed times for meetings and observations. Although this resulted in

some level of delay as meetings had to be postponed due to more pressing commitments (like teaching, marking loads and work-related meetings), I was extremely fortunate that my teacher participants were willing to remain committed to participating. Another issue was the fact that most of the content lecturers were part-time or contracted teaching staff who were not necessarily on campus most times. This had resulted in difficulties in establishing communication lines, eventuating in an extremely low participation rate with only one content lecturer participant. Although I was unable to conduct a focus group discussion with content lecturers, a semi-structured interview proved to be quite as fruitful as an alternative method.

This experience has reinforced the tremendous importance of retaining flexibility as well as having a 'back-up' plan in the event that things go pear-shaped. Also, the scope of this research has also become somewhat narrower due to the fact that there was only one content lecturer; consequently this study has become much more centred upon English language teacher participants in both General English as well as bridging courses and their students with the content lecturer amalgated together with the bridging course teachers.

## Chapter 5

# Teacher responses

The responses generated from this study are presented in two chapters. This chapter presents and describes the teacher participants' responses gathered from two teacher focus group discussions and follow-up discussions, one face-to-face interview as well as classroom observations and the individual follow-up discussions that follow. The following chapter (Chapter 6) presents the student participants' responses generated from their written questionnaire.

As previously discussed in the Methodology chapter, the focus group discussions were aimed at drawing out data in relation to what the teacher participants viewed regarding L1 use in the multilingual English language classroom. The objective was to explore their beliefs as well as the possible influencing factors behind these beliefs within a wider, university bridging context.

My data revealed that first language use is a common occurrence in the teacher participants' classrooms. However, two very broad responses emerged: those justifying judicious L1 use and those arguing for maximised English use. These are summarised in Table 3. This is followed by a presentation of factors mitigating L1 and English use that emerged from my data. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the tensions and complexities that panned out in the classroom.

**Table 3: Summary of responses emerging from teacher focus group discussions**

Justification for judicious L1 use	Justification for maximising English use
1. Social: It is a reflection of the students' identities	1. Customary & Practical: Classroom "etiquette" – a reflection of being polite by using a common language in a multicultural setting
2. Emotional: It lowers the affective filter	2. Contextual: It is in the target language context (i.e. in New Zealand)
3. Educational: It is a cognitive language learning tool	3. Realistic: The students are preparing for university study: a targeted learning outcome to achieve
	4. Pedagogical: Practice makes perfect

### **Justifications for L1 use**

The teacher participants shared the same view that it was "impossible" to take the first language out of the second language classroom. This was attributed mainly to three main reasons or themes which are discussed below. Although the teacher participants generally acknowledged and recognised the positive contributions first languages bring to the second language learning environment, they also noted that first language use should be exercised selectively or judiciously for reasons which are discussed in the next section.

### **Student identity**

For social reasons, the teacher participants reported that they felt very strongly about language being an inherent part of an individual's identity. As their students are "de facto speakers of another language" they "cannot help but

speak their mother tongue” especially if there is another speaker of the same language in the classroom. The teachers generally agree that this is acceptable “so long as they are on task and not disruptive.” Interestingly, Robyn particularly noted that it would be “strange” to speak in English with a friend (of the shared language) especially if they had known each other prior to the course – an observation equally emphasised by WSJ:

*To suddenly or consciously switch to a different language with someone whom you've always spoken to in one language is just weird and unnatural, so perhaps this is something we have to be conscious about especially as we have these larger groups from, say, China or Brazil. They knew each other back in China as classmates or friends so they are used to communicating to each other in Chinese or Portuguese; to expect or demand that they just switch to English is unnatural for them. But unfortunately we don't always think about that and this is what a lot of theory ignores – the real stuff – or maybe there is just a lack of research about this.*

The teacher participants also reported that sometimes they felt that their students could be using their first languages to mark “tribal affiliations” as this comment from Thelma illustrates:

*I think students sometimes use their first languages to distinguish themselves from each other, I mean, we do it to with English for example American English and Canadian English or Australian English and Kiwi English.*

In these situations, the teachers felt that the students might be trying to establish or assert their identity as a speaker or user of a particular language, both in terms of dialect and/or accent. In fact, WSJ reported that some students may purposefully “switch on or put on an accent just to fit in” with the identity of the dominant group or a particular group.

Robyn also identified “peer pressure” as a possible reason for students using their first languages, which was described by WSJ as due to “group culture identity.” Both Mary and Robyn reportedly observed and generalised that some cultures “tend to speak their own language with each other more” while some “have a strong desire for whatever reason to not use their own first language at all.” In other words, if a student started using English while the others maintained the L1, that student could be labelled as a “wanna-be” or a “show-off.” So to avoid being ostracised by their group members, some students may be pressured to use their L1 in order to “fit in with the rest” especially if English is positioned as the ‘other’ language.

Furthermore, the teacher participants collectively viewed the non-official ‘English-only’ language policy at the Centre, enforced via visual reminders, as being somewhat prescriptive. They felt that the enforcement of such a monolingual policy was “artificial” especially as the students are speakers of another language and by imposing English, their students would be denied their expressing their identity as a speaker of more than one language. This was because the teachers reported noticing that their students codeswitch from one language to another when discussing different things or moving between domains. For example, both WSJ and Grace pointed out that their students used their first languages presumably to talk about after-class activities or what movies to watch but when it came to actual class work, both teachers noticed a switch “whether consciously or not” to English although it should be noted that all the teachers agreed that this phenomenon was reportedly more noticeable amongst their higher level students. The teachers reported observing generally more L1 use amongst their lower level students because “[the students] did not have enough output [in English]” (this will be discussed in further detail under *Affective filtering* below).

Nevertheless, one interesting point raised by WSJ again was how they believe that some students use their first languages to exclude not just other students, but also “to mark that [the teacher] is not one of us.” In other words, by using the language their teacher does not speak, they could talk more freely about what they did not wish the teacher to know, for example the fact that they had forgotten to do their homework or that they hated vocabulary tasks. In point of fact, when I observed WSJ’s class on a review of critical reading skills, one particular Chinese student continually moaned in their L1, throughout the observation, about why WSJ was “doing this [teaching critical] reading again,” presumably because he did not want WSJ to understand what he said.

### Affective filtering

The teacher participants also reported that L1 use among their international students helped to promote less anxiety in the classroom. However, as mentioned briefly before, this phenomenon of L1 use was reportedly more observable among students of lower proficiency levels as they “do not have enough language” to be able to function in English. Furthermore, students who are less proficient were generally observed to be “less confident” and therefore perhaps not as inclined to speak in the target language, so L1 use was like a ‘safe-house’ for them. In fact, first language use was observed in all my classroom observations; the follow-up discussion with the respective teachers revealed that often, the teachers paired the students up or group them into small discussion groups and some, usually identified as the “weaker” or “less confident” students, tend to carry out the discussion in their first languages if paired with a student who shared the same language.

Moreover, translation or interpretation was an option some teachers considered as a less threatening approach. Margaret O'Connor described how she nominated more able students to explain something in the first language to the other students who were "struggling" when repeated efforts in English "did not seem to be working." Therefore while the teachers appreciated and agreed that the students should be "practising their English more" they also argued that L1 use should be considered "within reason" to avoid "causing stress and anxiety" among their students, especially those with limited English language skills.

Interestingly however, Dr. S perceived teacher-initiated peer translation as potentially damaging. Unlike Margaret O'Connor who had, on occasion, asked more able students to translate to help explain to struggling students, Dr. S believed that doing so could "potentially single the [struggling] student out." So to avoid any negative attention which could lead to anxiety, they did not to ask other students to translate for the struggling student, but instead, preferred that the students make the initiative to approach the teacher for help:

*I read [my students'] body language .... If they don't understand, I'll say to the whole class "if there's still any problems, I am available after class" ... so the onus is on them to approach me ... or they can ask me during tutorials or I may approach them quietly ... or they can email me.*

Nevertheless, Dr. S also subscribes to the position that reliance on or use of the first language is akin to being in a "comfortable zone." This position of first language use as a way of promoting a sense of comfort is similarly shared by Mary as their comment below illustrates:

*I have quite a high tolerance for L1 use [in their classroom] ... and I understand there are times that this is necessary ... [if] I can't seem to work out any other way of getting that student to understand, rather than [the*

*students] feeling embarrassed or unhappy, I would rather they feel comfortable.*

In fact, some teachers admitted that if they shared their students' first languages, they would consider using it for the same reason. Margaret O'Connor recalled using their French with some migrant students on very rare occasions in the past and Mary reported that if they had to, they would use their students' first language because they believed it would "make [the students] feel comfortable and relaxed."

Interestingly, WSJ noted from their personal foreign teaching experience that "monolingual overseas teachers of English" were not always necessarily aware of how students' first language use can help lower or filter feelings of anxiety when learning a second language. They also attributed ESOL teaching pedagogy or 'English only' policies as "unhumanistic ... [and] unsympathetic" causes of monolingual dominance in the language classroom. Both Thelma and Margaret O'Connor agreed and implied that one of their teaching limitations was when they were unable to translate or use the first language to help struggling students understand because they did not know that language.

## Cognitive learning tool

### **Teacher-initiated L1 use**

The teacher participants noted that teacher L1 use i.e. translation was "sometimes necessary," and especially when used at the right instance, can "help move things along a lot quicker." Therefore, the teacher participants argued that judicious teacher L1 use to explain a difficult concept or word should not be altogether abandoned either, especially in the lower levels, as "targeted" L1 use can be a useful learning tool, especially to enhance comprehension as this comment from Thelma illustrates:

*If you've tried in English to convey something and they still can't get it ... you know [if you] give them one line in French ... it will help them understand and I think this is useful.*

However the teachers agreed that they would prefer not to use the L1 if possible given the fact that the learning context is designed as an English-speaking university preparatory course. As such only in situations where all attempts at explanations have failed would the teachers resort to using some L1 if they shared the language with their students.

### **Student-initiated L1 use**

Student L1 use, within the right context, was identified as acceptable practice by the teacher participants. They concurred that rather than hindering learning, student-driven L1 use, whether "quickly asking a friend or someone from their own nationality sitting close to them" or through dictionary use, can, in fact, contribute towards a more holistic and conducive learning environment, especially "if the students were having trouble [understanding]."

In fact, Dr. S pointed out that being able to translate (i.e. with teacher's 'permission'), especially if these were student-initiated, can be beneficial because "the [international] students may be struggling in a new environment in a different language." In this case, student L1 use can also be positive if used as a learning tool "to help explain things," and in fact I noticed in all my observations that some students were quick to offer L1 explanations to a friend who was struggling without any prompting from the teacher. This appeared to be less teacher-dependent as "the students were discussing the content ... one asks and another explains ... and they still learn something ... they are on task." Dr. S believed that student L1 use provided cognitive support in terms of 'schema' and contextual information to understand new information in English. So by engaging in the new content or concept, even if it involved the students'

first language, the students are actively “thinking about [the concept]” and internalising the knowledge because “they learn it in English, translate or process it in their first language, and then reproduce it again in English to answer the question.”

Interestingly, one of the tools which I observed a lot of students use was the electronic dictionary. These are usually bilingual, and the teachers reported that their students rely on their bilingual dictionaries “quite often ... especially the weaker ones.” In all my observations, I noted that these dictionaries were employed mostly during vocabulary sessions or when the student presumably came across a new, previously unknown word. More especially however, I noticed that dictionaries were utilised by students whom the teachers later identified during the follow-up discussions as the weaker students as some teachers noted that “[these students] sometimes translate almost every word on the text.” I find this a significant piece of observation as it correlates with the theory that more able students may have in their arsenal higher meta-cognitive and –linguistic skills to adopt strategies pertaining to vocabulary learning. However, students with lower proficiencies or knowledge of the English language may struggle with comprehension especially with more challenging content.

Overall, the teacher participants displayed empathetic awareness that first language use is inevitable, especially among lower level learners of English or when introducing more complex content in university bridging courses. As such there was more tolerance towards first language use, including bilingual dictionary use for the purposes of comprehension; equally however the teachers felt that targeted or judicious first language use could benefit the overall second language learning process. Despite this encouraging attitude towards L1 use,

the teachers also agreed that there were also strong justifications for more English use, as will be discussed in the following section.

### **Justifications for maximising English use**

Although the teachers reported a consensus about the positive benefits of first language use in their English language classrooms, they also expressed reasons that this should not be the focal point in the learning process. Throughout the discussions, there was a strong sentiment of the need to have a sense of control over how the first language was used – if it was reserved for learning purposes, it was ‘acceptable’ and perhaps even encouraged strategically to enhance comprehension. Most importantly, the teachers communicated that English should be the focal point and students should be presented with maximum opportunities to be exposed to the target language environment for reasons discussed below.

### **Classroom etiquette**

This was an interesting discussion because it revealed nuances the teacher participants had regarding classroom ‘rules’. The preferred term was ‘etiquette’ as opposed to ‘rules’ because the teachers felt that as their students were “grown up”/university level students, they expected the students to be more culturally sensitive to not just the teacher who may not share their first language, but also to the other fellow students in the same class. As such, the teachers believed that English should be the language of choice in the multilingual classroom among students.

Margaret O’Connor also expressed that encouraging communication in English was important as it helped to promote a sense of inclusion within the

intercultural classroom community. Another teacher agreed and noted that they previously had “a large class where all but one [student] were the same nationality.” They expressed empathy towards students who had no one to speak their first language with in the classroom and described these students, usually the minority group, as potentially being “excluded” or left out simply because they did not speak other students’ first language. WSJ explained that this was because in an intercultural context like their classrooms, “to communicate in one language when there was an interlocutor who did not share the same language in the same group” was viewed as being rude.

In fact, the sentiment generated around the discussion on promoting that sense of inclusion strongly referred to what constituted rude or disruptive behaviour. Robyn suggested that it was impolite for students to “chit chat [in their L1] ... when the teacher is teaching or when other students are talking or responding to the task” in any classroom situation as it disrupts the lesson. Mary commented that if

*it's chit chat or idle chatter, I'll ... give them a short lesson on decorum and manners and explain that when they are speaking their own language the other students in the class feel excluded and can't understand ... it's impolite, very impolite ... and not how we do things in New Zealand.*

The teachers also reported that some students were more prone to using their L1 to the extent of going off-task which could potentially disrupt the class as well. Therefore by extension the etiquette of classroom behaviour also applied to whether the students were engaged in the task or not: if the students were not on task, it was considered “disrespectful both to the teacher and the other students who are interested to learn” as the following comment illustrates:

*I would have to waste time to get them back on task and this might entail repeating what I just taught when this time could have been better spent*

*moving onto the next item ... there's also the danger that the other students will feel impatient so this doesn't just affect me, but affects everybody.*

## Target language environment

Another justification why English should be maximised is due to the fact that the learning context is situated within the target language context. The teacher participants did make a distinction between teaching English as a foreign language outside the target language environment “for example in Japan or Thailand” and teaching English as a second language in the target language environment like New Zealand. The teacher participants reported having an expectation that because their students were learning in the target language environment in New Zealand, they should be communicating in English as much as possible.

