○ EN FRANÇAIS S'IL VOUS PLAÎT: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF THE USE OF THE FIRST LANGUAGE (L1) IN FRENCH FOREIGN LANGUAGE (FL) CLASSES

Erin White *School of Languages and Linguistics, University of Melbourne*
Neomy Storch *School of Languages and Linguistics, University of Melbourne*
neomys@unimelb.edu.au

This longitudinal study investigated teachers' use of the first language (L1) in two French foreign language (FL) intermediate level classes at two Australian universities. A native French-speaking teacher (NS) and a non-native French-speaking teacher (NNS) were observed and audio-recorded approximately every two weeks over a 12- week semester. The study investigated the quantity of L1 used, the purposes it served, and whether these changed over time. It also investigated possible factors that explain teachers' L1 use, including teachers' attitudes towards the L1 use. The study found consistently more L1 use by the NNS than the NS, but that over time the use of L1 by the NS teacher increased. The L1 served a variety of purposes, most notably explanations of vocabulary and of tasks. However, towards the end of the semester, there was a marked increase in the use of L1 by both teachers for the purpose of general administration. The interview data show that use of L1 was related to the teachers' pedagogical beliefs and goals and these together with context-specific factors determined L1 use. The findings are discussed in terms of how to establish guidelines concerning appropriate levels of L1 use in FL classes.

KEY WORDS: L1 use, purposes of L1, factors affecting teachers' L1 use, teachers' beliefs about L1 use

INTRODUCTION

The use of the learners' first language (L1) is a controversial issue in foreign language (FL) classes. There appear to be two opposing positions, for and against target language (TL) exclusivity in the FL class. From a second language acquisition (SLA) theoretical perspective, the main, and perhaps the most convincing argument for TL-exclusivity is the need to maximise exposure to the TL input, particularly since the classroom is often the only opportunity for learners to be exposed to the TL (Kim & Elder, 2005) and to use it (Polio & Duff, 1994). SLA theorists such as Krashen (1982) have argued that comprehensible L2 input is a necessary condition for SLA. Thus language teachers should maximise their TL use, using it for a range of functions, including classroom management, so that the learner is exposed to authentic language communication (Ellis, 1984). From this perspective, the use of L1 represents missed opportunities for SLA.

However, there are also some convincing pedagogical reasons to use the shared L1 judiciously. Cook (2001, 2008) suggests that teachers employ the L1 to explain grammar, particularly when grammatical rules in the TL are not present in the L1, and to explain tasks and activities to the students in the L1 if it is more expedient. Brooks-Lewis (2009) argued that the L1 can be used as a resource in FL teaching to promote student confidence in the classroom and to make 'learning meaningful and easier' (p. 234). The use of the L1 represents perhaps a more realistic multilingual environment rather than pretending that neither teacher nor the students speak the shared language (Guest & Pachler, 2001).

As Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney (2008) point out, this divergence of views seems to be rooted in what is considered as the ultimate goal of language learning. Whereas scholars such as Duff and Polio (1990) see the ultimate goal as that of native speaker competence; for others such as Cook (2001), the goal is perhaps a more realistic one of competent bilinguals. For such bilinguals, alternation between languages is natural (Turnbull, 2006).

Studies that have investigated TL and L1 use in FL classrooms have shed some light on what actually transpires in the FL classroom. The main aspects that have been investigated are: the amount of L1 (or TL) used, the purposes the L1 serves, and the factors which may explain teachers' language choice. Most of these studies have been conducted in contexts where the shared L1 is English.

A number of studies have investigated the amount of L1 or TL use in foreign language classes and the results are quite mixed. Some studies (e.g. Gutherie, 1987; Macaro, 2001) show a uniformly high level of TL use by teachers (over 80% of class time); others (e.g. Duff & Polio, 1990; Kim & Elder, 2005; Taylor, 2002) show great variations between teachers. For example, Duff and Polio (1990) reported TL use ranging from 10% to 100% among their teachers. However, these mixed findings regarding the amount of L1 use need to be interpreted cautiously as they are based on different methods of teacher talk analysis.

