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The Potential Impact of Cultural and Educational Background on Foreign Language Teachers' Use of the L1

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ABSTRACT

The majority of research on second language (L2) classroom code-switching has aimed to identify the functions for which teachers choose to employ the first language (L1) and L2 in their classroom, with little research investigating the underlying factors regulating these language choices. This study employs classroom observations and semi-structured interviews to examine teachers' use of their students' L1 in five multileveled tertiary foreign language (FL) classrooms (Chinese, French, German, Japanese, and Spanish). It aims to determine the extent to which teachers employ the L1, the reasons underpinning this usage, and what implications, if any, this knowledge could have for L1 use in FL education in the future. The results suggest that the cultural and educational backgrounds in which FL teachers were themselves educated may have an influential effect on their teacher code-switching practices and pedagogical approach. The author suggests the need for FL teachers to also consider their students' needs and adjust their practices accordingly as opposed to teaching based solely on their own L2 learning experiences.

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Because of its multi-layered nature involving both sociolinguistic and educational facets, researchers in the field of applied linguistics have struggled to agree on an exact definition of code-switching. Heller (1988), for example, broadly defines it as 'the use of more than one language in the course of a single communicative episode' (p. 1). Researchers in the field of second language (L2) and foreign language (FL) education have acknowledged that code-switching refers not only to the natural language practices of bilingual speakers, but also to the emergent language practices of language learners. These scholars use the term more specifically to describe both the cognitive linguistic abilities and practices of bilinguals and L2 learners and teachers involving the use of both the first and second language (Nilep, 2006). Lin (2013) points out that, further complicating the picture is an abundance of overlapping fields in L2 education research, with studies such as Brooks-Lewis' (2009) research on the incorporation of first language (L1) in

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foreign language (FL) teaching and learning, Mahboob and Lin's (2016) study on using local languages in English language classrooms, and Timor's (2012) investigation of the use of the mother tongue in teaching a foreign language, only adding more layers to the already complex definition.

There have long been negative attitudes held towards the use of the first language (L1) in the second and foreign language (here after, L2) classroom. Even today L2 teachers and learners who admit to code-switching often feel guilty and apologetic for doing so (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Such negative attitudes emerged from ideologies surrounding the dominant L2 pedagogy of the 20th century, i.e. the Direct Method, which advocates for L2 teaching be undertaken solely in the target language (TL). Learners' native languages were viewed as alien and contaminating to L2 learning, which ultimately lead to a complete separation of their languages altogether. Under such reckoning, students were thought to be off-task when utilising their L1 in the L2 classroom, and code-switching was subsequently viewed as both a cognitive and linguistic deficiency (García & Wei, 2014). In recent years, however, research has come to recognise the pedagogic validity behind code switching in the L2 classroom, and many scholars now acknowledge a learner's L1 to be a vital cognitive tool in facilitating L2 learning (Cook 2001; Macaro, 2014; Storch & Aldosari, 2010; Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009). But despite the suggested benefits of L1 use in the L2 classroom, even in recent years code-switching remains a scarcely endorsed pedagogy by most educational institutions (Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

In order to equip both L2 teachers and learners with the necessary tools to facilitate effective language learning, an epistemological change is needed surrounding the negative ideologies of native language use in L2 education, beyond what most institutions and teachers are currently willing to accept. Although some studies have investigated the code-switching functions of non-English FL classrooms (see for example Polio & Duff, 1994), the vast majority of past research on L2 classroom code-switching has predominantly focused on classrooms in which English is learnt as a foreign language (EFL) (Hobbs, Matsuo, & Payne, 2010). These studies have principally aimed to identify and legitimise teachers' existing code-switching practices and, although they often recognise teacher beliefs and background as a motivational factor, very few have acknowledged cultural background as an influential role in regulating these language choices.

This study aims to investigate the cultural and educational-based beliefs and ideologies that underpin FL teachers' use of the L1 in the L2 classroom. This article follows Turnbull and Dailey-O'Cain's (2009) reference not only to code-switching between two or more languages, but more specifically to L1 use in L2 classrooms. I argue that, although one aspect of code-switching, research on L1 use in the L2 classroom focuses specifically on the conditions and reasons for which teachers utilise the students' L1; largely uninterested in the functions for which they choose to employ the target language (TL). This study explores classroom code-switching from both a sociolinguistic and ethnographic perspective, examining teachers' use of the students' L1 in five multi-leveled tertiary FL classes (Chinese, French, German, Japanese, and Spanish) to determine the extent to which the L1 is employed, the reasons behind this usage, and what implications, if any, this knowledge could have for FL education in the future.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. L1 use in the FL classroom

Researchers investigating classroom code-switching have suggested that learners' languages are not hermetically closed units with solid boundaries (García, 2011). As Lemke (2002) suggests, pedagogical methods in which the two languages are kept separate actually make L2 development more difficult because educators 'bow to dominant political and ideological pressures to keep 'languages' pure and

separate' (p. 85). L2 learning is maximised when learners have access to all pre-existing language skills, and not making use of both the L1 and L2 in the classroom is a waste of a valuable resource.