Being an English language classroom in the target language context, Mary observed that “some nationalities seem to have a greater sense of discipline around not using their first language in the [English] classroom,” implying perhaps that there was a sense of expectation from the students that since the course, offered in New Zealand, will be conducted in English, the students should also function or interact in English. Also, because these classes were English language classes and academic university bridging courses, the teachers expected the students to use English as this comment illustrates:

*They did not come to New Zealand to learn Chinese or Japanese ... and we teach English in English ... I can understand if we were teaching English in Japan where no one speaks English, but this is New Zealand ... so I am assuming ... because we know some students had that decision made for them ... that they came all the way here to learn English – whether for*

*university or work. Of course it's different if they were completely new beginners with not a word of English, but we are talking about pre-university students who should, technically, have some decent level of English.*

## University context

Relating to the previous reason of learning English in the target language context, another reason for maximising English use as revealed in the discussions is due to the fact that most of the students will proceed into university study in New Zealand. It should be noted that this particular reason was more strongly communicated by the university bridging teachers – both English and content – possibly due to the nature of their courses which were designed to prepare students “to learn about and adapt to the New Zealand university study environment.”

In terms of student make-up, two of the three university bridging courses (i.e. Fast Track and Foundation from Foundation Studies) had both international and New Zealand students. For these teachers especially, it was much more imperative that they maximise English use as much as possible because of the fact that there were some students whose linguistic and/or prior academic knowledge surpassed some others in the same class. According to the teachers, these students were most often the most motivated to and most able to succeed in the programme. As WSJ pointed out, with higher level students, there was a higher level of expectation for them to use English as “they are able to do it, and they certainly have the language to do it.”

Therefore the teachers reported the importance of presenting “a feel of university atmosphere” by adopting lecture-style delivery which often also

included higher sophistication of language and vocabulary to cater to these students; the responsibility then fell on the less-able students to catch up with the rest of the class. Dr. S explained that “this is what [the students] will face when they finish my [university bridging] course so they need to be exposed to this style.” This meant “a lot of listening, note taking” and being able to cope with the pace of the lecturer. Similarly, WSJ pointed out that as university lectures are delivered in English, they encouraged “or sometimes ... push [their] students” to use as much English as possible because “they have to not just listen [to lectures] in English, but be able to express and communicate in English in order to participate successfully” in their future courses “which will not just involve international students but also native English or New Zealand students ... the lecturer is not going to slow down just because one or two internationals did not understand him or her so the onus is on the student to catch up.”

### Practice makes perfect

Finally, when asked if repetition and practice increases fluency in the second language, there was strong agreement amongst the teacher participants that ‘practice makes perfect’. While acknowledging that learning styles and learner types play an influential role in how people learn, the teachers believed that an immersion context is potentially beneficial in learning a second language as the learner would be “surrounded” or immersed in the second language environment. In such an environment, the learners would have little choice but to use the second language and, “with a lot more chance [of using English in and outside the classroom] there is higher chance of success in mastering the second language.” In fact, Robyn described how their tasks were devised to “encourage the students to use English.” If the students lapsed into their first languages even despite the structured support to enable them to complete the

task in English, the teachers reported that this was “frustrating” and “time consuming” but they would try to maximise English use by other means.

As a case in point, during my observations, I noted that some students, who completed their tasks in their first languages, were ‘invited’ by the teacher to contribute their answers to the rest of the class in English. When this was discussed with the relevant teachers during the follow-up, the rationale behind asking the students to share their answers was to make them “practice saying it or expressing it in English” as the teacher’s comment below expands on this matter:

*I know the students have done their questions, and they’ve basically written notes or answers in English, but because they negotiated or discussed in their first language, or in some rare cases relied too heavily on their gadgets, I make them share their answers in English. I have had grudgy students who shoved their handouts in my face to say ‘I’ve done [the questions] ... why do I have to say [the answers out loud]’ ... to which I reply ‘I know you can do it in your first language, and that’s OK, but can you explain it in English?’*

## **Factors mitigating the extent of L1 or English use in the classroom**

Although the teacher participants conceded that L1 use contributed positively to the overall learning experience, they also reported that sometimes certain factors contributed towards increased or unnecessary L1 use which impacted on how much English was being used in the classroom. The significant factors that emerged are related to the students’ (lack of) proficiency in English, class make-up and student motivation.

## Proficiency

As mentioned earlier, the teachers observed that it was almost impossible to expect students weak in English skills to function in English. This was mainly due to proficiency level and it was a significant factor that impacted on how much L1 or English was used in the classroom, an issue which emerged as extremely pertinent in the university bridging courses. It was a factor which the bridging course teachers identified as being problematic because it was something which they had to deal with in the classroom, but had no control over:

*Every semester, there will be that one or maybe two, but you will always have that one student who should not be in your class but somehow for whatever reason they met the entry requirements [into the course] and you really wonder. You can't turn them away because they are enrolled in the course.*

Grace noted that more successful maximised English language use could be achieved if lessons were carefully designed and "targeted" towards more structured English use. In this case, student L1 use could then be minimised judiciously especially when the English used was pitched and structured appropriately. However, WSJ noted that while this might be achievable with a class of streamed students, it may not necessarily be so if there were students of different levels.

My observations indicated that even with carefully structured approaches, there were times when the teacher's best intentions to encourage English use could be foiled if the students' proficiency impeded comprehension. As a case in point, while observing Robyn's advanced class, I commented on how, despite careful structuring to bridge the vocabulary and content for that lesson, one particular student did not appear to participate in English as much as the others in the vocabulary discussion task as they seemed to be working alone at times, being extremely reliant to their electronic bilingual dictionary. The teacher identified

the student as the weakest and who struggled at times to keep up with the class in English but since the pace of the lesson suited the other students, and since this student “was quite happy working on her own ... and her friend sometimes patiently translated for her” the teacher decided to “move on” in order to get through the content load.

## Class make-up

Lower proficiency, however, was not always the determining factor of increased L1 use. I observed an advanced academic English group where the majority of the students were Chinese with two Vietnamese and one Saudi Arabian. Although there was significantly more English use compared to the other lower level classrooms I had observed, there was still a considerable amount of Chinese exchanged between the students; it was only in smaller groups where the non-Chinese students were paired up that more English use was generally observed. The teacher explained that normally, the students from the majority group did not use that much English and, depending on the nature of the task:

*If they're just checking with each other ... like a grammar point or an item of vocabulary ... then I'm quite happy [for them to do so in Chinese] but ... if it's a discussion task, they're supposed to be practising speaking in English ... but after a minute lapsed into Chinese ... the task was to encourage them ... it gets annoying after a while.*

So although proficiency was an indicative factor in terms of how much (or little) English was used, my observation of this particular class suggested that class make-up played a more significant role as well. However class make-up was a factor beyond the teachers' control as it depended on student enrolments:

*[student cohorts are] like Russian roulette ... you don't know how many students and who they are or where they're from until the day you walk into the class.*

## Motivation

Yet besides ability and class composition, intrinsic motivation was identified as a stronger factor of increased English language use. The teachers generally agreed that if students were “really passionate about ... and really interested in [English]” they will use more English even without encouragement from the language teacher. In relation to that, the teachers believed that personality – whether a student was confident and extroverted or shy and introverted – also contributed to how much English was used:

*The risk-taker student probably didn't care if they made all these mistakes ... they just wanna talk to you in English.*

However, some students may not have the same motivation or interest and may not have chosen to study or learn English and there was general agreement that students who were unmotivated or “had no interest [in being in the classroom] were types of students who were “the most difficult to encourage” due to the amount of time and effort being spent to “help them ... but we're not going anywhere” especially if they were unwilling to participate in class activities. This observation was supported by WSJ's experience as they noted that more motivated students also tend to want to exercise their English language skills and will “take advantage of the situation [in New Zealand] to speak English.” So although the teacher participants generally agreed that less motivated or less able students may benefit from more encouragement, ultimately the success of the learning process is dependent on the students themselves.

In fact in one of my observations of a smaller general English class of seven students comprising four different nationalities, the teacher of this class agreed that this “more international” composition did mean that there were more opportunities for English use simply because the students did not share first languages. However what made this class interesting to observe was the fact that the students had a strong rapport with each other and appeared to be highly motivated and “interested” to function in English. When I asked if the students spoke more English because I was there to observe them, the teacher disagreed and maintained that they never had any issues in encouraging their students to interact in English, but surmised that:

*it could be because there were some mature [age-wise] students in the group and the younger students were on a short course with us but I did not have to constantly remind them to use English ... they were very motivated ... everyone got along and it's lovely to teach when the students want to [be engaged].”*

Therefore, based on this observation, it would seem that motivation was also a strong determining factor of how much English is used. If the students were interested and motivated, the teachers reported that teaching would not be like “pulling teeth” as they did not have to spend as much time encouraging English use. However the teachers believed that students’ intrinsic motivation was something which really depended on the students themselves as “you can lead a horse to water but you can’t make it drink.”

### **Tensions and complexities in practice: Balancing differing values**

During my observations and discussion sessions, the issue of L1 use in the classroom was not without its complexities. On the one hand, there was strong consensus from the teachers that student L1 use had its place, value and

potential in the English language classroom. On the other hand however, the teachers also felt strongly that student L1 use can sometimes be perceived negatively. The complexities that emerged and how the teachers seek to balance them in the classroom are discussed below.

### L1 use as a means to save face but ...

One of these complexities is the extent of student L1 use as a self-protective measure against potential embarrassment. During my observation session of WSJ's class, I observed a particular student who appeared to have a rather nonchalant, at times disinterested attitude and even appeared to 'moan' about particular tasks during WSJ's class. When I discussed this with WSJ, they noted that this students' constant use of their L1 and their apparent lack of interest in class was a possible attempt at trying to protect himself from his weakness in English:

*[the student] did not understand what was going on and tried to hide his weakness by trying to be the popular guy ... he always sat with the two other Cantonese students and spoke English only when explicitly asked to respond to a question ... he knew his English was not good so he avoided working with other students, especially the New Zealand students.*

WSJ explained that this particular student was usually the instigator of Chinese use with the other Chinese students – whom WSJ was quick to point out were more receptive towards working with other non-Chinese students in English compared to this one particular student. In fact, during the observation, I noted that although WSJ attempted to pair the students into discussion groups where they did not share any first languages to encourage English use, this particular student 'snuck' into a group with a Chinese friend; when asked why WSJ did not attempt to re-place him into his intended group, WSJ explained that "by that

stage into the course [i.e mid-way through the semester]... if the student wasn't bothered or did not want to engage [in English] I obviously can't make them ... plus I had 12 other students to support." From this comment I inferred that WSJ believed that the student was responsible for his own actions, and the student's unwillingness to participate and engage in English was beyond their control.

Nevertheless, WSJ appeared to tolerate the rationale of self-protection albeit reluctantly. WSJ empathised that the student may have chosen to use their L1 to save face but the student's decision/behaviour did not reflect positively in the context of a student-centred English language classroom especially as their action "limited the other two Cantonese students' chances" of interaction in English with other students. The tension I felt emerging was due to the fact that WSJ expected the students to be ready and to work with each other in groups, and be able to perform at a certain minimum level – both linguistically and academically – in order to achieve a successful outcome and be ready for university study by the end of the course; however if the student was not even at that minimum level, and did not even appear to be attempting to put in more effort (like this particular student), WSJ felt this could negatively affect the dynamics of the overall cohort and even undermine the potential success of the course due to lack of completion rates. The tension WSJ felt in trying to provide more opportunities for the student – which the student did not take advantage of – led them to concede that there was not much else that could be done as WSJ believed it was the student's decision to continue to favour L1 use over English, much to the student's detriment.

L1 use is part of the multilingual classroom but ...

Another complexity which emerged from the classroom was the question of controlling L1 use, especially spoken L1. Although the L1 was accepted as an

inherent aspect of the multilingual classroom, it was inferred from the discussions that controlling L1 use (i.e. that it was used judiciously) was a significant aspect of classroom management as the teachers were ultimately classroom managers who assumed responsibility of ensuring that English was taught and learnt in the classroom.

Mary noted class make-up was one of the contributing factors of increased L1 use because if the “whole class was one nationality” then it would be quite impossible to expect English all the time. Robyn similarly agreed and observed that increased L1 use was mainly exacerbated by how large the student group of the same nationality was; if it was just two or three students, it was implied that first language use may be easier to monitor. However if it were a whole class or a majority group, “there is a greater percentage of ... first language use” in the classroom.

This complexity certainly arose during my observations. The teachers paired students into groups where the students did not share L1s so that they would have to interact in English. However even with explicit instructions to “discuss in English,” in classes where there was a majority nationality, it was almost impossible for the groups to achieve certain tasks (e.g. discussions) completely in English despite structured approaches for linguistic support. In fact some of the teachers reported feeling “annoyed” because of this lapse into the L1 occurring even amongst more able students who were capable of completing the task in English as this comment from Robyn, who had an advanced group of 11 students of one nationality bar 3 students, illustrates:

*If I want them to do a discussion in English ... they are supposed to be practising speaking in English ... they would start off in English but after a minute they lapsed into Chinese because it was easier [for them] ... in fact I asked them about it afterwards ... and they all knew that they shouldn't*

*have, they knew they were supposed to speak in English, but they said, "Oh, it was easier for us to express our opinions in Chinese because we can't express our opinions in English easily."*

Perhaps most underlying reason for this tension was the sense or expectancy that the students would interact and maintain interaction in English. The teachers felt that if too much L1 was used in the classroom, it would "undermine" the quality of the course as an English language course and "other students might feel cheated having paid all this money and come all the way to New Zealand [to attend an English speaking course] only to find Chinese or Japanese instead of English."

Dictionaries are a good resource but ...

A third complexity which arose regarded the issue of electronic bilingual dictionaries and/or electronic translators. Although the teachers agreed that dictionaries were invaluable learning resources, there was some level of divergence as to how much dictionary use enhanced or disrupted the lesson. One aspect of potential disruptive use concerned the extent of or reliance on dictionary use. The other aspect pertained to the inaccuracies of electronic bilingual dictionaries and translators.

In my observations, I noted almost all students used their bilingual dictionaries in their lessons; some students relied on their gadgets more often than others. When this observation was discussed in the follow-up, the teachers identified that some students were more reliant as they had weaker comprehension and vocabulary skills; some students were more reliant because the topic was more challenging or complex. Often, the teachers reported their students saying "I know the word in my language but I don't know in English" suggesting that

perhaps bilingual dictionary reliance could be a 'bridge' connecting existing knowledge in the first language to the gap in the second language. The teachers were generally tolerant and accepting of these modern gadgets especially when students used them independently because "the students were looking words up without having to be told" and "not too teacher reliant by repeatedly asking the teacher."

However, some teachers expressed their concern that the lack of accuracy of electronic translators could be detrimental to the second language learning process and consequently "undo or worsen what you have just spent time and effort teaching." In response to this, Thelma gave her ESOL students a list of reliable electronic dictionaries which they could download onto their smartphones as an attempt to eliminate inaccurate translations while promoting the use of technology in her classroom at the same time.

However the university bridging teachers also noted that students who utilised their dictionaries to the extent of having to translate "every other word" can be disruptive to their own learning progress as well because "they would be so caught up with trying to understand the text but ... not following the lesson." Yet, I felt that this issue went back to the question of proficiency as discussed earlier as the teachers agreed that in general, the students who were weaker tended to utilise their dictionaries and translators more, resulting in sometimes significant misrepresentation of meaning in higher level academic reading texts as well as producing "funny and garbled essays," which in itself was problematic because it was a clear indication of the students' lack of comprehension which could consequently play a detrimental impact on their performance.

Nevertheless, the complexity I felt emerging was when the students were explicitly instructed not to utilise their gadgets. When I asked the teachers why

they explicitly asked their students not to use their dictionaries, the teachers explained that their rationale was to encourage students, in their groups, to work collaboratively on the tasks (e.g. vocabulary, reading comprehension) as well as to develop inferencing skills. If it was an individual task, the teachers explained that they would probably expected their students to utilise their dictionaries but because they had a friend “who might know the word,” an explanation from the friend would benefit both students as there would be negotiation of meaning in English taking place. Therefore as a whole, dictionaries are good resources but only if used wisely.