The purposes the L1 serves have also been investigated by a number of researchers, using a set of categories established by Polio and Duff (1994). Polio and Duff (1994) identified five categories of L1 use: administrative vocabulary, grammar instruction, classroom management, reflecting a stance of empathy/solidarity, and English practice by the teacher. The most common use of the L1 reported is for vocabulary, particularly for administrative vocabulary (Kramer, 2006; Polio & Duff, 1994). For example, Polio and Duff (1994) found that teachers often used L1 for single words and phrases such as 'review section' or 'homework'. Other researchers (e.g. Rolin-Ianziti & Brownlie, 2002; Taylor, 2002) reported that L1 was most often used to translate vocabulary, often in response to students' requests. Another commonly found use of L1 was for explaining grammar (e.g. Polio & Duff, 1994; Rolin-Ianziti & Brownlie, 2002). Guest and Pachler (2001) suggested that 'grammar is often perceived to be a difficult – if not the most difficult – part of [language] subject(s) to be taught in the TL' (p. 92). What has

not been investigated, however, is whether these uses of L1 change over time. For example, does the use of L1 for vocabulary, including administrative vocabulary, decrease over time, as learners become familiar with the TL vocabulary?

A third area of research on L1 use has attempted to investigate factors influencing teachers' decisions to use the L1. Duff and Polio (1990) listed a number of possible factors, including: departmental policy, the type of exercises, and the nature of teacher training. However, the researchers admitted that owing to the design of their study (observing thirteen teachers in two classes) they could not identify definitive causal factors. Subsequent studies have shown activity-type to be a factor in teachers' use of the L1 (Kim & Elder, 2004; Rolin-Ianziti & Brownlie, 2002; Taylor, 2002), with task-based activities more conducive to TL use than grammar focused exercises (Kim & Elder, 2004). Another factor found was teachers' pedagogical beliefs and goals. For example, Taylor's (2002) longitudinal study conducted in two computer assisted French classes (one taught by a male teacher, the other by a female teacher) found that although both teachers used the L1 mainly for vocabulary, particularly when experiencing technical problems with the computers, what guided L1 use were quite different. Whereas the male teacher was strongly guided by the development and maintenance of good social relationships with his students in his employment of the L1, the female teacher preferred to keep more social distance from her students, using less L1 than the male teacher. Crawford's (2004) large-scale (n=581) investigation of high school language teachers' views on use of the TL found that the learners' L2 proficiency level and perceived goal of the language course may also influence teachers' L1 use. In Crawford's study, teachers expressed reservations about using the TL in lower level classes; however, these reservations declined in the upper years, or intermediate level. Furthermore, teachers whose primary concern was communicative TL acquisition were significantly more likely to support use of the TL. Kramer (2006) found that what determined the amount of L1 use was related to the teachers' teaching experience; teaching assistants with more experience used less L1 than those with less experience.

Our study aimed to further explore use of the L1 (English) in the university-level FL classroom, but we were mainly interested in how the passage of time affected teachers' use of L1 and the factors that may explain teachers' use of the L1. Since the seminal work of Duff and Polio (1990), there have been a number of studies into the distribution of TL and L1 use in FL classrooms. However, few studies, apart from that of Taylor (2002), have taken a longitudinal approach to investigating teachers' use of the TL and L1 in order to examine what, if any, changes occur in teachers' speech over the duration of a semester. Kraemer (2006) notes that the advantage of longitudinal research is that it 'prevent(s) unnatural teaching style and thus offer(s) broader insights into [L1 use in the FL classroom]' (p. 448). Furthermore, studies which have investigated university-level FL classes have mostly been at the beginner level of FL study, where students have little to no prior knowledge of the TL

(e.g. Duff & Polio, 1990; Guthrie, 1987; Rolin-Ianziti & Brownlie, 2002; Taylor, 2002). Thus, our study set out to investigate teachers' use of the L1 over a semester, focusing on FL classes at the intermediate level.