In their study investigating the use of the L1 by six different tertiary-level FL teachers (Chinese, German, Hebrew, Korean, Japanese, and Slavic), Polio and Duff (1994) found that use of the L1 varied from as little as 7.2% of the class time (German), to as much as 67% (Slavic), with an overall average of 38.6% across all six languages. Although they also noted that few discourse features were common across all observed classes, they identified five functional categories for which teachers employed the L1, including for administrative vocabulary items, grammar instruction, classroom management, empathy and solidarity, and for English practice by the teacher. They also identified two times in which the L1 was used because of difficulties, which included translating unknown TL items and addressing students' miscomprehension, and one final function involving an interactive effect in which students would employ the L1 in response to the teacher's use of English.

Inbar-Lourie's (2010) study into the use of the L1 (English) by six teachers at Hebrew-meduim and Arabic-meduim schools identified three main categories of L1 use: (1) for instructional purposes, including to facilitate comprehension and explaining complex grammar; (2) for managerial purposes related to the task, classroom behavior and concept management of the actual learning taking place; and (3) for affective features including encouragement, feedback, and restoring the flow of interaction after negative responses. She does, however, allude to an important notion in which she suggests FL teachers are 'often unaware of the scope and nature of their L1 use' (p. 354).

Studies have also suggested numerous motivational factors affecting the amount of L1 use by FL teachers. De la Campa and Nassaji (2009), for example, investigated the amount, purposes, and reasons for which two FL German teachers employed the L1 throughout a single university semester, and concluded that both experienced and novice instructors employed the L1 in their respective clases, but for different functions. They also found that students' low levels of proficiency in German played an influential role on teachers' employment of the L1. Rolin-Ianziti and Brownlie (2002), investigating the use of the L1 by four FL French teachers in an Australian university, found that the type of teaching activity being conducted had an effect on the quantity of teachers' use of the L1. Similarly, Ford (2009) interviewed 10 Japanese university teachers of English and found that teachers' use of the L1 may be affected by the nature of the classroom content, whereby more L1 is used in sophisticated classes requiring critical thinking and complex language, and less in classrooms involving simple day-to-day topics.

A number of studies have investigated the use of the L1 in L2/FL learning based on a sociocultural approach in collaborative activities (e.g.: Antón & DiCamilla, 1999; Brooks & Donato, 1994; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003; Swain & Lapkin, 2000), concluding that the L1 is an effective cognitive tool that helps to facilitate the completion of tasks. Other scholars have suggested that L2/FL teachers can use the L1 effectively for instructional features, such as to explain grammar rules (Demir, 2012), give instructions (Cook, 2001), translate vocabulary (Macaro, 2009) and reading passages (Nation, 2003), and to discuss cross-cultural issues (Tang, 2002). It has also been reported that the L1 can be used to lower affective filters and motivate students (Meyer, 2008), ensure learners feel comfortable in the classroom (de la Campa & Nassaji, 2009), remove language anxiety and provide students with a sense of security (Levine, 2003), create social relations and rapport between students and their teachers (Littlewood & Yu, 2011), build interlinked knowledge in the learners' mind (Mart, 2013), and raise learners' confidence levels on the whole (Karimian & Mohammadi, 2015).

Bell (2005) claims that in the past few decades, a change in the way foreign languages are taught has been observed, particularly in Western countries, with a shift from traditional grammar-based pedagogies, in which use of the L1 is generally high, to a more interactive and communicative approach (see Eurydice, 2001) where the use of the L1 is low or non-existent. CLT places emphasis on communicative skills so that function takes priority over form, during which language is learnt through

meaningful use in the classroom with 'an abundance of speaking activities, a focus on TL use, and teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil interaction' (Hobbs et al., 2010, p. 48). CLT first emerged in European countries in the 1970s after the Council of Europe developed a syllabus for FL teaching 'based on functional-notional concepts of language use' (Savignon, 1991, p. 263). The CLT method has remained the most dominant teaching approach in developing EFL and other FL communicative competencies in Europe ever since (Howatt & Smith, 2014), meaning that FL teaching and learning in said contexts relies little on the use of the L1 overall.