## **Summary**

Overall, the teacher participants reported a rather positive overview towards first language use in the English classroom especially if it aided learning. They believed that this sort of strategic L1 use was not only pedagogical, but it also helped avoid potential feelings of exclusion in a mixed ethnicity classroom. The teacher participants also believed that opportunities to use English i.e. the target language should be maximised especially as the students were looking at moving into university study or work in an English-speaking environment.

However, the question of how much L1 should be used in the classroom was not without its intricacies. Based on my observations, certain factors mitigated English use and although the teachers tried to balance differing views regarding how they felt about these factors, these are not easily resolved due to the complexity of other factors beyond the teachers’ control which included the students’ identities, attitudes and unwillingness to speak English as well as entry criteria to the course and therefore class make-up.

From the teacher discussions, I felt that there was a stronger imperative to promote English use, especially within the bridging courses, due to the fact that the students were preparing for university study or, for the general English students, preparing for university bridging courses before ultimately completing their university degree in New Zealand. Because of that, the teachers employed strategies to attempt maximising English use as this bridges and balances the issue of 'too much L1 use over not enough English use'. This was because they believed it important that the students received every available opportunity to be exposed to English use for the very reason of improving their proficiency and mastery to be ready for the academic demands of university study.

## Chapter 6

# **Student responses**

This chapter deals with student responses generated from a four-part written questionnaire which, as discussed in the Methodology chapter, was aimed at eliciting student opinions and attitudes about first language use in the English language classroom. The rationale was to determine whether the views of students across the general English and university bridging courses corresponded with each other and more importantly, whether the students' responses corresponded with the teachers' perceptions and beliefs regarding first language use in the English classroom or not.

The written questionnaire consisted of four parts (Appendix F). In Part One, multi-choice closed questions (Yes/No/It depends) were used to elicit students' self-reported perceptions and beliefs about the use of the first language in a native English speaking learning context. In Part Two, a Likert-scale of 1-5 (one being 'strongly disagree' to five being 'strongly agree') was adopted to gauge students' attitudes and beliefs about first language use by both the English language teacher and students in the classroom. Part Three consisted of multi-choice questions regarding reasons for and frequency of using both their first language and English in their English language classrooms. Finally, Part Four consisted of prompts regarding both first language and English use in the classroom as well as questions of quantitative nature for statistical purposes.

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire has been presented in table form; the qualitative data has also been presented in table form where appropriate, but the students' longer written responses have been primarily

used to illustrate this data. The wordings from the students' written responses have been re-produced in the tables with no attempt made to either correct or amend their errors in English. The rationale behind this approach was to enable a more accurate representation of some of the language problems and difficulties faced by the participants when learning English. Furthermore, I felt that any attempt on my part to edit the student participants' written responses would compromise their individual voices and most importantly, the imposition of my own interpretation of their responses ran the risk of misconstruing their intended meaning.

It should be noted that the questionnaire was designed with international student participants in mind; however for reasons discussed in the Methodology chapter, I decided to include New Zealand students in the study by inviting them to complete only Section Two of the written questionnaire (as the other three sections would be irrelevant to them as native speakers of the target language). This was because they were important participants in the space where first languages were used and therefore their responses were important in obtaining a full view of the context and perceptions of it.

Where possible, the students' responses from both university bridging and general English courses have been amalgated but for more depth the results have been separately tabulated according to the different course groups (i.e. general English and university bridging courses). Questions dealing with age, type of first language spoken, how long they have been studying English and the reasons for studying English were designed to provide a general profile of the respondents in order to inform the process of interpreting their responses.

## Background of the student participants

### Age and course of study

In general, students enrolled in both general English and university bridging courses are between 17-25 years old. However there were New Zealand students who, for reasons impeding them from completing formal education at high school level or university level, were 'mature' students and in order to be able to continue their tertiary education, were required to complete a university bridging course. Other mature students in the university bridging courses also included students who had completed their undergraduate studies in their home countries in their L1, but may be looking to gain entry into a New Zealand postgraduate course. Similarly, some general English cohorts may include adult or mature students who are usually migrants to New Zealand wishing to improve their English or students who did not achieve the required English proficiency for university entry.

**Table 4: How old are you & which course are you currently studying?**

Age	Courses	
	General English course (2 classes)	University Bridging courses (3 classes)
<b>17 – 25</b>	11	24
<b>26 and above</b>	6	4

As seen in Table 4, a larger proportion (35 out of 45) of the student respondents were aged between 17-25 years. Basically the respondents were studying English for a variety of reasons but most of the younger-aged students enrolled in the general English programme were looking to improve their English language to "get into university" for their undergraduate courses. Some of the international students "just graduate from high school, Massey Uni require me

to take in the foundation class,” while some lacked the minimum English language requirement “because my IELTS score is less than 6.5” or “because I didn’t pass the IELTS exam.” This implied that they may have been unsuccessful in securing university entry due to insufficient English language skills for even entry into university bridging courses. Some of these students may be more motivated than others to study in New Zealand “because it’s good at me” while others may be less motivated “because my mom sent me here.” Only a marginal few who “just wanted to find an exclusive English environment for my learning” ... “because it has the good learning and it is good place for studying.”

There was also a smaller group of adult or mature students in both groups. Two written responses suggested that the students were postgraduate candidates as they noted their reasons for studying English as “to study Master” and “to get IELTS score and studying PHD course in massey university.” Other reasons included “to because my job need that” and “for to seek my job.”

## Ethnicity and first languages

**Table 5: What is your first language?**

<b>Chinese (Mandarin/ Putonghua)</b>	<b>Arabic</b>	<b>Vietnamese</b>	<b>Thai</b>	<b>Korean</b>	<b>Japanese</b>	<b>Farsi</b>
19	7	2	1	3	4	1

Student participants from both the general English and university bridging courses consisted of seven different ethnicities or nationalities (excluding New Zealand students). This is summarised in Table 5. It should be noted that the Chinese group was the largest cohort; in fact, in one of the university bridging classes, only three of the eleven students were not Chinese; in another smaller

university bridging class, four out of six students were Chinese and overall, there was at least one Chinese student in the other classes observed. However based on the questionnaire results, some students did not share L1 with any other students in their class. This could explain why they “never use my first language in class.”

## Length of time having studied English

**Table 6: How long have you been studying English?**

<b>Period</b>	<b>General English course</b>	<b>University bridging courses</b>
<b>Less than 12 months</b>	2	1
<b>1-2 years</b>	2	2
<b>2-5 years</b>	1	2
<b>5-10 years</b>	9	6
<b>More than 10 years</b>	3	10

As the student respondents are mostly studying English at the Centre in preparation for their university studies or for work in New Zealand, it was expected that they would have had some previous experience studying English. It was also expected that in general, students enrolled in the General English programme may have had less experience than those in the university bridging courses, although this assumption is not necessarily always an accurate description for all language students. Table 6 illustrates that the student respondents have been studying English for varying lengths of time, ranging from less than 12 months to more than 10 years.

It was interesting to note that one respondent from one of the university bridging courses reported having studied English for less than 12 months. This

was potentially a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the question as 'how long have you been studying in New Zealand' instead.

### **Beliefs about first language use while learning English and reasons for using the first language in the classroom**

First, before discussing student beliefs about first language use, it would be useful to ascertain what was meant by 'first language use' in the English classroom. This study assumed the following as 'first language use' based on the student respondents' responses that they "translated," "wrote notes" and "used bilingual dictionaries" when learning English in the classroom. Table 7 below summarises these responses.

**Table 7: When I learn English, I ...** (*General English and university bridging participants*)

<b>First language use</b>	<b>Responses</b>
<b>Use the bilingual dictionary</b>	33
<b>Translate</b>	25
<b>Write notes in my first language</b>	19

The international student participants were also invited to respond to a series of eight statements about their beliefs regarding first language (L1) use in the English language or English-medium classroom. Based on Table 8 below, out of the total 38 respondents, a majority reportedly believed that the best way the learn English was to do so in an English classroom and if possible, in an English speaking country or environment. This could be especially true for students who came from countries where English was not commonly or widely spoken in general. Interestingly, some students responded that they thought the best way

of learning English depended on whether it was an individual or classroom approach as “if compared with just learning by myself, I think ‘yes’” then learning in an English classroom was the best way. Other responses suggested that the English classroom may not necessarily be the best approach as learning also depended “on attitude of learners” and “on using methods, environment, time” and whether or not one was a ‘good’ student as “if you are a good student it doesn’t matter about it”.

**Table 8: Student beliefs about first language use in the English classroom** (*General English and university bridging participants*)

	Yes	No	It depends
<b>1. I believe that the best way to learn English is to do so in an English classroom.</b>	26	5	7
<b>2. I believe that the best way to learn English is to go to an English speaking country.</b>	36	2	-
<b>3. I believe if I use my first language to learn English, my English will not improve much.</b>	24	13	-
<b>4. I believe if I use more English, my overall English will improve.</b>	37	-	1
<b>5. I believe using a bilingual dictionary (a dictionary which translates words between English and my first language) is helpful to learn English.</b>	34	2	2
<b>6. I believe being able to discuss an activity in my first language with a friend is a good strategy for me to learn English.</b>	17	21	-
<b>7. I believe writing notes in my first language helps me learn English better.</b>	18	19	-
<b>8. I believe using my first language while learning a second language is OK.</b>	21	16	2

Nevertheless there appeared to be a contradiction in the students’ reported belief about first language interference, and this could be a reflection of the complexities surrounding the issue of L1 use. Over half the respondents believed that using their L1 to learn English would negatively impede their English progress which corresponds with their reported belief that increased usage of English will lead to an overall improvement in their English language

skills. However it was interesting to note that a majority of 34 students reported using a bilingual dictionary helped them learn English vocabulary and grammar while 21 students reported that it was 'OK' for them to use their first languages while learning English. Perhaps this divergence of self-report suggests that the respondents were aware (perhaps subconsciously) of the inherent nature of their L1 as a part of their linguistic repertoire but at the same time were more conscious of how L1 use could also be beneficial despite their stated (and perhaps idealised) belief that it could be equally detrimental to their English progress.

Furthermore, 21 students reported that they did not believe using their first languages to discuss class tasks was a good strategy for them to learn English. Yet this phenomenon was observed in every classroom I visited and when asked if they believed it was possible to learn English without using their first language, a majority of the students responded that they did not believe it was possible, with many written responses indicating that the students were aware that "people can't learn English well without first language at beginning." Only four students reported that they thought it was possible but interestingly all of them believed that it would "need a very long time to achieve" fluency in the target language.

Reasons that included efficiency to complete the task as well as comprehension were included as preferred strategies. L1 use was "faster to get the right meaning" and "easiest way to understand." The students also utilised interpretation when they "ask my friend what teacher taking about and something I am not understand" to avoid "sometimes misunderstand question" as "the equivalent meanings does not always exist between two languages." The students also reported using bilingual dictionaries or translation "to understand my teacher," "to understand my classmates" and "to learn and study new

vocabulary and grammar.” Tables 9 and 10 below summarises the top five reported reasons for using the first language in the English classroom for the General English and university bridging participants respectively:

**Table 9: When I am in my English classroom, I translate to and from my first language ...**  
(General English participants)

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Responses</b>
<b>1. To learn and study new vocabulary &amp; grammar</b>	14
<b>2. To understand my teacher</b>	9
<b>3. Because it is faster if I use my first language</b>	9
<b>4. To understand my classmates</b>	7
<b>5. To understand my teacher’s instructions for class activities</b>	6

**Table 10: When I am in my English classroom, I translate to and from my first language ...**  
(University bridging participants)

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Responses</b>
<b>1. To learn and study new vocabulary &amp; grammar</b>	18
<b>2. To understand my teacher</b>	10
<b>3. To understand my teacher’s instructions for class activities</b>	9
<b>4. To understand my classmates</b>	8
<b>5. Because it is easy</b>	7

Other reasons reported for L1 use by respondents included discussing with other classmates about class work and feeling “more comfortable” talking in their first language. Interestingly, social reasons like chatting with friends and not wanting the teacher to know what was being said were also reported and the latter is of particular interest as it reinforces the themes of exclusion which

was explored in the teacher focus group discussions. These reasons are summarised in Table 11 below:

**Table 11: Other reasons for using the first language in the English classroom** *(both General English and University bridging participants)*

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Responses</b>
<b>6. To discuss with my friends about our class question/activity</b>	11
<b>7. To chit-chat with my friends</b>	7
<b>8. Because I feel more comfortable talking in my first language</b>	6
<b>9. Because I don't want my teacher to understand what I am talking about with my friends</b>	3
<b>10. Because I don't feel confident talking in English or using English</b>	2

Student attitudes about first language and English use by both students and teachers in the classroom

Student participants were invited to respond a series of five statements by indicating whether they strongly disagreed ('1') or strongly agreed ('5') with the statements. As mentioned earlier, I decided to invite New Zealand students from the university bridging courses to participate in this section of the study as I felt that their responses could potentially add a further dimension to how New Zealand (or native-English speaking) students perceive first language use in the multicultural university classroom. The responses have been broken down according to types of students and courses, and presented in the following tables: Table 12 (General English respondents); Table 13 (international students from University bridging courses); and Table 14 (New Zealand students from university bridging courses).

**Table 12: Do you agree or disagree with these statements?** (*General English i.e. 17 international participants*)

	1☹	2	3	4	5☺
1. I think it is OK when teachers use the students' first language to explain something the students don't understand in English.	-	7	4	4	1
2. I think it is OK when the teachers allow students to use their first language in the English classroom to help each other.	1	6	3	5	1
3. I think it is OK when the teachers use the students' first language to give advice or to warn students.	-	7	7	2	1
4. I think the teacher should teach in English all the time.	-	-	2	4	11

**Table 13: Do you agree or disagree with these statements?** (*University bridging courses i.e 21 international students*)

	1☹	2	3	4	5☺
1. I think it is OK when teachers use the students' first language to explain something the students don't understand in English.	1	4	1	11	4
2. I think it is OK when the teachers allow students to use their first language in the English classroom to help each other.	3	8	1	7	2
3. I think it is OK when the teachers use the students' first language to give advice or to warn students.	1	7	6	7	-
4. I think the teacher should teach in English all the time.	4	2	5	5	5

**Table 14: Do you agree or disagree with these statements?** (*University bridging courses i.e. 7 New Zealand students*)

	1☹	2	3	4	5😊
<b>1. I think it is OK when teachers use the students' first language to explain something the students don't understand in English.</b>	-	1	1	4	1
<b>2. I think it is OK when the teachers allow students to use their first language in the English classroom to help each other.</b>	-	5	2	-	-
<b>3. I think it is OK when the teachers use the students' first language to give advice or to warn students.</b>	-	2	2	2	1
<b>4. I think the teacher should teach in English all the time.</b>	-	-	1	5	1

The responses seem to indicate that generally, it was acceptable for some first language to be used in the classroom. In all three courses, L1 use either by the teacher "to explain" or by students "to help each other" was generally viewed more positively by the respondents as this type of first language use offered linguistic support to students whose command of English may be weaker. Interestingly this was also a view shared by the New Zealand respondents. This could be an indication of their awareness and/or empathy that other students whose first languages were not English may need some form of language support.