The research questions guiding our study were:

     i.   How much L1 is used in the intermediate level FL classroom?

     ii.   For what purposes is the L1 used?

     iii.   Does the amount and purpose of L1 change over time?

     iv.   What factors may help explaining the teachers' use of the L1 in their classroom?

THE STUDY

CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

The study was conducted in two intermediate (post beginners) level French classes at two metropolitan Australian universities. One class was taught by Odette (pseudonym), a female native French speaker (NS); the other by Sally (pseudonym) a female non-native French speaker (NNS). Both teachers are highly qualified and experienced French language teachers. Both hold postgraduate degrees in Applied Linguistics and have taught French at secondary and university levels for over ten years. They are both highly proficient in their respective L2. There were 17 students in the Odette's class and 21 students in Sally's class. Unlike Odette's university, Sally's university does not have an upper-level cut-off point of L2 proficiency for students wishing to enrol in the intermediate French course. Therefore, the students in Sally's class seemed more heterogeneous than in Odette's class in terms of French proficiency. The students in both classes were from a range of L1 backgrounds; however, the language shared by all students and teachers (apart from the TL) was English.

DATA COLLECTION

The data in the present study comes predominantly from classroom observations and recordings conducted by the first author and supplemented with teacher interviews.

OBSERVATIONS AND CLASSROOM DATA

Classes were observed and audio-recorded on four occasions throughout the observation period (one semester). Both universities follow a twelve-week semester, and classroom observations took place in weeks 3, 4, 7 and 12 in Odette's classes and weeks 4, 5, 7 and 12 in Sally's classes. In total, data were collected in four of Sally's and five of Odette's lessons resulting in just over 10 hours of audio-recordings (about 5 hours for each teacher). The purpose of the observations was to gain an insight into the teaching approach adopted by the teachers and the type of activities used.

Sally's class was held once a week for three hours during which time a variety of content topics (e.g. grammar, cultural issues) and activities were used. The instructional approach adopted was communicative. The classes were interactive with a combination of individual, pair and group work, and tasks included oral dictations (both teacher- and student-led), comprehension exercises, and discussions. The course textbook was Personnages (Oates & Dubois, 2003), a textbook containing both English and French. Due to the length of the classes, only 1.5 hours approximately of each lesson were observed.

Odette's class was held twice a week, with a one-hour cultural discussion class and a two-hour grammar based class. The class used a textbook and student workbook called Interaction (St. Onge & St Onge, 2007); the textbook contained both French and English while the student workbook was entirely in French. Tasks used in these classes were mainly comprehension activities completed in pairs and reported back to the whole class and direct teacher lecturing. Due to timetabling constraints, four of Odette's cultural discussion classes, each of an hour's duration were observed and recorded. However, in order to provide a comparison between the grammar-based and cultural discussion classes, one of Odette's grammar classes was recorded in the final week of semester (week 12).

TEACHER INTERVIEWS

Teacher interviews followed a semi-structured format, based on questions used in teacher interviews by Duff and Polio (1990) and Kraemer (2006). These interviews were conducted after all classroom data had been collected, coded and analysed and thus some of the questions were informed by the classroom data analysis. The interview schedule covered the teachers' educational and teaching background, their attitudes towards, and self-perceptions of, use of the L1, and a brief discussion of departmental guidelines regarding choice of language in the FL classroom. The teacher interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes each, and were audio-recorded and later transcribed.

DATA ANALYSIS

Our main sources of data were the transcribed recordings of the classes and of the teacher interviews. The classroom recordings were used to quantify the amount of L1 used by the teachers, and the purposes the L1 served. Teacher interview responses were summarised for their attitudes towards, and self-perceptions of, use of the L1, and of departmental guidelines regarding choice of language in the FL classroom.