However, as Hobbs et al. (2010) point out, certain forms of CLT are 'incompatible' (p. 46) with some Confucian Heritage Cultures (CHCs) of Asia, where the culture of learning is quite different to that of the western countries in which CLT was developed (Littlewood, 2007). Despite government initiated acts in Japan that emphasise the development of students' communicative ability in English (MacIntyre, 2007), and an update of syllabi and teacher knowledge in China to include more communicative-orientated pedagogies (Hu, 2002), there appears to be a cultural mismatch between theoretical underpinnings of CLT, and the culture of learning in these countries (Samimy & Kobayashi, 2004). Hu (2002) claims that, in Asia, 'CLT has not received widespread support and the traditional approach is still dominant in many a classroom' (p. 94). In traditional methods, such as the grammar-translation approach, grammatical competence prevails over communication as the foundation of language ability. The teacher takes on full responsibility in the L1, and the learners themselves adopt a passive approach to learning (Taguchi, 2005). Classes have a tendency to centre on cross-linguistic grammar comparison and memorization in which the use of the L1 us high, with an emphasis on literacy and few opportunities to speak in, or use, the TL.

2.2. Teacher beliefs in FL education

There is evidence to suggest that L2 teachers' beliefs about language teaching and learning play an influential role on their code switching choices in the classroom. Hobbs et al. (2010) claim that 'language teachers filter teaching philosophies and methods through their culture of learning, interpreting approaches like CLT [Communicative Language Teaching] in very different ways depending on their beliefs about teaching and learning' (p. 46).

Liu, Ahn, Baek, and Han's (2004) study on the code-switching practices of English teachers in South Korean high schools found that teachers' beliefs have the power to supersede even institutional and curriculum guidelines on L1/L2 use. In their study on Japanese L2 teachers, Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) found that teachers made sense of their teaching based on their own personal experiences, and interpreted approaches like CLT in a number of different ways depending on these beliefs. The beliefs that L2 teachers hold regarding language teaching tend to originate from their own second language learning experiences (Bailey, Curtis, & Nunan, 2001) and act as a lens through which they implement their own teaching practices; a concept which Lortie (1975) referred to as the 'apprenticeship of observation' (p. 61).

3. Methodology

Despite the apparent differences in FL teaching pedagogies between Eurpoean and Asian-based countries regarding the use of the L1, little research has been conducted to investigate the potential effects of this difference on teachers' approach and use of the L1 in the L2 classroom. The primary aim of the present study is thus to investigate tertiary-level FL teachers' use of the students' L1 in the classroom at all three levels (beginner, intermediate, advanced) across five FL courses (Chinese, French, German, Japanese, and Spanish) in relation to their cultural and educational backgrounds. The study focuses on how often the

teachers employed the students' L1, the extent to which this varied across each level and language, and the potential reasons that underpin this difference.

3.1. The teachers

The present study involved 12 FL teachers (F=8, M=4) from the Languages and Culture Department of a New Zealand university, all of whom agreed to take part in the project voluntarily (see Appendix A for teachers' background and relevant class information). The participating teachers taught respectively at beginner (100-level), intermediate (200-level), and advanced (300-level) FL classes, although three teachers taught at more than one level, and were thus observed twice overall (indicated by a * symbol). These proficiency levels were determined by the university in accordance with each year level (i.e. first year, second year, and third year), and corresponding learning materials. In total, three Chinese teachers (F=3), two French teachers (F=1*, M=1), two German teachers (F=2*), two Japanese teachers (F=1*, M=1), and three Spanish teachers (F=1, M=2) took part in this study. Four out of the 12 teachers were non-native speakers of the language they were teaching (beginner Chinese, intermediate Chinese, advanced French, beginner German), but all had learnt the TL in countries in which the majority of the population speak the language as an L1.

The teachers came from native language backgrounds of Mandarin, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Romanian, Spanish, and Taiwanese, and had studied English in EFL countries across the world, including Chile, China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Romania, Singapore, Spain, and Venezuela; as well as in ESL countries including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the USA. Their total years of teaching experience ranged from three years to 37, with an average of 22 years. All of the participating teachers expressed an interest to partake in the study, and were selected because of the broad representation they provided for each language at each proficiency level.

3.2. Procedure

The present study consisted of a mixed qualitative and quantitative approach in which both in-class observations of each language at each level, and semi-structured interviews with the participating FL teachers were conducted. The in-class observations were undertaken with the teachers' permission at a pre-scheduled time for one 50-minute long class. The size of each class varied from the smallest class of just four students, to the largest of 23, with an average size of 13 students. Teachers were not informed as to what was being investigated until after the in-class observations so as not to influence their everyday code-switching practices during the class.

The semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B) were conducted and recorded at a time following the in-class observations. The questions asked by the researcher were related to the functions and reasons for which the teachers do and/or do not utilise the students' L1, the advantages and/or disadvantages they see in doing so, and whether or not they were taught in their L1 when learning their own L2. At the request of the teacher, no interview data could be obtained from the advanced Japanese teacher.

3.3. Data Analysis

There are two general approaches to the analysis of teachers' use of the L1 in the L2/Fl classroom: (1) measured in terms of the time spent in each language (e.g. Duff & Polio, 1990); and (2) measured in terms of the number of words spoken in each language (e.g. Rolin-Ianziti & Brownlie 2002). The method of measuring the time spent in each language was selected for use in the present study, as the latter

method of word counting allows for errors regarding differences in morpheme-based word counts between synthetic (e.g. French, German, Spanish) and isolating languages (e.g. Chinese). This method was also selected because transcription was not required for the quantification of L1, L2 and Mixed L1/L2 utterances.

The observations of each class were audio-recorded with a professional quality tape-recorder. Following the observations, the audio-recordings were reviewed, and the duration of each utterance that was spoken by the teacher, and the language in which it was said, was identified. The definition of an utterance used in the present study has been taken from Mackey, Oliver, and Leeman (2003), who defined it as 'a stream of speech with at least one of the following characteristics: a) occurring under one intonation contour, b) bounded by a pause, and c) constituting a single semantic unit' (p. 45). Each utterance was then categorized into one of three categories: (a) 'L1', referring to utterances said completely in the L1; (b) 'L2', referring to utterances said completely in the L2; and (c) 'Mixed L1/L2', referring to utterances in which the L1 and L2 were inter-wound, or when no clear-cut separation between two utterances could be determined, including intra-clausal/mid-sentence code-mixing, translanguaging, and instantaneous translations. At the end of the 50-minute class, the total duration of time for which the teachers spoke in each respective language category was tallied, and a percentage of L1, L2, and Mixed L1/L2 usage was determined overall. Utterances in which the teacher was reading aloud from a pre-written passage in a textbook or a worksheet were excluded, as this was not considered to be a code-switch of their own choice.

The post-observation semi-structured interviews were based on five main questions (see Appendix B), although the researcher probed with further questions in accordance with each teachers' individual responses to gain more information. The interviews were recoded and transcribed afterwards. The coding of the interviews was based on three main priori codes: types of L1 use in the classroom, advantages and disadvantages of L1 use, and teachers experience learning English in their home countries. Emergent codes later focused on the role of the L1, for which teachers were vocal and provided detail about their views both for and against its usage.

A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches was selected for the present study because a convergent parallel mixed methods approach was thought to provide the greatest insight into teachers' use of the L1 overall. Employing quantitative analysis to measure the extent to which teachers employed the L1 in class, and comparing this data with semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to verify and validate the two types of data to draw hypotheses and reach conclusions regarding the overall effect of educational and cultural background on teachers' use of the L1 in the FL classroom.

4. Results

4.1. Amount of L1 use in the FL classroom

Teachers' use of the learners' L1 varied greatly throughout both intra-lingual proficiency levels, as well as across each FL. Table 1 reports the average total percentage of teachers' use of the L1, L2 and a mix of both languages respectively. Overall, the L2 (or TL) was used the greatest amount, employed 54.6% of the time across all levels of all languages. The L1 was utilised slightly less at 34.2%, with mixed L1/L2 code-switching used the least, just 11.2% of the time.

Table 1.
Average total percentage of teachers' use of L1, L2, and Mixed L1/L2 per class

Language & Level	**L1 %**	**L2 %**	**Mixed L1/L2 %**

Language & Level	L1 %	L2 %	Mixed L1/L2 %
Chinese Beginner	85.1	5.5	9.4
Chinese Intermediate	76.5	11.3	12.2
Chinese Advanced	2.1	94.6	3.3
French Beginner	46.2	23.1	30.7
French Intermediate	1.2	94.5	4.3
French Advanced	0	100	0
German Beginner	10.1	68.1	21.8
German Intermediate	3.3	92.4	4.3
German Advanced	1.1	96.8	2.1
Japanese Beginner	85.4	3.1	11.5
Japanese Intermediate	37.3	46.6	16.1
Japanese Advanced	94.5	1.2	4.3
Spanish Beginner	65.4	21.3	13.3
Spanish Intermediate	4.2	65.7	30.1
Spanish Advanced	1.1	94.7	4.2
TOTAL PERCENTAGE	**34.2**	**54.6**	**11.2**

It was difficult to draw extensive generalisations on teachers' use of the L1 in relation to proficiency level alone. A general pattern was observed (see Table 2) in which more of the L1 was used for the beginner level (an average of 58.4% across all five languages) and less for the intermediate (24.5%) and advanced (19.8%). However, atypical findings such as the beginner German class' relatively low percentage of L1 use (just 10.1%), and the advanced Japanese class' remarkably high usage of the L1 (94.5%), suggests the results would best be analysed intra-lingually, examining each language separately.