Nevertheless, there appeared to be a difference of opinion about whether the teacher should teach in English all the time between the respondents. On the one hand, none of the international respondents from the General English and none of the New Zealand university bridging group students thought that the teacher should teach in any other language besides English while on the other hand, six international students from the university bridging group disagreed

and/or strongly disagreed with this opinion, implying their preference that the teacher should perhaps teach in their first language if possible.

It could be inferred that the General English respondents' view of this particular statement 'I think the teacher should teach in English all the time' was influenced by their attitudes about learning English in Western countries. They perceived learning English in New Zealand as a positive experience as these comments illustrate: "I just wanted to find an exclusive English for my learning" to be able "to speak English" and since "New Zealand is one of the safest countries, and there are many people who come from various countries, so I can know their values." This attitude was supported by the fact that a majority of the student respondents believed that the best way to learn English is by attending an English language class in an English speaking country i.e. English is best learnt in the target language context (please refer to the first two statements from Table 8 reproduced and broken down into Tables 15 and 16 below) and therefore that the teacher should teach in English all the time.

**Table 8: Student beliefs about first language use in the English classroom** (*General English and university bridging participants*)

	Yes	No	It depends
<b>1. I believe that the best way to learn English is to do so in an English classroom.</b>	26	5	7
<b>2. I believe that the best way to learn English is to go to an English speaking country.</b>	36	2	-

**Table 15: Student beliefs about first language use in the English classroom** (*General English participants*)

	Yes	No	It depends
<b>1. I believe that the best way to learn English is to do so in an English classroom.</b>	12	3	2
<b>2. I believe that the best way to learn English is to go to an English speaking country.</b>	17	-	-

**Table 16: Student beliefs about first language use in the English classroom** (*University bridging participants*)

	Yes	No	It depends
<b>1. I believe that the best way to learn English is to do so in an English classroom.</b>	14	2	5
<b>2. I believe that the best way to learn English is to go to an English speaking country.</b>	19	2	-

So although the overall numbers in Table 8 strongly suggests that the respondents believed going to an English language environment is the best way to learn English, the breakdown of numbers in Tables 15 and 16 reveal slightly interesting results. As noted earlier in Table 14, six out of 21 university bridging participants reportedly disagreed that the teacher should teach in English all the time while another five respondents were 'unsure'. Although a small sample, this was significant as five respondents reported that the best way to learn English was not necessarily in an English classroom as learning depended on "attitude of learners" since the success of the learning depended on the student especially as "sometimes students don't pay attention English classroom." This implies that even with the best teacher "using methods, environment and time" the learning process would not necessarily guarantee success; however "if you are good student it doesn't meter about it."

As such it was possible to infer that perhaps, these university bridging students may not realise the importance of mastering English language skills in order to be able to master content or specific knowledge in English for university level, and therefore were of the opinion that content delivery did not necessarily have to be done in English. Yet whether this response was due to the fact that the content level in university bridging courses was more challenging than anticipated due to their lower English skills, and therefore teaching in their first language was more acceptable by these particular respondents or not was seen as a reason for this divergence was unknown, but worth investigating in any future studies on this particular issue.

## Reasons for using English in the classroom

**Table 17: Reasons for using English in the classroom** (*both General English and university bridging students*)

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Frequency reported</b>
<b>1. To talk/communicate (with foreign students, the teacher and New Zealand students)</b>	14
<b>2. To practice and improve their English skills</b>	9
<b>3. To discuss class tasks with teachers and other students</b>	5
<b>4. To ask and answer the teacher's questions</b>	4
<b>5. To study and learn English</b>	3
<b>6. To obey class regulation</b>	1

Besides identifying or justifying reasons for using their first languages in the classroom, reasons for using English in the classroom were also identified from student respondents. Overall reasons for using English in the classroom reported by participants from both the General English and university bridging

courses were quite similar. They included communication with teachers and foreign classmates, to discuss tasks with classmates, to ask and answer questions from the teacher as well as to practice and improve their English skills. During my observation, English use was observed when the students interacted with each other, more especially if they did not share the same first language, and also with the teacher. These reasons have been summarised in Table 17 above.

In comparison to the teachers' responses as discussed earlier, the students' reasons for using English in the classroom appeared to be more practical in nature. It was interesting to note that they reported using English to "communicate" with their teacher and classmates (presumably those who did not share their first languages including New Zealand students). As their teachers were English-speaking or did not share their first languages either, these student respondents had to ask their teachers questions in English; likewise, as the teacher elicited answers from them on a task, the students were required to respond in English as it was an English-medium class. Unexpectedly, only nine students reported using English to practice and improve their English skills. This does imply that the students may be translating or using their L1 to learn English which appears to be contradiction to the overwhelming majority (37 out of 38 international students) self-reported belief that using more English will lead to further improvements in their overall English language learning process. Whether this was due to the students' insufficient knowledge in English to be able to operate more fully in English or not remains unclear, so this could be a potential area for further investigation.

The respondents also reported using English to "discuss" questions or tasks with their classmates, most notably perhaps due to the fact that the group they were in were multicultural or, if not, they were following explicit instructions to

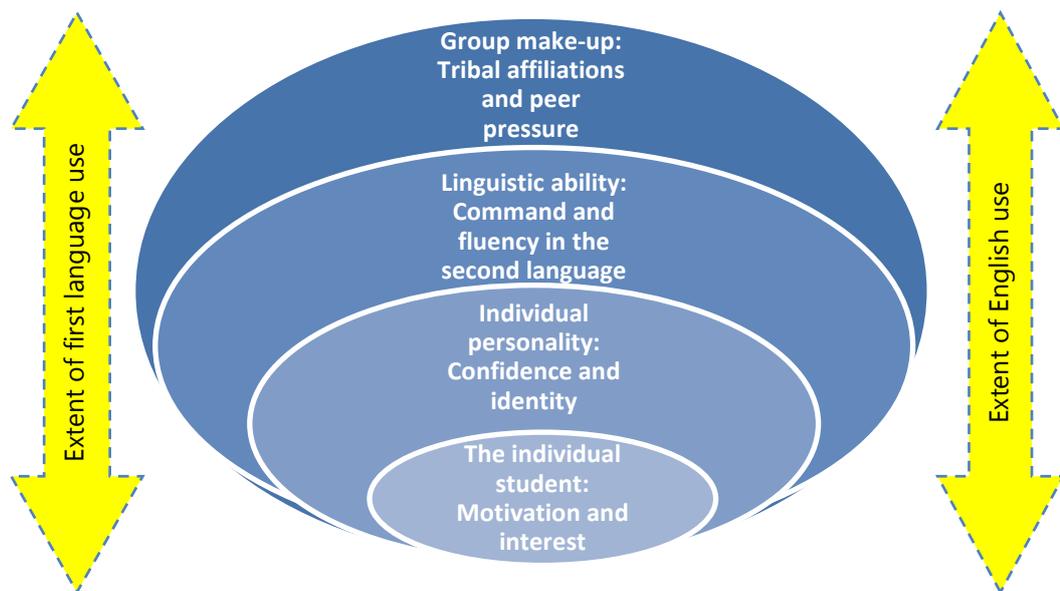
complete the task in English perhaps even without the aid of their bilingual dictionaries. Other reported reasons included using English to study and learn the language itself. Finally, one student reported using English to “obey” the teacher’s instruction to complete the task in English or to work with a classmate from a different country.

### **Factors affecting L1 and English use in the classroom**

The results from the student questionnaire revealed multiple forces at play which affected how much L1 and English are used in the classroom. As the teacher participants discussed and identified earlier, each cohort was never the same as dominant student groups or class make-up can as easily affect how much a particular first language is used as compared to proficiency level or motivation. Similar factors have been identified from the analysis of the student responses. Starting at the individual level, individual factors like personal motivation – both extrinsic (e.g. a goal of gaining entry into a university programme or improving English language skills) and intrinsic (e.g. personal interest) – and personality contributed to how much L1 was used. Whether a student felt confident about interacting with others or not was in turn affected by whether the individual was introverted or extroverted, and perhaps to a certain extent, their command of English within a classroom context.

The number of students of one particular ethnicity or nationality could potentially affect the overall dynamic and interaction pattern of the whole class. Classes consisting of a larger cohort of one particular nationality or shared first language group could dominate classroom interaction by increasing the propensity of that language being used as opposed to English. Yet, some students may or may not be affected by peer pressure to use either the L1 or English in the classroom. If, despite the class being mostly of one particular

nationality, a student was keen to interact in English, they would. Therefore there does not seem to be a linear relationship between the factors affecting the extent of first language or English use but rather a combination of factors identified through the responses in this study. These factors are illustrated in Figure 3 as overlapping relationships.



**Figure 3: The overlapping factors contributing to the extent of first language and English use in a classroom**

## Overview

Overall, the student respondents reported using their L1s in the English classroom mainly for learning purposes. This was in correlation with the teacher respondents' belief that targeted L1 use can help promote understanding and comprehension of English. Although students' self-reported belief that L1 use may interfere with their English learning process was detected, my observations revealed that despite this purported belief, L1 use was still observed in all classrooms I visited; however I must stress that most of these were confined to being on-task and, to a lesser degree, some undisruptive idle chit chat but this

mostly occurred either before the beginning of class or when the students had completed their task and were waiting for the class to regroup. Some of the New Zealand students who participated in this study also appear to believe that first language use by non-native English speaking students is acceptable as long as it was limited to learning and understanding classroom material; it could be inferred that L1 use for other reasons in the presence of non-speakers could be perceived by the New Zealand students as rude and/or exclusive.

However, despite the majority view that English should be the sole language of instruction, six international students from the university bridging courses were of the opinion that the teacher should be able to teach in their L1 too despite the fact that an overwhelming majority (32 out of 48 international students) believed that one of the best ways to study English was to do so in an English speaking country. Although a small number, this was significant in that it was a divergence from the majority perspective, especially the teachers' belief that exposing the students to as much English as possible helped prepare them for the realities and demands of university study in New Zealand.

The dichotomy between students' self-reports of their belief that L1 use could impede their English language progress and what I observed in terms of L1 use strongly suggested that student L1 use was an inherent and natural occurrence especially as English may not necessarily be their strongest or dominant language in the case of second language speakers, a point raised by Macaro (2005: 68) when he argues that "the language of thought for all but the most advanced L2 learners is inevitably in his/her L1." So whether the students were learning English out of intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, their reported reasons for using English as a *lingua franca* was mainly to communicate with students from other nationalities but perhaps also, to an extent, out of an awareness that they had to improve their academic English skills in preparation for university

study in New Zealand. This does seem to stream with the teacher respondents' belief that English should be the language of choice in the classroom as often as possible.

## Research reflections and discussion

The discussion of the findings will begin first by reflecting on why the teacher participants believe that English should be the ideal language of choice, followed by why, despite this ideal, the L1 was still believed to be a valuable language learning tool. The reflection and discussion of key findings from the results are presented in this chapter with references to relevant literature.

### In an ideal situation ...

As discussed in the Review of Literature in Chapter Three, Corbett (2003 as cited in Llurda & Lasagabaster, 2010: 329) makes a strong claim that international students studying abroad were made to “mimic” the culture and language of the host community with little interest from the host community in the students’ own foreign cultures. This suggests an ethnocentric view of the host community. At the Centre, there was an informal “English only” policy where students were reminded to interact in English at all times through visual reminders that can be seen in the General English classrooms (Figure 4). It would be easy to assume that the ‘enforcement’ of an English only zone at the Centre was ethnocentric as it positioned other languages as ‘the other’.



**Figure 4: English only zone**  
(Source: The researcher’s own).

## A communicative approach: English as the lingua franca in a multilingual environment

However, what transpired during our discussions in this study was that our teacher respondents did not believe in an “English-only” rule. The visual signs, as explained, were introduced by the then-ESOL coordinator who believed that the Centre should be an English-only establishment because it was multilingual, and because it was an English language centre. Similarly, the English language teacher participants subscribed to the attitude that due to the multilingual classroom environment, English should be the main or preferred language (Berry, 2006: 493; Soderlundh, 2013: 91). Yet they also acknowledged that the students’ L1s are an inherent aspect of their multilingual classroom and agreed it should not be banned altogether (Macaro, 2005: 68), thus imposing an English-only policy might be problematic or unrealistic.

In the classrooms I observed, there were groups of students who shared L1, and groups that did not. Firth (1996: 240) coined the term “contact language” to describe a common language used between “two persons who share neither a native common tongue nor a common culture, and for whom the lingua franca is the chosen language of communication.” In fact, Csizer and Kontra (2012: 2) identify English as a lingua franca in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts which include English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in university preparation courses as these classrooms were often multilingual. So it would seem the obvious choice for students who do not share L1 to interact in English i.e. the lingua franca. Furthermore, in order to generate an inclusive learning atmosphere, the teacher respondents believed that encouraging all their students, including those who share L1, to interact in English would help foster this community as a multilingual, English speaking classroom by adopting what Gomes, Mortimer and Kelly (2011: 748) term as “pedagogical strategies of

inclusive practices.” Through my observations, these included pairing students into groups that did not share L1 because the teachers – both English language and university bridging – believed this would encourage more interaction in English. Hence the General English teachers reported treating the visual reminders at the Centre more as a goal (“we will aim to speak English as much as we can”) rather than a rule (“we must speak English only”).

### The situated learning context

Perhaps the most persuasive factor influencing the teacher participants’ belief that English should be the ideal language of choice was due to what Ranta and Meckelborg (2013: 2) posit as contextual surroundings: in the case of this study, it was the situational English speaking environment. In other words, if the situational environment had been foreign English language education in a non-core English speaking country, then the expectation of achieving near 100% student interaction in the TL might be arguably lower simply because of the foreign language environment (Fortune, 2012: 83). The university bridging teacher participants reported having a higher expectation on their students to interact in English (Thompson & Harrison, 2014: 323) due to the fact that the learning environment was in New Zealand.

More important was the fact that the courses in this study (i.e. General English/ESOL and English for Academic Purposes in university bridging) were essentially English language/medium courses in New Zealand. Since their students were in New Zealand to learn English for eventual study at a New Zealand university, the teacher participants from the General English and university bridging courses were of the opinion that their students should take full advantage of meaningful communicative interaction in English both in and outside the classroom, as they believed it would help to improve their students’

English language development – a view similarly shared by Gass and MacKay (2006 as cited in Ranta & Meckelborg, 2013: 4) and Franklin (2007: 20).

On the other hand, due to philosophical demands, all of the three university bridging courses were conducted on the main university campus instead of at the Centre. This was mainly to integrate the bridging students to a university environment as the Centre was located on a separate campus elsewhere. On campus, these university bridging classrooms were more utilitarian as they were shared by other faculties at the university; any visual material specifically designed for these classes, including English-only signs, were absent. Despite this, the university bridging course teachers also believed that it was important to foster a maximised English language environment and, based on our discussions, they were more acutely aware of the need to encourage higher frequencies of English use in comparison to the General English teachers. This was mainly due to the student make-up and the nature of the university bridging courses.

Fostering an English language environment can be challenging to achieve mainly due to the fact that classroom dynamics are affected by human dynamics. Teacher participants from both the General English and university bridging courses reported that previous experiences in teaching multilingual groups had led them to subscribe to the belief that student make-up and ability contributed to language choice in the classroom. This observation was similarly made by Soderlundh (2013: 91) who notes that language choice can be affected by majority or dominant L1 groups. In this case, the L1 could be the preferred language of interaction as opposed to English especially if most of the students in the group shared the same L1.