Table 2.
Average total percentage of L1/L2 use across each level for all languages

Level	L1%	L2%	Mixed L1/L2%

Level	L1%	L2%	Mixed L1/L2%
Beginner	58.4	24.2	17.4
Intermediate	24.5	62.1	13.4
Advanced	19.8	77.5	2.7
TOTAL PERCENTAGE	**34.2**	**54.6**	**11.2**

Teachers' use of the learners' L1 varied from the lowest percentage of just 4.8% collectively across all three German classes, to the highest of 72.4% in the equivalent Japanese classes. In general, teachers of Western languages pertaining to Europe (i.e. French, German, and Spanish) utilised the L1 far less than the teachers of Eastern languages from Asia (i.e. Chinese and Japanese) (see Table 3). The L1 was utilised 54.6%, and 72.4%, of the time across all three levels of Chinese and Japanese respectively, compared to just 15.8% for French, 4.8% for German, and 23.6% for Spanish, across each of the equivalent classes. This means that, collectively, the teachers of French, German, and Spanish employed the students' L1 nearly 2/3 less than the teachers of Chinese and Japanese, and the L2 over four-times more, across all three levels.

Table 3.
Total percentage of L1/L2 use across each language for all levels

Language	L1	L2	Mixed L1/L2
Chinese	54.6	37.1	8.3
French	15.8	72.5	11.7
German	4.8	**85.8**	9.4
Japanese	**72.4**	17	10.6
Spanish	23.6	60.5	**15.9**

Very rarely did the teachers employ mixed-language strategies involving the use of both the L1 and L2, although when they did, their mixing of the languages was relatively consistent across all five language courses. Only a 9.4% difference separated the teachers of Chinese, who employed mixed strategies the least amount of the time (8.3% in total) with the teachers of Spanish, who employed mixed strategies the most (15.9% overall). The relatively low percentage of Mixed L1/L2 practices across all five languages is evidence that the FL teachers in the present study rarely employ fluid code-mixing or translanguaging practices in their classroom, opting instead for a traditional clear-cut separation between the two languages.

4.2. Teacher interview data

In the post-observation interviews, teachers' comments regarding their use of the L1 in the L2 classroom did generally, but not always, reflect their actual teaching practices. Although all but one teacher (Advanced French) utilised the L1 to *some* extent in their classroom practices, those who admitted to, and acknowledged the benefits of, L1 use in their interview were generally teachers of Chinese and Japanese. These teachers of the Asian languages recognised and commented on the L1's role in translating and explaining difficult grammar and vocabulary to assists students' comprehension:

Beginner Chinese: *If I translate in English most of the time, they will understand more – understand better – and we can communicate better. This helps the dynamics of the classroom and therefore students' learning.*

Intermediate Chinese: *Students find it difficult to understand all in Chinese, and that's true: the pace of the lesson slows down significantly. In fact, there were times when we just couldn't move forward because they just couldn't understand, and of course, at that point I have to go back and use English anyway.*

Beginner/Intermediate Japanese: *If I were to explain grammar points in Japanese, I would then have to explain what I had explained in English. Everything in Japanese is very, very hard. Especially for the important things that students cannot miss, I need to use English.*

On the other hand, the teachers of European languages at the same levels held very different views on the use of the L1, commenting in favour of maximum TL use in the classroom. Teachers of German in particular favoured sole use of the TL, and were less accepting of the L1 in both theory and practice than were the teachers of French and Spanish.

Beginner German: *I really try to avoid translating. I don't want them to translate, I just want them to use the words that they know and try to say things. I really think it is beneficial for the students to get as much exposure as they can from me, to use the language as much as they can, and to show to them as well that they actually can use it, giving that feeling of success.*

Beginner/Intermediate French: *Its about exposing them to the most French I can. It's a good opportunity for them to hear French.*

Beginner Spanish: *I tell them [students] that what I want is for them to use, and to try to express everything in Spanish, even if you don't understand every single word.*

Some teachers of the European languages were not entirely against L1 use in the L2 classroom. Two teachers in particular commented on some of the facilitating benefits that employing the L1, and allowing the students to do the same, can have on L2 learning, regardless of whether or not they chose to do so themselves in practice. Their comments centered on the affective features of students' learning by providing a comfortable learning environment in the classroom. For example:

Intermediate German: *I think you build a better rapport in English. So if you want to empathise with them [students] when something is hard, and you keep speaking in German, that's not going to help, but if you actually speak a little bit of English, it's not only that they understand you, but also you put yourself at their level. I think there's this feeling that you connect with them more when you speak in their native language.*

Intermediate Spanish: *Students don't always feel comfortable when I teach only in Spanish, so I will sometimes include a short explanation in English for those who are really struggling, but always in the most appropriate, best possible way; not too much, and not too little. It just helps them with their confidence.*

The majority of the advanced level classes were in favour of minimal L1 use, except for the advanced Japanese class, which employed the L1 extensively. Teachers of the advanced language classes expressed their views regarding the importance of TL use:

Advanced Chinese: *I think that at the advanced level it's better to just use Chinese in the class-time. It forces them to learn the language.*

Advanced French: *I don't use English in my classroom – that's the way I want the students to learn.*

Advanced German: *I really think it is beneficial for the students to get as much exposure as they can, to use the language as much as they can, so I won't use English.*

Advanced Spanish: *I use Spanish to get them thinking in the L2. Then they develop the confidence and ability to use Spanish. You can't do that in the L1.*

Teachers also commented on their class structure and what they consider to be an important focus in the FL classroom. Comments from the teachers of Chinese and Japanese suggested the need to focus on grammar and explicit instruction, as is characteristic of the traditional grammar-translation approach to FL education. For example:

Beginner/Intermediate Japanese: *At university, students have to learn academically. The course requires them to learn grammar and vocabulary for assessment purposes. For this, we need to use English to help explain the concepts.*

Intermediate Chinese: *We tend to focus on vocabulary and reading to provide students with a solid base to understand the target language through English.*

Teachers of the European languages, on the other hand, expressed the need to provide learners with opportunities for communication in the TL as the main goal:

Beginner German: *We use a communicative method, and because of that, it's like recreating a full immersion situation where the students speak the target language as much as they can. Students do the grammar at home - grammar is a tedious thing to do in class.*

Intermediate Spanish: *There is a discrepancy between the assessment and what we have in mind as the final goal. Because ultimately there is a test and they [students] know that. But we're not aiming for grammatical accuracy, we're aiming for communicative fluency.*

Advanced French: *I try to teach students to avoid 'linguistic traps' by having them use the language naturally for communicative purposes. So, instead of having them work out linguistic rules, which is not 'the language', I get them to use synonyms and other words to try and say what they want to say naturally. The more they can speak the better.*

When asked specifically about their own L2 learning experiences, the teachers of Chinese and Japanese recalled their learning of English through traditional approaches resembling the grammar-translation approach:

Beginner Chinese: *In China, we were taught in Chinese. I studied English in China for 10 years and the teacher used Chinese the entire time.*

Beginner/Intermediate Japanese: *When I started learning English in Japan, we never spoke in English, it was only grammar and writing. We learnt how to write and express some ideas through translating from the L1, but that was about it.*

The intermediate Chinese teacher commented on her experience learning German in a modern communicative method to which she was unaccustomed, and the difficulty she had in acquiring the language. She stated that:

Intermediate Chinese: *When I studied German in Germany, unfortunately I did not succeed, because it was taught in German, and I did not understand it. It was virtually impossible for me to even take that first step. But I think that, if my teacher then had been able to communicate what was required in English, I would have been able to move forward.*

On the other hand, the teachers of French, German and Spanish commented on their experiences learning English through communicative methods in their respective countries:

Beginner French: *We used a lot of English. We would talk, sing, play games and do activities all in English.*

Intermediate German: *There was no explanation of things in German. We learnt in English, and would use English a lot during class time.*

Advanced Spanish: *I did use a lot of English when I studied in Spain and overseas. We practiced speaking and communicating in the target language a lot, and it worked.*

5. Discussion

In spite of the general pattern in which more of the L1 was employed in the beginner level classes, and less in the intermediate and advanced classes, the present study noted a number of superseding exceptions in teachers' use of the L1 in the FL classroom. Nilep (2006) proposes that 'linguistic form is affected by setting and participants as well as topic' (p. 7), implying that teacher's code-switching is dependent on the types of learners present, the type of class being taught, as well as the type of content being learned. However, the comparatively low percentage of L1 use by the beginner German teacher, and the remarkably high use of the L1 by the advanced Japanese teacher, suggests there may be more factors affecting teachers' code-switching practices than those raised by Nilep (2006) alone. The results of the present study have suggested that the culture and environment in which teachers themselves were educated in their L2 may play a further influential role in their choice of code and pedagogical approach in the FL classroom.

The present study observed two different types of L2 classrooms: those based on traditional grammar teaching methods, in which the use of the L1 was high overall, and those based on a modern communicative approach, with little to no use of the L1. As previously discussed, FL education in countries from Europe has a tendency to focus on modern CLT approaches in which function takes precedence over form (Hobbs et al., 2010). Confucian Heritage Cultures from the Asia region, on the other hand, have a tendency to employ traditional approaches to FL education in which grammatical competence prevails over communication (Littlewood, 2007). As Heaton and Mickelson (2002) state, 'teachers teach the way they were taught' (p. 51), and in accordance with the prevailing teaching approach of their respective countries, the FL teachers in the present study provided evidence to support the claim that the culture and environment in which they themselves were educated has an influential effect on the code-switching practices and pedagogical approach they choose to employ in their classroom.

The teachers of Chinese and Japanese in the present study exhibited a strong focus on grammar and vocabulary, taught extensively in the L1. The beginner/intermediate Japanese teacher even expressed her opinion that university courses were supposed to be *academic* as opposed to conversational in nature, and therefore have a tendency to focus on grammar and assessment requiring frequent use of the L1. This method corresponds with the traditional approach to FL education in which the L1 is utilised often and is 'maintained as the reference system' in the learning and teaching of the L2 (Stern, 1983, p. 455).

Interestingly, although both teachers of Japanese had studied English in ESL countries including Australia, USA and New Zealand, and 2/3 of the teachers of Chinese had studied abroad in Australia, their teaching practices did not reflect the modern CLT approach dominant in these ESL environments. ESL countries, in which English is spoken as an L1 and is therefore the dominant language of instruction in the L2 classroom, tend to have a strong focus on modern communicative approaches involving extensive or sole use of the TL. However, because teachers of the Asian languages in the present study employed the TL infrequently, it appears as though their experiences studying abroad in ESL

environments did not have any major effect on their teaching practices regarding L1 use. This provides evidence in support of the claim that it is the culture and environment in which learners begin learning, and acquire the fundamentals of, the L2 that has a greater effect on their view regarding how FLs are learnt and should therefore be taught.

In contrast, the teachers of the French, German, and Spanish courses were considerably more communicative in their teaching, focusing less on the explicit translation and instruction of grammar rules, and more on practical use of the TL. Their lessons were conducted either predominantly or exclusively in the TL, with little to no use of the L1, as is common practice for the modern CLT approach popular in European FL education, (Hobbs et al., 2010). This is further potential evidence in support of the claim that the cultural background in which teachers themselves were educated in their L2 has an influential effect on their later teaching practices in the FL classroom.

Very rarely did teachers in the present study, including those who frequently employed the learners' L1 in their practice, mix the L1 and L2. The teachers of intermediate Spanish, beginner French, and beginner German respectively employed mixed strategies the most in their classes, providing evidence to suggest that language teachers from Europe are more inclined to use mixed-language strategies than are those from Asia. However, because of the relatively low percentages for which other teachers of European-based languages employed mixed strategies in their practice, it is difficult to make any broad conclusions on the matter. In general, the majority of the teachers in the present study chose to treat learners' languages separately, suggesting that either (a) mixed language strategies were not a regular practice in the FL classrooms of the European and Asian countries in which these teachers were educated; or (b) the teachers in the present study have little or no knowledge and/or interest concerning the implementation of a mixed language approach in their classroom.

These findings have a number of implications for FL education on the whole. The present study has suggested that teachers' cultural and educational background may not only have a superseding effect on their practical employment of the L1 in the L2 classroom, but also on their perspectives regarding how FL should be taught and learnt. This raises an important question: *where do the students fit in?* It is not necessarily the case that L2 students will conform to the same, or even similar, ideologies as their teachers concerning FL learning (see Gabillon, 2012). Previous studies have found that L2 learners are generally in favour of L1 use in the L2 classroom (see for example Brooks-Lewis, 2009; Debreli & Oyman, 2015; Neokleous, 2017; Saito & Ebsworth, 2004), even if this conflicts with what their teachers believe (see Tsagari & Diakou, 2015). However, few teachers in the present study provided details concerning how the L1 can facilitate L2 learning, regardless of whether they chose to employ it or not. This may suggest either a lack of knowledge regarding the L1's potential in the L2 classroom, or a disregard for its use based on their own past L2 learning experiences.

In spite of these findings and implications, there are some limitations to the present study that must be addressed, and a number of important future research paths to identify. Because the present study is based on just 12 FL teachers, where only one class per level of each language was investigated, thus representing only a limited cohort of data, broad conclusions cannot be drawn from this study alone. Future research regarding these matters may take one or more of the following three pathways: (1) A longitudinal study spanning an entire semester or year-long course to develop a more consistent and broader gauge on the effect of, and extent to which, teachers' cultural and educational backgrounds influence their pedagogical approaches regarding L1 use in the FL classroom; (2) An analysis into how students perceive their teacher's pedagogical style and employment of the L1, as determined in part by the teachers' cultural and educational background, and whether this matches with the students' preferred teaching and learning strategies; and (3) An investigation regarding the pedagogical approach and teaching style of non-native FL teachers whose cultural and educational background is in opposite to that

of the TL, and whether this conforms to the dominant approach to FL education in the country in which the TL is spoken.