In terms of student make-up, whether or not the class consisted of all international students or a mixture of native English speakers and international students was also a significant factor. The issue regarding L1 use did not seem as rigid as it was an English language class i.e. the English language teachers were considerably more tolerant of student L1 use because the students' English abilities were lower and could therefore benefit from judicious student L1 use although the English language teachers felt that English should still be the lingua franca to avoid exclusion in a multilingual environment.

On the other hand, two of the three university bridging courses (i.e. Fast Track and Foundation from Foundation Studies) had both international and New Zealand students. In the view of the bridging teachers, the bridging classes were not English language classes; the classes were designed for university preparation and were pitched at more sophisticated levels of English use. As LeLoup, Ponterio and Warford (2013: 46) note, achieving maximum TL use in the foreign language classroom was difficult and this was similarly elucidated by the bridging teacher participants as some of their students seemed to fall back to their L1 rather often. That was why they believed it was all the more important to explicitly foster and maintain an English speaking environment especially in the formal domains of teaching and learning where all their students could have access to participation by engaging and responding to communicative tasks in English meaningfully regardless of their L1 (Berry, 2006: 494).

### The nature of the courses

The second factor affecting the teacher participants' belief that the classroom environment should be in English as much as possible was due to the nature of the university bridging courses which prepare students for eventual study in an English language environment. Education in multilingual English-medium

courses seems to be “a way of attracting foreign students to universities” (Soderlundh, 2013: 99) and the bridging courses in my study were marketed as courses tailored for an international setting that would help prepare students “to meet the academic and English language requirements” for university entry (Figure 5).

What is it like?  
The Certificate in Foundation Studies is a full-time, two semester bridging programme that will help you to meet the academic and English language/literacy requirements for university entrance at undergraduate level.

**Figure 5: Advertisement of one of the university bridging courses on the university website.**

Like their academic counterparts in other universities in the western world, the university bridging teacher participants were “concern[ed] for ... the English language proficiency and subsequent academic achievement of international students ... not only to entry levels but also to exit levels” (Rochecouste, Oliver & Mulligan, 2012: 1) between pre-university and university levels. In the university bridging teachers’ opinion, the entry level of IELTS 5.5 into bridging courses (and IELTS 6 into most undergraduate programmes; see Chapter 4 Methodology: Table 1: Summary of English language course offered at the Centre) was not necessarily adequate for all students and therefore did not necessarily guarantee successful participation rates in the bridging courses, especially for weaker students. Therefore they believed it was significantly important that they pushed for more English use in the classroom.

Generally speaking, all teacher participants agreed that the more motivated or more able their students were, the less they had to consciously remind them to interact in English. However it was students who entered with lower than

expected levels of English which caused most concern as their lack of English ability led to increased L1 use (Kim & Elder, 2008: 179; Hamid, Jahan & Islam, 2013: 154), resulting in a negative implication on both the overall dynamics and delivery of the class. As shared by one bridging teacher participant, many Asian international students seemed to have an impression that EAP classes operated like ESOL classes and the weaker students expected considerably more academic support from the teachers. They did not seem to be aware that studying at a Western university required much more self-direction as well as a certain level of English and/or academic study skills in order to be able to participate successfully. Many students also failed to realise that language learning can be a time-consuming process and hence had very unrealistic expectations of being able to master academic English skills within a short amount of time from a low base. So when the weaker students struggled to cope, they subsequently blamed the teachers as being incompetent for not providing adequate support; yet in a bridging course which had native and near-native students, it would be difficult for the teachers to compromise the pace for just one or two struggling students as this would frustrate the other students as well – incidents which some of the teacher participants reported as having occurred in their classrooms.

I sensed that teacher frustration stemmed from being expected to continue delivering the course which was pitched at near-native level, and so felt under pressure to ensure that all their students have developed the adequate level of academic and linguistic fluency for university entry to be able to “compete on an equal footing with native speakers” (Collier, 1987 as cited in Harklau, 1994: 241). I felt that the bridging teacher participants shared the sentiment that achieving “expert level” (Csizer & Contra, 2012: 2) in terms of comprehension and fluency in English, as well as having developed a strong foundation in academic study skills, was key to their international students’ eventual successful

participation at university level and as such, believed it was pertinent that their students were able to participate to their fullest potential at the bridging courses. In fact, Skyrme's (2010) longitudinal study of a group of Chinese students at a New Zealand university strongly suggested that university bridging courses play a key role in providing "a very direct preparation for the harrowing demands" of academic skills required at university level. However, equally exigent was also the fact that students should be made aware of what is expected of them in their future courses to avoid potential failure and/or frustration. Therefore one of the ways to achieving such expert levels was by encouraging "extensive use of [English] in the classroom" (Crichton, 2009: 21) because they believed this prepared them for successful participation in their own programme.

### **In the real world ...**

#### Diglossia in the English language classroom: English as the language of education

Nevertheless, the teacher participants' view of their classrooms as being both a multilingual and diglossic environment was consistent with Chavez's (2003: 163) and Cook's (2001: 418) assessment. In such an environment, different languages are used for different functions and therefore language choice is a result of the language repertoire of a multilingual (or bilingual) individual, whereby choices are made regarding which languages to use in particular domains (Fishman, 1972b: 437 as cited in Sridhar, 1997: 51; Creese & Blackledge, 2013: 6). In her study of patterns of language choice, Soderlundh (2013: 90) identifies a phenomenon called "accommodation to the linguistic competence of one's peers" and notes how English was the deliberate language of choice in a multilingual English-medium classroom especially in domains of teaching and

learning because it was the language of “shared competence.” Soderlundh (ibid) observes that student L1 use was only observed in domains outside the formal classroom teaching and learning or when there were no students without shared knowledge of a particular L1 in a group to avoid exclusion.

Perhaps that explained what may be the most notable observation in my study that in the classroom/formal teaching-learning domain, English was used on-task as the language of knowledge almost all of the time: The teachers taught in English only, and the student participants always used English when working with non-shared L1 students, when they had to verbally report to the rest of the class or to respond to the teacher. On the other hand, L1 was observed to be used mostly on-task to discuss or negotiate tasks/activities if there were shared L1 students in the group, or as a problem-solving tool in private speech – a finding similar to Centeno-Cortes and Jimenez (2004: 17).

Judging by their written responses in the questionnaire, almost all of the international students from both the General English and university bridging courses were of the opinion that English should be the language of choice in the classroom by both teachers and students especially when it pertained to the domains of formal teaching and learning. The student participants viewed English as the formal language of university education which could be a result of its perceived position as “an international language ... used to communicate across linguistic and cultural boundaries” (McKay, 2002: 38), and as such, the language of education and upward mobility (O’Shea, 2006: 1), where an overseas qualification from a Western university was perceived to be an essential in accessing knowledge, power and wealth (Dasgupta, 1993: 143). These attitudes imply that the student participants had a more utilitarian view of English language study as a way to gain entry into either their university bridging or under-/postgraduate courses upon completion of their English

language courses and eventually as their “key to the future” (O’Shea, 2006: 1). So besides being bilingual or diglossic, perhaps this perception of English was another contributing reason as to why the student participants were mostly observed to use English on-task in the classroom, but not very much in other domains off-task unless they were interacting with a student who did not share their L1.

### **Teacher beliefs and student attitudes regarding L1 use**

As discussed in the review of literature, it has been argued that teacher beliefs are important to the process of teaching as they play a significant role in affecting the process of learning (Borg, 2006: 1). In their study on teacher beliefs, Clark and Peterson (1986: 255) suggest that teachers’ cognitive processes are strongly influenced by their beliefs which in turn “substantially influenced and even determined” teacher behaviour. As such, teacher beliefs are viewed as a central component that influences how teachers interpret information, like theory, and translate it into their classroom practice (Song & Andrews, 2009: 3).

Similarly, student attitudes about language choice are important as they can “offer insights into [their] understanding of the linguistic situation” (Soderlundh, 2013: 95). In other words, student attitudes about the target language are inter-related to what they perceive of their learning context because attitudes have a potentially “profound influence on ... learning behaviour” (Cotterall, 1995: 195 as cited in Chan, 2009: 19). So, students’ view of both the L1 and the TL could have implications in the classroom as well.

## L1 use as a reflection of the students' identity as L2 speakers

The teacher participants believed that because the students' L1 is "pervasive" in the English language classroom (Newton, 2014), the use of L1 was "a natural psychological process in second language development" (Stern, 1992 as cited in Ghorbani, 2011: 1654). As Macaro (2005: 64) suggests, codeswitching "occurs naturally among bilinguals" as it enhances and maintains communication strategies. As Levine (2014: 332) asserts, the L1 "already has a natural place in the language classroom ... serv[ing] many pedagogical, discursive and social functions." So the teacher participants believed that their students' codeswitching between English and their L1 was a genuine reflection of their students' identity as speakers of more than one language.

Moreover, in acknowledging that their students were speakers of other languages, the teacher participants believed that student use of L1 was to be expected as it was "normal activity" (Levine, 2003: 346) in the multilingual English language classroom. The teacher participants believed that their students' decision to choose different languages in negotiating academic/classroom tasks is complex. According to Hornberger (2007 as cited in van der Walt, 2013: 119), code choice should be viewed as existing in a continuum of time and space which traces the extent to which one language is used to negotiate/facilitate tasks in another language. Cook (2001: 412) therefore suggests that "students should be encouraged to see themselves as true L2 users ... in both languages" where the use of both their L1 and English are part of what is described as "identity performance" (Creese & Blackledge, 2013: 5) or their "multilingual competence" (Newton, 2014). More important perhaps is the fact that the students expressed that they could not consciously 'switch off' their L1. Hence, both teacher and student participants conceded that it was therefore quite impossible to eliminate the L1 from the TL classroom due

to the fundamental fact that it is inherently part of the L2 students' identity as bilingual or second language speakers.

### L1 use as a learning resource

Even though it is commonplace in bilingual or multilingual communities, Macaro (2005: 63) notes that "codeswitching is considered ... to be neither an asset nor a valuable addition" to classroom discourse. Yet rather than subscribing to the belief that translation between L1 and L2 has no place in the L2 classroom (Cummins, 2005: 588), the teacher participants in this study generally believed that some form of targeted L1 use can be beneficial to the learning experience. As learning is also a socially "mediated, collaborative process" (Levine, 2011: 24), targeted student L1 use was specifically applicable on occasions where some of their students codeswitched and negotiated meaning in the L1 as a communication strategy "to compensate for lack of linguistic knowledge" (Macaro, 2005: 67). The teacher participants believed that L1 use was sometimes necessary especially at beginning or low levels (Macaro, 2009, as cited in McMillan & Rivers, 2011: 253) as previously discussed, because they believed that in order to "mak[e] the unavailable available, the teacher's role is one of facilitating ... comprehensible input" not just in the target language, a view consistent with Higgs (1982: 8), but also in the L1 as argued by Chavez (2003: 168). Along the same lines, written responses from the student participants suggested that they viewed their L1 as a resourceful tool in learning English. This finding corroborated with how language students used the L1 particularly to "access vocabulary meaning and explain ... grammatical system[s] of the TL" (Rolin-Iansity & Varshney, 2008: 267) as well as to discuss task requirements and negotiate or clarify interpretation of content (Newton, 2014; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003: 763).

This belief was reflected in my observations: although I did not observe any of the teachers using their students' L1, I did however observe student use of L1 to facilitate their comprehension of their tasks and I did not observe any teachers explicitly forbidding this type of targeted L1 use. Similar to Mori's (2004: 229) study which recorded how the teacher and other students tried to maintain an English-only interaction by using verbal strategies, the teachers I observed used recasts or provided alternative possibilities to foster genuine discussion/interaction opportunities in English where possible although codeswitching between English and the L1 was still observed to be used by the students.

In relation to that, Potowski's (2009: 113) research on codeswitching between heritage speakers and second language students strongly suggests that codeswitching, like language learning, is developmental, implying the dominance or mastery of one (or more) language form over another. In the case of my study, the student participants were more fluent and proficient in their first languages than in English. Even after achieving some level of English language competence for pre-university study in English (as opposed to a beginner's level), leading to a heightened use of the TL (Pappamihiel, Nishimata & Mihai, 2008: 388), L1 use was nevertheless observed among most of the international students to complete tasks in the classroom. On-task L1 use among the student participants could be attributed to their written self-reports that it was faster and easier to complete their tasks in their L1, presumably because it was their dominant language.

### L1 use as a coping mechanism

The teacher participants admitted that L1 use or translation was sometimes necessary especially when students lacked knowledge in the TL (Kim & Elder,

2008: 167), and translation “enabled students to accomplish their tasks more successfully” (Turnbull & Arnett, 2002: 206). According to Canagarajah (2004: 124), students in his study were observed to use L1 or translate to “unpack the meaning” of the text while the teacher was reading aloud in front of the class. In fact, two of the teacher participants from my study noted being aware that their students translated in their written work. One teacher claimed to believe that this enhanced their students’ overall understanding of scientific content as they believed having to “produce the work twice,” i.e. first in their L1 and then translating it to English consolidated their knowledge in the content matter. Meanwhile, the other teacher believed that their students’ use of translation fostered meaningful learning in English as it helped consolidate their students’ mastery and fluency of knowledge in the English language. That the use of L1 can enhance performance in the L2 was in fact evidenced in Lameta-Tugufa’s (1994) study of how Samoan students with limited English who completed their task in Samoan before translating it to English outperformed a similar group who completed the task in English only (as cited in Newton, 2014).

Interestingly also, Flavell (1964, as cited in Centeno-Cortes & Jimenez, 2004: 11) observed the use of L1 to negotiate challenging tasks in the L2 in self-talk and described this as *private speech*. Other terminologies include *thinking aloud*, which Centeno-Cortes and Jimenez, (2004: 9) interpret as “a mediating artefact in the resolution of cognitively challenging problem-solving tasks in a second language”. McCafferty (1994b as cited in Centeno-Cortes & Jimenez, 2004: 11) finds that second language learners’ use of private speech in the L1 diminishes with increased proficiency in the TL but this was nevertheless dependent on other factors like task difficulty.

In fact, I observed one student in one of the bridging classes who seemed to use private speech more often (based on my observations, this included consulting the dictionary and writing a lot of notes in their L1), and when discussing this with the teacher, they noted that the student appeared to be the weakest in terms of using English and seemed to rely on their L1 quite often to cope with the demands of the class. Because the teacher knew the student was using the L1 for specific cognitive reasons, rather than perceiving it as an impediment, the teacher viewed crosslingual activities in the classroom like translation and bilingual dictionary as learning “strategies in their own right” (Stern, 1992: 295) and thus they refrained from explicitly ‘banning’ the student from using their L1.

However, higher levels of L1 use may not always be an indicator of low English proficiency as during my observations, I noticed that some of the students tended to complete almost every task in the L1 especially in small groups where there are shared-L1 students – an observation similarly made by Ghorbani (2011: 1655). My observations also revealed that the propensity of L1 use seemed to increase when there were more shared-L1 students, a finding which was consistent with Atkinson (1991: 3) and Soderlundh (2013: 91). Nevertheless, I also noticed that the student respondents’ use of L1 appeared to generally decrease within the higher level classes or within groups who appeared to be more motivated to interact in English; however, like private speech, other types of student L1 use (i.e. peer discussion, note-taking and bilingual dictionary use) were still noted in my observations especially when attempting more difficult concepts or tasks.

In other words, if the L1 was used on-task, or as a tool that could aid students’ comprehension, the teachers reported feeling more tolerant and therefore did not prevent this because holistically, they believed it could play a positive role in

the language learning process. This kind of strategic first language use was also reported by Leloup et al (2013: 50) where students were observed to translate in order to understand their task instructions. In fact, the student respondents' views converged with the teacher participants' beliefs as they reported having positive attitudes about how being able to use their L1 was expedient in helping them understand their teacher, their tasks and their classmates.

### L1 use lowers the affective filter

However, the teachers strongly emphasised that they were cautious in not promoting this 'allowance' of L1 use over optimal English use. One way of addressing this was by teaching in English only, and only when all available avenues using English were exhausted did the teachers report being willing to adopt some form of interventive instruction involving L1 use in their teaching approach to help the student who had difficulty understanding (e.g. asking another student to interpret). This "limited translation" approach (Leloup et. al. 2013: 49) was adopted because they believed it helped the language learning process by reducing levels of stress and anxiety at not being able to understand instructions in English.

In point of fact, the teachers shared Yoshida's (2013: 936) view that by alleviating their students' language learning anxiety, the overall classroom atmosphere was more conducive to learning. The teacher participants noted that this was especially true when delivering a challenging concept, or for lower proficiency students, an observation similarly made by Li (2014: 37) who reported that he used both English and Mandarin when teaching abstract or complex ideas because he believed it was less threatening for his lower proficiency students as, based on their feedback, his L1 use helped them "to avoid losing face ... [and] allay their fears and anxiety."

Canagarajah (1997: 174) coined the term “safe house” to initially describe a non-threatening place for L1 use in instances where the L1 was seen as “behaviours that are not authorised or rewarded by teachers” (Canagarajah, 2004: 121). So when teachers provided “safe spaces for students to adopt their multilingual repertoire for learning purposes” (Creese & Blackledge, 2010 as cited in Canagarajah, 2011: 8), this strongly reflects what Polio and Duff (1994, as cited in Kim & Elder, 2008: 168) describe as their teacher participants’ awareness of how their decision of not preventing on-task or judicious student L1 use can impact on the conduciveness of the TL learning environment.

A teacher’s own learning experience could be a powerful influence on their beliefs and teaching practice (McMillan & Turnbull, 2009: 27; Phipps & Borg, 2009: 381). This is because beliefs are often the product of particular critical episodes or events which exert “subjective power, authority and legitimacy” on events later in time (Nespor, 1987: 320). Beliefs can be powerful and, in particular, resistant to change or influence including that of professional training or teacher education which “ignore ... teachers’ prior beliefs” (Borg, 2003: 81). In the case of this study, despite their ESOL training which included communicative language teaching methodologies that appear to “have no necessary relationship with the L1” (Cook, 2001: 404) because “the learner’s L1 [was viewed] as counterproductive to the learning process” (McMillan & Rivers, 2011: 253), the teacher participants’ own past second language learning experiences has led to their firm belief that targeted L1 use can enhance their students’ learning experience. Some of the teachers had learnt foreign languages in an exclusive TL classroom and found this experience highly stressful as their language teacher did not teach in English or did not use English to explain difficult words or concepts from the TL and, as such, they had felt demotivated and discouraged from pursuing the TL to a higher level in the classroom. Therefore

the teacher participants wanted to avoid for their students the kind of helplessness and frustration they had experienced, and saw tolerance of L1 speech and the use of modern technology which they had not had the advantage of (such as bilingual dictionaries) as ways of preventing that.

Therefore, despite their belief that English should be the language of instruction the teacher participants believed that L1 use could be a potential resource if used strategically. They believed that through what Gindis (1999 as cited in Berry, 2006: 494) termed as "mediation of learning," the students' knowledge in the L1 acted as an interface or scaffold in learning English as a second language. As Turnbull and Dailey O'Cain (2009: 183) assert, judicious or optimal first language use contributes to both linguistic and identity development in the target language:

Optimal first language use in communicative and immersion second and foreign language classrooms recognises the benefits of the learner's first language as a cognitive and meta-cognitive tool, as a strategic organiser and as a scaffold for language development. In addition, the first language helps learners navigate a bilingual identity and thereby learn to function as a bilingual... Neither the classroom teacher nor the second or foreign language learner becomes so dependent on the first language that neither can function without the first language. Optimal codeswitching practices will ultimately lead to enhanced language learning and the development of bilingual communicative practices.

## **Summary**

Language learning is a "meaning-making activity that takes place in a complex network of complex systems ... interwoven amongst ... physical, social and

symbolic worlds" (van Lier, 2004: 53). On the one hand, the situated nature of the learning environment, i.e. a pre-university setting within New Zealand, played a significant determinant on the teacher participants' belief that English should be the language of instruction and the main or preferred language of choice in the classroom as much as possible because they believed this helped to prepare their students to meet the language demands for their eventual university study in New Zealand. On the other hand, the responses generated from this research indicated that the teacher participants believed that strategic L1 use was potentially beneficial to the learning experience and as such did not strictly enforce the existing but informal "English only" policy at the Centre. This was executed by maintaining English as the language of instruction while allowing students selective access to their L1. This was mainly due to the desire to promote an environment conducive to learning through meaningful communicative practices; however, the awareness of the students' identities as bilingual or multilingual speakers of languages was also a contributing factor to not implementing a strictly monolingual English-only approach.

# Conclusion

The concluding chapter begins with an overall summary of the background of teacher beliefs about L1 use in an English language classroom. This leads into a brief summary of my research objectives and design, followed by a summarised response of my findings with reference to my research questions. This chapter ends with recommendations for potential further research and implications for possible guidelines on future classroom practice.

### **The implications of multiculturalism on the L1-L2 debate**

The popularity of English as an international language of knowledge, education and progress (Evans & Morrison, 2011: 148) has meant that English has increasingly become a tool of enhancing future employment prospects (Warschauer, 2000: 518) for many especially from the outer and expanding circles. However, with the perceived prestige associated with having linguistic capital (by being a speaker of English) or having a Western university degree comes the valorisation that the language is best learnt from a native speaker. This, as discussed in Chapter Two, stemmed mainly from the view that a monolingual approach is 'best practice' which promotes the assumption that the L1 has no place or value in second language learning. In fact, to this day the monolingual approach is still taken for granted as the preferred (both officially and non-officially) policy in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) (Hall & Cook, 2012: 271; Kumaravadivelu, 2003 & Macaro, 2001 as cited in McMillan & Rivers, 2011: 251).

Being one of the six Western countries in the inner circle, university courses in New Zealand are strategically and attractively marketed as 'international' to entice foreign students to a burgeoning and lucrative industry. Indeed, so lucrative is the tertiary education industry that it has become a service industry generating "large export earnings" (Smith & Rae, 2006: 27) of approximately NZD2.3 million in 2013, which is just under 90% of the total gross output of international education in New Zealand (Infometrics, 2013: 2). ESOL and EAP classrooms in such environments are most often multilingual (Cook, 1992 as cited in Goh & Hashim, 2006: 30) and arguably, such multilingual environments justify the use of English as the lingua franca (Csizer & Contra, 2012: 2; Firth, 1996: 240) especially as many language teachers may not share all their students' L1 (Cole, 1998).

Thus in order to avoid disadvantaging any particular L1 group, teachers avoided using any of the students' L1 in a multilingual environment and maintained English as the language of instruction. Yet it is quite undeniable that student use of L1 remains a core feature of L2 or TL classrooms (Soderlundh, 2013: 90) and in fact, L1 use has been argued to be beneficial to the L2 /TL learning process cognitively and affectively (Behan & Turnbull, 1997: 41; Swain & Lapkin, 2000: 252). As part of the maintenance of speaker identity in multilingual classrooms, code-choice and codeswitching has become "increasingly de-stigmatised" and perceived as normal behaviour (Hall & Cook, 2012: 278) while the learners are perceived as "multiple language users" (Belz, 2002: 77). From this perspective, student L1 use and translation in the classroom is increasingly recognised as contributory to the complex and diverse L2 learning process (Hall & Cook, 2012: 278). However what do English language or EAP teachers and content lecturers, as well as students, perceive about L1 use in an environment where English is the expected language of choice for university preparation?

## **Research objectives**

The primary aim of this study was to explore teacher beliefs about first language use in a tertiary New Zealand context. Teacher beliefs are instrumental as they are “personalised and context-sensitive” (Borg, 2003: 81). In the case of language teaching and learning beliefs, language teaching practices are influenced by beliefs language teachers hold about L1 use in L2/TL learning which are affected by personal convictions, pedagogical training, classroom experience or language policies (Levine, 2003: 343). Because these beliefs affect teaching practice, they in turn affect the learning experience and how students perform (Polio & Duff, 1994: 313). To this end, I decided to pursue a case study of the teachers and students involved in General English and pre-university courses. Although a small study, this provided a contextualised view of beliefs about L1 use in a pre-university setting in New Zealand which would lead to a more informed view about the L1-L2 debate in a target language environment context.

## **Research questions and design**

In order to achieve my objective of exploring teacher beliefs about L1 use in the English language classroom, the following research questions were constructed:

1. What do English language teachers believe about first language use while teaching the second language (i.e. English) in a university bridging context?
2. What are the factors influencing these beliefs?
3. How do ESOL and university bridging students perceive the use of first languages in the English medium classroom?
4. How are these beliefs enacted in the classroom?

My research design consisted of three instruments, mainly to achieve richness as well as triangulation of data. The first instrument was a focus group (and one face-to-face interview) designed to elicit teacher responses through the use of semi-structured questions. This design allowed me the advantage of picking up on candid nuances through “structured eavesdropping” (Powney, 1988 as cited in Wilkinson, 2004:181) by observing the teacher participants interact with each other (Litosseliti, 2003: 16; Edley & Litosseliti, 2010: 158) without having to prime or direct the participants, which could yield potentially biased results.

The second instrument was a written questionnaire administered to student participants in the General English and university bridging courses. The questionnaire was designed to elicit their attitudes about L1 use in the English language/medium classroom to explore whether their attitudes aligned with or diverged from teacher beliefs regarding L1 use within the context of English language learning. Finally, as both the focus group and written questionnaires were self-reported accounts, the third instrument – classroom observations – allowed me the opportunity to make direct observations of what was realistically happening in the classroom (Dornyei, 2007:178). A summarised account of my results in reference to each of the research questions is presented below.

### **Research question 1**

**What do English language teachers believe about first language use while teaching the second language (i.e. English) in a university bridging context?**

On the surface, all the teacher participants agreed that English should be the primary language of choice for both teachers and students in their classrooms as much as possible mainly due to the fact that:

1. the classrooms were multilingual,

2. the courses were offered in an English-speaking environment in New Zealand and
3. the General English students were in preparation for entry into their university bridging courses where English is the language of instruction.

There was considerably more support for L1 use within the General English course. Although there was an informal English-only policy at the Centre where the General English course was conducted, the General English teacher participants did not blindly adhere to the policy. If they shared their students' L1 they would consider using it selectively to "expedite things" if necessary. The teacher participants believed that the L1 played a key role in their classrooms because:

1. it was an inherent characteristic of a second language/multilingual classroom and
2. it was used by their students for learning purposes besides socialising.

However, within the university bridging courses which had native and near-native students, there appeared to be a higher expectation of English use although L1 use was still recognised as a useful tool. Therefore, in order to maintain a balance between English and other languages in this environment, the teacher participants from both courses maintained English as the medium of instruction and encouraged as much English participation as possible but 'allowed' strategic L1 use among their students to enhance their comprehension and performance in English while on task.

## **Research question 2**

### **What are the factors influencing these beliefs?**

Overall, the teacher participants believed that judicious or targeted L1 use can offer potential benefits to their students' English language learning experience. This belief was mainly influenced by two overlapping reasons:

1. the teachers' past language learning experiences (Borg, 2003: 86), where translating between the L1 and the TL was 'automatic' and 'impossible to eliminate' especially at beginning or lower levels and
2. the teachers' recognition of the bilingual nature of their students who had two languages (or more) at their disposal albeit at different levels of proficiency (Chavez, 2003: 163).

However I felt that the university bridging teachers had a stronger belief that the level of English use should be considerably higher due to:

1. the design of the bridging course specifically to prepare the students for the academic demands (both in terms of language and content) of university study and
2. the presence of native and near-native English speaking students in two of the university bridging courses.

## **Research question 3**

### **How do ESOL and university bridging students perceive the use of first languages in the English medium classroom?**

Overall, like the teacher participants, this study found that the student participants – both international and New Zealander students – generally had positive views about L1 use in their English medium classrooms. In terms of L1 use, almost all student participants felt that it

1. was an inherent part of their identity as second language learners,

2. was potentially beneficial especially in terms of cognition as it helped promote and enhance comprehension and aided negotiating of meaning in English,
3. was a strategy "to make a difficult task more manageable" (Swain & Lapkin, 2000 as cited in Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003: 760),
4. helped maintain a collaborative learning environment that was conducive to ensuring task completion, and
5. helped alleviate language learning anxieties.

On the other hand, L1 was also observed to be used outside task-related activities i.e. for personal or social reasons. However, some of the student participants' written responses also suggested that they seemed to be aware of the potential detriment of an overreliance of L1 use on their English skills.

Nevertheless, like the teacher participants, most of the students expressed the importance of having good English language skills for their eventual university studies. Due to the nature of the courses, almost all students (including all New Zealanders) believed that:

1. the language of instruction should be in English at all times but
2. the international students should be 'allowed' to use their L1 in the classroom especially if it helped enhanced their English language skills.

Finally, many of the international student participants perceived that relying on too much L1 may potentially impede their English progress. This suggests that these students may be aware of the necessity of performing in English in order to participate successfully in a New Zealand university where English is the medium of instruction.

## **Research question 4**

### **4. How are these beliefs enacted in the classroom?**

This was perhaps the most interesting yet pertinent aspect of my study. I found tensions and complexities regarding the question of L1 use consistently emerging throughout my research and these were quite frankly not easily reconciled because of the fact that the factors leading up to these complexities were out of the teachers' control and were sometimes quite emotionally charged as they intertwined with the teachers' own teaching convictions and workplace policy and/or demands.

Almost all of the student participants reported believing that the best approach to learning English was to learn it in English. However they also viewed strategic student L1 use as valuable as both a cognitive and an affective tool. In other words, even though it was observed to be used to compensate for lack of linguistic knowledge in the classroom in my study, codeswitching and/or L1 use was viewed by both teacher and student participants as being a strategic communicative resource (Cheng, 2013: 1277) while also creating a safe-space for learners to "contribute more to a lesson and engage more critically with the curriculum" (Arthur, 1996 as cited in Hall & Cook, 2012: 279).

Yet, equally significant was how my teacher participants found L1 use or codeswitching to be potentially contentious in the classroom (Macaro, 2005: 63) when:

1. a student had lower-than-expected proficiency to be in that particular class,
2. there was a majority or dominant nationality group and
3. a student was neither interested nor motivated, or was unwilling to engage or participate.

These three problems led to what the teacher participants believed to be increased or unnecessary L1 use. As discussed earlier, the teacher participants believed that it was important that opportunities to maximise English use were available due to the fact that their courses were designed to prepare students to meet the demands of academic university study in New Zealand. This was attempted by encouraging their students to complete their tasks in English and with the teacher teaching in English only. However in classroom situations it was sometimes challenging to push for more English use because the teachers also recognised that:

1. student L1 use was an inherent part of a second language student's identity,
2. judicious student L1 use was cognitively and affectively important as a learning resource
3. student L1 use was also a 'defensive mechanism' to avoid embarrassment or exposure of a lack of English skills

Yet due to pressure to complete course content within a limited time frame as well as achieve higher completion rates, the teacher participants reported that it was therefore sometimes quite difficult to resolve these bigger tensions, especially if it was what the teachers felt was the students' own choice to be unwilling to use English. So although the teachers and students in this study believed that L1 use played instrumental roles in enhancing the English language learning process, they agreed that, like Cook (2001: 418), rather than prohibiting it completely, L1 should be used selectively as this was an English-speaking university environment.