6. Conclusion

This article has identified the cultural environment in which FL teachers were educated in their own L2 as a potential influence on their use of the L1 in the L2 classroom. It also appears to have a related effect on the pedagogical approach teachers' chose to employ in their classroom, be it communicative or grammar-focused. In the present study, the teachers of languages pertaining to countries in Europe (i.e. French, German, and Spanish) employed very little use of the L1 in accordance with the communicative approach to FL education prevalent in their respective countries. In contrast, the teachers of languages from Asia (i.e. Chinese and Japanese) employed the students' L1 extensively throughout their classes, focusing on grammar and L2 literacy skills, as is common practice in the traditional grammar-based EFL education of their home countries.

Although neither approach necessarily supersedes the other in FL education, it is important that FL teachers acknowledge the fact that appropriate use of the L1 is not always something to avoid in the L2 classroom, regardless of whether or not they choose to do so themselves. Strategic and purposeful use of the L1 by both the teacher and students alike is an important pedagogic and learning tool at the disposal of all FL teachers. Not utilising it, or prohibiting its use by students, in the L2 classroom is essentially limiting available resources, which could have subsequent effects on students' learning.

This article has suggested a number of implications for FL education. Firstly, teachers' cultural and educational background may not only have a potential superseding effect on their use of the L1 in the L2 classroom, but also on their perspectives regarding how FLs should be taught and learnt, bearing the question, *where do the students fit in?* Because not all students will conform to the same or even similar ideologies as their teachers concerning FL learning, there is a definite need for FL teachers to be educated on how and when they can use the L1 effectively to facilitate and support students' L2 learning. Furthermore, teachers must be made aware of their own teaching practices regarding the L1, and the influence that their own cultural and educational background may have on these practices. By educating teachers on L1 use, and raising their awareness of the influential effect their personal experiences may have on their own teaching practices, FL educators will be able to make informed decisions on appropriate FL pedagogies and approaches. In doing so, teachers may then adjust their culturally-based practices accordingly to suit the needs and experiences of the students at the centre of their class, as opposed to conforming solely to their own views on how FL should be learned based on their past L2 learning experiences.

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Appendix A: Teacher Background Information

Language (Level)	Gender	Age	L1	L2	NS?	Country of education	Teaching experience	Class size
Chinese (B)	F	41-50	Taiwanese	Mandarin, English	N	Taiwan	25yrs	23
Chinese (I)	F	31-40	English	Mandarin	N	Singapore, Germany, Australia	3yrs	16
Chinese (A)	F	20-30	Mandarin	English	Y	China, Australia	5yrs	4
French (B/I)	F	51+	French	English	Y	France	34yrs	12/19
French (A)	M	51+	Romanian	French, English	N	Romania, Canada	37yrs	12
German (B)	F	41-50	Italian	German, English, French	N	Italy, Germany	18yrs	9
German (I/A)	5	41-50	German	English, French	Y	Germany, France, US	27yrs	14/5
Japanese (B/I)	F	41-50	Japanese	English	Y	Japan, USA, NZ	27yrs	19/12
Japanese (A)	M	41-50	Japanese	English	Y	Japan, USA	———	16
Spanish (B)	M	51+	Spanish	English	Y	Chile	34yrs	10
Spanish (I)	M	41-50	Spanish	English	Y	Venezuela, Canada	29yrs	16
Spanish (A)	F	51+	Spanish	English, French, German	Y	Germany	27yrs	5

Appendix B: Teacher Questionnaire

Age: 20-30 ( ) 31-40 ( ) 41-50 ( ) 51+ ( )

Gender: male ( ) female ( )

What language/level do you teach? ______________________________

Native language: ______________________________

Second language(s), proficiency, and where you learnt the language: ______________

____

Country/countries of previous education: ______________________________

____

Duration/details of teaching experience? ______________________________

____

Interview questions

1. Do you use your students' L1 in the classroom? Are there any particular reasons for this?
2. What are the main reasons/times you utilise the learners' L1?
3. What do you think are the advantages of using L1 in the L2 classroom?
4. What do you think are the disadvantages of using L1 in the L2 classroom?
5. When you learnt English as a L2, did you teacher employ your L1 often? What kind of approach were you taught under?