## **Limitations and recommendations for further research**

Several limitations emerged from this study and if the opportunity presents itself, further investigation should be conducted to obtain a more in-depth interpretation and understanding of the subject. The first limitation was the fact that only one content teacher participated in this study. The next limitation was the fact that the teacher participants were all New Zealanders. Finally, only a small number of New Zealand students volunteered to participate in this study while all international students volunteered.

This study set out to explore teacher beliefs about L1 use in a target environment classroom. However, only one content lecturer participated and, like the English language teacher participants, they believed that the students' L1 was inherent – and a useful resource – in the multilingual classroom. However would this be a similar view shared by other university lecturers who have not been trained as second language teachers, and who would presumably expect their students to be linguistically and academically equipped at university level and therefore be more concerned at their students' ability to master content? As I was unable to ascertain this aspect for this study, this could be the subject of further investigation.

Another limitation which emerged unintentionally was the fact that all the teacher participants happened to be New Zealanders. Although some of them spoke a second language (among them, some Asian and some European), some were monolingual English speakers; in other words, most of them did not share most of the students' L1 as the cohorts at the Centre were predominantly of Middle Eastern or Chinese ethnicities. As there were language teachers and content teachers of other nationalities at the Centre, it would be interesting to see whether they profess different or similar beliefs to the teacher participants from this study.

A third limitation was the fact that not all but only a small number of New Zealand students volunteered to participate in the study. It would be interesting for further research on the said subject to involve a more significant cohort of New Zealand students who were students in the pre-university courses given that the focus of this research was on multilingual classrooms, and by definition that should include the New Zealand students as well. To do so would strengthen data generated from the students' perspective and reinforce the triangulation of the overall study.

### **Implications from theory to practice**

So to what extent should the 'English-only' policy manifest itself in the classroom? Despite visual reminders throughout the Centre, the classrooms are nevertheless multilingual social spaces (Levine, 2014: 334). Although Levine (2014: 332) suggests that code choice is and can be co-constructed positively and negotiated effectively by both students and teachers in such spaces, the professional teaching staff sometimes found it challenging to find where the boundaries of L1 use should be in the classroom.

I would suggest that there be more open discussions for all teaching staff regarding L1 vs English use by advocating or making overt the value of an English speaking environment (as opposed to English-only). This way, the L1 is still acknowledged as being inherently part of the English classroom, where its potential can be appreciated alongside English use, and teachers would feel less conflicted about 'allowing' L1 use both in and outside the classroom.

My other recommendation would be for the Centre itself. Indeed, studying in an English-speaking environment like New Zealand seems to imply an expectation

of an English-only environment. This could be achieved if the students were all expert or near-native users of English; in reality however, the Centre hosts international students who speak other languages besides English as their L1 and many of the students were enrolled in the General English course because they did not meet the minimum English language proficiency requirement for entry into either university or university bridging courses. This was a clear indication of the fact that the students had a lower level of English proficiency with varying degrees of language learning and pastoral needs. More important perhaps was that the students were users of multiple languages and therefore, the classroom cannot but reflect this multilingual aspect in reality. As such, the Centre should reconsider its informal English-only policy. This may mean rewording the existing English-only labels to perhaps 'Speak English' or 'English zone' to reflect domains or areas where more English use is encouraged without compromising the position or role of the L1 in a multilingual context, or even removing these labels altogether.

My final recommendation is to both the international students and the university itself. I would suggest that perhaps international students be made more explicitly aware of the English and academic demands expected of them at university level before they begin their course. This is important as it can help avoid dissatisfaction upon mismatched expectations (cultural, linguistic and academic) and/or failure due lack of skills. However, if they were better equipped, they would experience higher chances of success which could enhance their motivation to use English – even in demanding tasks. Perhaps an effective strategy to convince even the most reluctant student to use English (despite their teachers' urging) would be invite past students who are already enrolled in the university to share their own experiences. The student participants in Skyrme's (2008) study wanted to convey to English language centres to insist on more English language use in the classroom and provide a

realistic notion of the "harrowing challenges" of university life. This could be achieved by showing the students the experiences of "exposure to real lectures, being more demanding in requiring homework to be done, working in topics that related to university (economics, for example, rather than "fairy tales," Saul, 4) ... and insisting on the use of English in class (p. 263). Nevertheless, in such multilingual spaces, English language teachers must recognise that the L1 is an invaluable cognitive and affective tool.

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## Appendix A

### ***Interactions in the international English classroom: A case study***

#### INFORMATION SHEET FOR TEACHERS

##### **Focus Groups**

###### ***Researcher's Introduction***

My name is Cindy Tan and I am conducting this research project in fulfillment of my Master of Arts thesis in Second Language Teaching. This research is not related to my position as an English Language Teacher held at Massey University. This research project is a case study of teacher and student beliefs on language use in the international English classrooms.

###### ***Project Summary***

The global concept of 'international curriculum' and ethos of 'internationalism' at Massey University encourages the promotion of awareness of different cultures and nationalities within the international classroom. Classrooms at tertiary or university level, especially in English language and university bridging courses, are mainly delivered in the English language to students of multinational and multilingual backgrounds. At PaCE, Massey University, our international classrooms showcase students (and teachers) who are bona fide users of other languages even though English is both the target language and lingua franca. This brings up issues of language use within the process of learning, and how, within our English-medium courses at PaCE, the use of the first language of the international students might be viewed by both the students and teachers. In light of this, PaCE would be an excellent research environment for this project aims to explore a broad range of study contexts regarding beliefs of language use in the international English classroom at pre-university level.

###### ***An invitation to participate in the research***

I would like to formally invite you to participate in my research project by attending a focus group meeting. Your assistance in the focus group discussion will be much appreciated and your participation will be highly valuable to this research project. You have been invited to participate because you are English language teachers from the Intensive English Language Studies (IELS), Direct Entry English Programme (DEEP Advanced) and/or Foundation Studies courses. You also have experience teaching students in an international classroom context.

Should you decide to participate, can I ask that you sign a consent form indicating that you have been informed and that you understand the details of the study. Can I also ask that you sign a Confidentiality Agreement to ensure that the identities of the participants will remain confidential within the group and that no dissemination of any information will lead to the identification of any participant in the group. I will make every practical effort to ensure that your opinions and responses in the study will be treated as objectively as possible without bias or prejudice.

Hey Joung has kindly consented to circulate this information sheet on my behalf to eligible teachers from all of the 3 courses mentioned above. You have some time to consider whether you would like to participate or not. To indicate willingness to participate, can I ask that you sign the accompanying consent form and confidentiality agreement, and return it to Hey Joung by **2p.m. on Thursday November 28, 2013** by email or in person (please use the envelope provided). I will then personally collect the signed consent forms and confidentiality agreements from Hey Joung.

I will then get in touch with you by email and arrange suitable times for the focus group meeting at a time and place agreeable to all participants, in an afternoon after your teaching times. The focus group meeting, which

will take about 45 minutes to an hour, will be audio recorded, transcribed and analysed by myself for my study. Should you feel that you still have pertinent comments to add to the discussion after the focus group meeting has concluded, you may get in touch with me to either arrange a point of contact in person, or email me your comments. With your permission I would like to audio-record this meeting but you may decline permission if you wish.

I am also hoping to observe language use in one session of your classes. After the conclusion of the focus group meeting, I will ask for your permission to observe student interactions in your class at a later stage. Once again, participation is entirely voluntary and joining a focus group does not commit you to continuing. Permission of students will be also sought before observations can proceed. Classroom observations will take place after the focus group, at a mutually convenient time. Following the observations, I would like to conduct an audio-recorded informal follow-up discussion with the teacher involved to explore further our interpretations of the interactions.

### ***Participant's Rights***

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question during the focus group;
- choose to, if you wish, provide any further supplementary response to me either in person or email after the focus group meeting has ended;
- ask for the voice recorder to be turned off at any point of the focus group meeting;
- withdraw from the study before the start of the focus group;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- request for a summary of the project findings at least 6 months after data collection is concluded.

### **Project Contacts**

Please do not hesitate to contact me (**email:** [c.s.w.tan@massey.ac.nz](mailto:c.s.w.tan@massey.ac.nz)) should you have any questions about this research project, or any of my supervisors if you prefer:

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#### **Dr. Ute Walker**

*Senior Lecturer in Linguistics/Applied Linguistics and German (School of Humanities)*

*Director, Teaching and Learning (College of Humanities & Social Sciences)*

**Telephone:** +64.6.350.4231 x 81175 **Email:** [u.walker@massey.ac.nz](mailto:u.walker@massey.ac.nz)

Thank you for your time.

Best wishes, and looking forward to working with you,

*Cindy Tan*

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 13/72. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, please contact Dr. Nathan Matthews, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 80877, email [humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz).

***Interactions in the international English classroom:  
A case study***

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM – TEACHING STAFF**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

*(Please indicate)* I agree/do not agree to the meeting being sound recorded.

*(Please indicate)* I wish/do not wish to receive a summary of the findings.

I agree to be contacted by the researcher about the details of the meeting(s) for this study only.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

.....

**Full Name (please print)**

.....

**Email (please print)**

.....

***Interactions in the international English classroom:  
A case study***

**CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT  
Focus Groups**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I ..... (Full Name - printed)  
agree not to disclose anything discussed in the Focus Group that could identify particular ideas to particular focus group participants concerning the project ***Interactions in the international English classroom.***

**Signature:**

.....

**Date:**

.....

## Appendix D

### **Draft focus group questions/prompts**

#### ***Interactions in the international English classroom: A case study***

Warmer: I am going to pose a language learning myth to you. What are your views?

#### **Language learning myths**

- Some people believe that if a child can learn their first language without any other language, then similarly, we can learn a second language without the first language.
- Some believe that learning a second language via the first language can impede rather than enhance the learning process.
- Some people believe that one of the best ways to learn a second language is to spend more time in the second language environment.

#### **1. Brainstorm/Ice breaker**

“What is classroom interaction?” (Printed)

Participants to brainstorm some ideas about the question.

(Sticky notes provided for the participants to write their answers and these can be displayed on the board for discussion. Participants are invited to expand on their answers.)

#### **2. Scenarios – General for both ESOL & Content groups**

*There are 4 main sections: Classroom management, Classroom discipline, Understanding instructions and Teaching. The researcher will NOT be asking all the scenarios in the discussion; perhaps only one from each of the 4 sections if the discussion has not developed further enough and only present more scenarios in the event if the discussion is not developing much. There is a selection of scenarios in each section – these are there to act as further prompts in the event that the responses are limited.*

#### **Classroom Management**

1. This is a new class and you want to explain to them some general policies or expectations at university level with regards to their academic work. How would you explain to your students about plagiarism?

*Prompt: Would you do it differently if you shared the student’s first language?*

2. You have one particular student who appears to have plagiarised an essay despite the fact that you have explicitly and repeatedly explained that this is not an unacceptable practice. Their final draft reads significantly differently from their first draft (which you have marked and given comments on). The

student claims they were helped by a friend – you don't doubt the student's effort to produce the final draft, but you suspect they may not fully comprehend what entails 'plagiarism'. How would you respond?

3. You are teaching and suddenly you realise one of your students is not participating as usual but is quietly sobbing. You improvise and give a task to the class to do, and quietly take this particular student to one side. You want to find out what is going on. How would you go about achieving this?

*Prompt: Would you do it differently if you shared the student's first language?*

4. You have given the students a task to work in small groups. You notice that one group is operating in their first language, but they appear to be on task. What would you do?

### **Classroom Discipline**

5. You have some students who are constantly chatting in their first language while you are teaching at the front and despite repeated address in English they do not take any notice of your warnings. How would you manage the situation?

*Prompt: Would you do it differently if you shared the student's first language?*

6. Some of your students failed to hand in assignments (worth a significant percentage) despite numerous attempts on your part to remind them. This is also not the first time they have failed to turn in work. You have decided to take some disciplinary action. How would you go about executing this?

### **Understanding Instructions**

7. You have one particular student who is very weak in comprehending instructions (both written and spoken). This assignment is an important one. You are reviewing their draft before the end of class on a Friday afternoon and realise that they have completely misunderstood the brief and you don't have much time left (you have another class arriving in 10 minutes). What would you do to advise them?

*Prompt: Would you do it differently if you shared the student's first language?*

*Further prompts:*

- *would you allow dictionary use?*
- *would you allow a fellow student to interpret/translate?*
- *would you allow your student to make notes on the margin in their L1?*
- *What are, if any, the language policies in place in the classroom?*

## **Focus Group 1 (English language teachers)**

Participants are anticipated to be qualified ESOL and/or EAP teachers.

### **Teaching**

#### **Functional language**

1. You have a classroom of international students from one country where English is not the main language, e.g. Japan. What strategies would you use to teach e.g. situational English/functional English e.g. dining out?

*Would you do it differently if you shared the student's first language?*

*Would you have done it differently for lower level and higher level students?*

### **Grammar**

2. Some of your students appear to struggle to understand the use of, for example,

- The past simple / verb conjugation – irregular/regular
- The present perfect (e.g. "Have you tried bungee jumping before?")

What strategies would you use to help your students understand the meaning and function behind these grammatical concepts?

### **Vocabulary**

3. Your students seem to have difficulty understanding the difference between certain words, e.g. come – go; see – watch; listen – hear. How would you attempt to explain the differences?

*Would you do it any differently if the student approached you in person (e.g. after class) or if you had to explain it to the whole homogenous (e.g. Japanese or Chinese) class?*

*Further prompts:*

- *would you allow dictionary use?*
- *would you allow a fellow student to interpret/translate?*
- *would you allow your student to make notes on the margin in their L1?*

## **Focus Group 2 (Academic/Content lecturers)**

Participants are academic/content teachers (e.g. Introduction to Advanced Maths or Introduction to Biology.)

### **Teaching**

1. Your students seem to have difficulty grasping a particularly abstract or difficult concept in your field. How would you facilitate in this situation?

*Would you do it differently if you shared the student's first language?*

2. One day, one of your (Middle Eastern) students seems to have misunderstood a task and has difficulty getting back on track. Their (Middle Eastern) classmates attempt to help, but in Arabic. How would you facilitate?

*Would you do it differently if you shared the student's first language?*

*Further prompts (if these questions were not addressed/answered during the scenarios):*

- *would you allow dictionary use?*
- *would you allow a fellow student to interpret/translate?*
- *would you allow your student to make notes on the margin in their L1?*

#### **4. Closing (to be used for both English teachers & content lecturers)**

The researcher will administer this question on a piece of paper to the group. They will be given 15 minutes to brainstorm and discuss this amongst themselves. Teachers invited to share their responses at the end of 15 minutes.

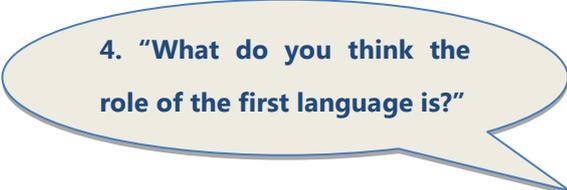
- 1. “What are, if any, the language policies in place in the classroom?” In the institution? How do these inform your teaching practice?**

The researcher will administer Questions 2 & 3 below on paper to participants individually. The rationale for the individual approach is to avoid any potential discomfort in having to answer question 1 in the presence of others who might have had some experience learning another language.

- 2. Did you learn a second language?**

- 3. What are some of the strategies you employed to learn the language?**

Finally, participants will be given 10 minutes to comment on this statement amongst themselves. Feedback will be collected at the end of 10 minutes.



**4. “What do you think the role of the first language is?”**

## Appendix E

### Revised core focus group discussion questions

1. Brainstorm: Tell me about your views and observations of interactions in your classrooms.
2. I would like to know your views on these language learning myths:
  - a. Some people believe that if we learn our first language without any knowledge of a prior language as children, we could therefore learn a second language without reliance on our first language
  - b. Some people believe that learning a second language using the first language could impede rather than enhance the learning process
  - c. Some people believe that one of the best ways to learn a second language is to spend more time in the second language environment
3. I would like to know more about your views on the role of first language use in the context of learning English (i.e. ESOL & university bridging programmes)  
Prompts: What are your views about 'the first language'?
4. Tell me more about your views on the use of bilingual dictionaries and translators in your English language classroom.
5. Please share with me your views on any language policies in place in your English language classrooms. How do these inform your teaching practice?

## Appendix F

### *Interactions in the international English classroom: A case study* Student questionnaire

**Part 1: Please choose Yes or No for the following statements. If you choose 'It Depends', please explain.**

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>It depends</i>
1. I believe the best way to learn English is to learn it in an English classroom.	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	
2. I believe the best way to learn English is by going to an English speaking country.	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	
3. I believe if I use my first language to learn English, my English will not improve much.	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	
4. I believe if I use more English, my overall English will improve more.	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	
5. I believe using a bilingual dictionary (a dictionary which translates words between English and my first language) is helpful for me to learn English.	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	
6. I believe being able to discuss an activity in my first language with my friend is a good strategy for me to learn English.	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	
7. I believe writing notes in my first language helps me learn English better.	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	
8. I believe using our first language while we learn a second language is OK.	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	

**Part 2: Choose the best answer for each statement (1-Strongly Disagree – 5 Strongly Agree).**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I think it is OK when teachers use the students' first language to help them teach English.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I think it is OK when teachers use the students' first language to explain something the students don't understand in English.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I think it is OK when teachers allow students to use their first language in the English classroom to help each other.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I think it is OK when teachers use the students' first language to give advice or to warn students.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I think the teacher should teach in English all the time.	1	2	3	4	5

**Part 3: Please choose your answers for these questions.**

1. Please choose many as you like and order from 1-most important etc.

When I am in my English classroom, I translate to and from my first language ...

- To understand my teacher.
- To understand my classmates.
- To learn and study new vocabulary & grammar.
- To understand my teacher's instructions for class activities.
- To discuss with my friends about our class question/activity.
- To chit-chat with my friends.
- Because I don't want my teacher to understand what I am talking about with my friend.
- Because I feel more comfortable talking in my first language.
- Because I don't feel confident talking in English or using English.
- Because it is faster if I use my first language.
- Because it is easier if I use my first language.
- Others (Please give an example) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Please ORDER your answers (1 – most often; 4- least often)

When I learn English, I ...

- Use a bilingual dictionary.
- Translate into my first language.
- Write meanings in my first language.
- Other (Please give an example) \_\_\_\_\_

3. When I translate, I think it helps me learn English ... (choose ONE answer).

- Very much.
  - Most of the time.
  - Sometimes.
  - Rarely.
  - Never.
- Because ... (can you tell me why?) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Please ORDER your answers (1 – most often; 5- least often)

When I translate, I ...

- Use a bilingual dictionary.
- Think in my head in my first language.
- Write notes & meanings in my first language.
- Ask a friend to translate/interpret for me
- Others \_\_\_\_\_

5. When I first started learning English, I ... used my bilingual dictionary to learn new words (choose ONE answer).

- Always.
  - Most of the time.
  - Sometimes.
  - Rarely.
  - Never.
- Because ... (can you tell me why?) \_\_\_\_\_

6. Now, I think I ... use my bilingual dictionary to learn new words (choose ONE answer).

- Always.
- Most of the time.
- Sometimes.
- Rarely.
- Never.

*Because (can you tell me why?)* \_\_\_\_\_

7. When my teacher or friends talk to me in my English class, I still have to think about the answer in my first language and translate it to English (choose ONE answer).

- Always.
- Most of the time.
- Sometimes.
- Rarely.
- Never.

8. I use my first language in my English classroom ... (choose ONE answer).

- Always.
- Most of the time.
- Sometimes.
- Rarely.
- Never.

**Part 4: Please complete the following statements.**

1. I think using my first language can be helpful to me in the English classroom because ...
2. I use my first language in my English classroom to ...
3. I use English in my English classroom to ...
4. Some people believe that you can learn English without translating to and from their first language. What do you think?
5. How long have you been studying English (choose one answer)  <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 12 months <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 years <input type="checkbox"/> 2-5 years <input type="checkbox"/> 5-10 years <input type="checkbox"/> More than 10 years
6. What is your highest IELTS score?  <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 3.0 <input type="checkbox"/> 3.5-4.5 <input type="checkbox"/> 5.0-6.0 <input type="checkbox"/> 6.5-7.5 <input type="checkbox"/> 8.0-9.0
7. Why are you studying English in New Zealand?
8. Which course are you currently studying?  <input type="checkbox"/> Foundation Studies <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced DEEP <input type="checkbox"/> IELTS

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.  
Please remember to bring this back to class tomorrow.

## Appendix G

### **Follow up questions (Focus group 1)**

1. I am interested to know whether you have different views on the extent of allowing L1 use (both in terms of student-student and teacher-student interaction) in a low level group (e.g. beginners or introductory) with very limited English in an English speaking context (i.e. learning/studying in an English language environment in NZ) to a higher level group
2. I would like to know more about your views or beliefs on whether, as an English language teacher, if you would use a shared L1 with your students or not (i.e. if you share an L1 with your students would you use it with them?)
3. I am interested to know what has influenced or affected this belief (from Question 2)

### **Follow up questions (Focus group 2)**

1. What are your views on your students using translators (not dictionaries) in the classroom?
2. Are there any other reasons you can think of why your students use their first language in your classroom besides trying to learn a new vocab, to explain, or chit chat?

***Interactions in the international English classroom:  
A case study***

INFORMATION SHEET FOR TEACHERS

**Classroom observations & informal follow-up discussions**

***Researcher's Introduction***

My name is Cindy Tan and I am conducting this research project in fulfilment of my Master of Arts thesis in Second Language Teaching. This research project is not related to my position as English Language Teacher at Massey University. This research project is a case study of teacher and student beliefs on language use in the international English classrooms.

***Project Summary***

The global concept of 'international curriculum' and ethos of 'internationalism' at Massey University encourages the promotion of awareness of different cultures and nationalities within the international classroom. Classrooms at tertiary or university level, especially in English language and university bridging courses are mainly delivered in the English language to students of multinational and multilingual backgrounds. At PaCE, Massey University, our international classrooms showcase students (and teachers) who are bona fide users of other languages even though English is both the target language and lingua franca. This brings up issues of language use within the process of learning, and how, within our English-medium courses at PaCE, the use of the first language of the international students might be viewed by both the students and teachers. In light of this, PaCE would be an excellent research environment for this project aims to explore a broad range of study contexts regarding beliefs of language use in the international English classroom at pre-university level.

***An invitation to participate in the research***

I would like to formally invite you to participate in my research project by allowing me to

1. observe one session of your class. The objective is for me to be able to observe interactions involving language choice in your class; I wish to stress that I am not interested in observing your teaching practice or content, and
2. have an informal follow-up discussion with you after the observation to ensure that I have not misinterpreted the observations I noted on my observation sheet. With your permission, I would like to audio-record this discussion.

Your assistance in this study will be much appreciated and your participation will be highly valuable to this research project. To indicate willingness to participate, can I ask that you sign the accompanying consent form and return it to Hey Joung by **May 9, 2014** by email or in person, if you prefer. I will personally collect the signed consent forms from Hey Joung.

I will then get in touch with you by email and arrange suitable times for me to come and observe one hour of your class. The informal follow-up discussion afterwards, at your time of convenience, should not take more than 10 minutes – this consultation is to ensure that I do not misinterpret any interactions I have noted on my notes. I will make every practical effort to ensure that your opinions and responses in the study will be treated as objectively as possible without bias or prejudice. Pseudonyms will be used in any reports, publications or presentations to protect your identity and I will make every

effort to ensure that no information will be disseminated which would enable the identification of participants.

After you have indicated your permission, permission of your students will be also sought a week before observations can proceed. This is to enable you to organize the students into the group agreeing to participate (and allowing me to observe them in class) and those who might potentially decline participation.

### **Participant's Rights**

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question during the informal follow-up discussion
- ask for the voice recorder to be switched off at any time of the discussion
- withdraw from the study before student consents are sought from your class
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher
- be given access to a summary of the project findings at least 6 months after data collection is concluded.

Lastly I wish to remind you that your participation is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to continue participation should you decide to withdraw from the study before student consent is being sought. If you decide to do so, please inform me by **email** ([c.s.w.tan@massey.ac.nz](mailto:c.s.w.tan@massey.ac.nz)) any time before this. You are also always welcome to get in touch with me or my supervisors at any stage of the study to discuss any concerns you may have about the study:

### **Dr. Gillian Skyrme**

*Senior Lecturer for Linguistics and English for Academic Purposes (School of Humanities)*

**Telephone:** +64.6.350.4231 x81171 **Email:** [g.r.skyrme@massey.ac.nz](mailto:g.r.skyrme@massey.ac.nz)

### **Dr. Ute Walker**

*Senior Lecturer in Linguistics/Applied Linguistics and German (School of Humanities)*

*Director, Teaching and Learning (College of Humanities & Social Sciences)*

**Telephone:** +64.6.350.4231 x 81175 **Email:** [u.walker@massey.ac.nz](mailto:u.walker@massey.ac.nz)

Thank you for your time and contribution to this study.

Best wishes,

*Cindy Tan*

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 13/72. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 80877, email [humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz)

***Interactions in the international English classroom:  
A case study***

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM – TEACHERS  
Classroom observation and informal follow-up discussion**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to have one class observed at an agreed time.

I agree/do not agree to have the informal follow-up discussion sound recorded.

I agree to be contacted by the researcher about the details of the classroom observation session for this study only.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

.....

**Full Name (please print)**

.....

**Email (please print)**

.....

## **Adapted questions for academic/content lecturer semi-structured interview**

### **Warmer (you may like to use these as prompts to help get you thinking ...)**

6. When my students speak in their first languages in the classroom, I ....
7. When my students use their dictionaries in the classroom, I ...
8. When my students speak in/use English in the classroom, I ...

### **These are the main questions I would like to discuss in the interview.**

1. Tell me about your views on classroom interactions in your international/multicultural/multilingual classrooms.
2. Have there been any occasions where you have used any other languages besides English (the language of instruction) with your students in your classroom?
3. I would like to know your views on these language learning myths:
  - a. Some people believe that if we learn our first language without any knowledge of a prior language as children, we could therefore learn a second language without reliance on our first language.
  - b. Some people believe that learning in a second language using the first language could impede rather than enhance the learning process (e.g. learning Biology or Math in English rather than in their native Chinese or Arabic)
  - c. Some people believe that one of the best ways to improve in a second language is to spend more time in the second language environment
4. Please tell me more about your views on your students using their first language in your English-medium content classroom.
5. To what extent do you think your students using their first languages in your class affect or influence both their learning experience and your teaching experience? If you like, you could share some examples here.
6. How important is it to you that your students function and operate in English in your classroom?

7. I would like to find out more about your views on the use of bilingual dictionaries and translators in your classroom.
8. Please tell me your views on any language policies in place in your English language classrooms. These could be departmental or university policy, or your own 'classroom rules'. I would like to know how these inform your teaching practice.
9. Finally, have you had the experience of learning another language before, or are you a speaker of more than one language?

***Interactions in the international English classroom:  
A case study***

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM – STUDENT  
Classroom observation**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I wish/do not wish to receive a summary of the results.

I agree/ do not agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

.....

**Full Name**

**(please write clearly)**

.....

**Email:**

.....

## Appendix L

Hi, Kia Ora!

My name is Cindy and I am doing a research project about how teachers and students use their languages in the English classroom. Would you like to be a participant in my project? If you are interested, please complete a few short questions below to see if you are the right person!

**1. Are you studying in one of these 3 courses? (Please circle one answer)**

- YES/NO      IELTS (Intensive English Language Study)  
YES/NO      DEEP Advanced (Direct Entry English Programme, Advance Level)  
YES/NO      Foundation Studies

**2. YES/NO      Are you from another country outside New Zealand?**

If your answer is 'YES', which country are you from?

**3. YES/NO      Do you speak another language(s) (mother tongue, first language) besides English?**

If your answer is 'YES', what other languages do you speak?

Did you answer 'YES' to all 3 questions? This means you are the right person to participate in this research project. If you are still interested, I would like your help with 2 things:

- 1) You let me come and watch ONE of your classes (you don't have to do anything special, just be yourself in class)
- 2) You complete a quick written questionnaire for my research project.

I have more information for you in the Information Sheet at the back of this letter. If you still have any questions, please email me at [c.s.w.tan@massey.ac.nz](mailto:c.s.w.tan@massey.ac.nz)

Thank you. I look forward to seeing you soon.

*Cindy Tan*

***Interactions in the international English classroom:  
A case study***

INFORMATION SHEET FOR STUDENTS

**Classroom Observation**

***Researcher's Introduction***

My name is Cindy Tan and I am conducting a research project in fulfillment of Master of Arts degree in Second Language Teaching. This research project is not related to my position as an English Language Teacher at Massey University. I am asking if you would agree to take part in my research project about language use in your international English classroom as it is important that we understand why other languages may be used in an English language classroom.

***How will I do this?***

You can help me by first, agreeing to let me observe one of your class sessions and second by completing a written questionnaire. I will talk to you more about this later.

I will come and observe your class next week after you have given your permission. I will not make any voice or video recording but I will take notes in my notebook to help me remember what I see. You do not have to do anything different during the time when I am observing the class. Just treat it like a normal class. I will not do anything that will disturb you while I am observing your class. In fact your decision to participate or not **will not** affect your marks or your performance in the course. Your participation will be highly valuable and informative to my study. Other people will not look at my notes because I am the only researcher in this project and no one will know your name.

***Your rights:***

You do not to participate in this study if you don't want to. However, if you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- Take this information sheet away with you for a day to think about, discuss and/or translate the information here before you make your decision;
- withdraw from the study any time **before** the observation starts;
- ask me any questions about the study at any time before or after the observation;
- talk to me knowing I will not use your name;
- be given a copy of the summary of the results of my research when it is concluded.

***Any questions?***

You can ask me any questions about the research before you agree to participate. You can email me at [c.s.w.tan@massey.ac.nz](mailto:c.s.w.tan@massey.ac.nz)

You can also contact my supervisors, **Dr. Gillian Skyrme**, School of Humanities, Massey University, (extension 81171 or email [g.r.skyrme@massey.ac.nz](mailto:g.r.skyrme@massey.ac.nz)), or **Dr. Ute Walker**, School of Humanities, Massey University (extension 81175 or email [u.walker@massey.ac.nz](mailto:u.walker@massey.ac.nz)).

***What should you do next?***

If you agree to let me observe one of your classes, please sign the **Consent Form** that comes together with this Information Sheet and bring it back to class **tomorrow**. An Administration Staff member will collect it from you in class.

**Thank you for reading this. I really look forward to observing your class soon.**

Best wishes,

*Cindy Tan*

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 13/72. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 80877, email [humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz)