QUANTIFYING L1 USE

As noted earlier, a range of measures have been used in previous studies to quantify TL or L1 use. Whereas researchers such as Guthrie (1987) and Rolin-Ianziti and Brownlie (2002) used word counts; others such as Macaro (2001) and Kim and Elder (2005) coded and counted segments of teacher talk based on a coding scheme originally developed by Duff and Polio (1990). Duff and

Polio (1990) divided their recordings of thirteen different FL classes at American universities into fifteen second segments, and coded these segments as either entirely L1, mostly L1 (with a word or phrase in the TL), mix of the L1 and TL (neither predominant), entirely L2 and mostly TL (with a word or phrase in the L1). However, in reflecting on their study, Duff and Polio conceded that their fifteen second sampling may not have reflected accurately the actual quantity of English (L1) and the TL spoken in the classroom. Thus in our study, instead of relying on sampling segments, we used turns as our unit of analysis. We counted all turns, identified the L1 turns and then calculated the proportion of L1 turns of total turns. We also noted the length of all turns, and counted the number of L1 words in the L1 turns.

L1 turns were then categorised as either wholly, predominantly, or partially in the L1 (Storch & Aldosari, 2010) based on the amount of L1 within each L1 turn. The following are examples of such L1 turns. In all the examples provided, the TL used by the teacher appears in italics, L1 use is indicated in bold, and translations appear in square brackets either immediately after use of the TL or in an adjacent column when TL use is particularly long.

Turns entirely in the L1 were classified as wholly L1 turns, as in Example 1 below:

Example 1   A wholly L1 turn

41   **T : Ok, who got totally confused with this homework ? Ok, was it the first part that confused you, or the second part?**
(Sally, Lesson 1)

Turns with more L1 words than TL words were coded as predominantly L1 turns. In Example 2 below, there were more L1 words (21) than TL words (6).

Example 2   A predominantly L1 turn

57   **T :** *Et demi.* [And a half.] **So it's, we, in English we'd say nine and a half percent, in French you say nine percent and a half.** *Neuf pourcent et demi.* [Nine and a half percent.] (Sally, Lesson 2)

Finally, turns with either an equal number of TL and L1 words or more TL words than L1 words were classified as partially L1 turns, as in Example 3 where there were more TL words (16) than L1 words (8).

Example 3   A partially L1 turn

142   **T :** *Oui, parce que c'est une habitude, d'accord ?* [Yes, because it's something habitual, ok ?] **It's, it's** *c'est une habitude* [it's something habitual]**, it's something that keeps repeating itself,** *d'accord?   Donc c'est une habitude, continue…* [ok ? So it's habitual, continue…] (Odette, Lesson 5)

PURPOSES OF L1 USE

In order to analyse the purposes the L1 served, we coded our data for L1 episodes. Based on research which has investigated learners' use of their L1 in L2 classes (e.g. Storch & Aldosari, 2010), an L1 episode contained one or a number of L1 turns which seemed to serve a specific purpose or issue. Our categories for analysing these episodes for the purposes of L1 were informed by Polio and Duff's (1994) scheme and a reiterative reading of our data. We identified five different purposes of L1 use: grammar, vocabulary, task management, general classroom management, and other.

GRAMMAR

Grammar L1 episodes were instances where the L1 turns were used to explain grammatical rules or how to construct particular grammatical constructions. In Example 4 below, Odette uses the L1 to explain the difference between the French simple and imperfect past tenses.

Example 4   Grammar L1 episode

130   **T : *Unless something else happened as you were going home and something else happened. Because that would be considered background.***

131   **S: *So if it was just saying "when I* (inaudible)"**

132   **T : *No, so if it's "as I was returning to* (inaudible)" *you know, something happened, then it would be background information. But if you just say* [inaudible] *that's an action and that's completed. Unless if they, if they uh have an adverb.* Peut-être qu'il dit "souvent" [Maybe if it says "often"] *or something like that suggests that it's something you used to do a lot in the past.* Est-ce que vous avez la même réponse? [Do you have the same answer?] (Odette, Lesson 5)**

VOCABULARY

Vocabulary L1 episodes were those in which the L1 was used to provide word meaning, as in Example 5 below.

Example 5   Vocabulary L1 episode

102   **T : *Un romancier c'est un écrivain qui écrit les romans. (inaudible).* [A novelist is a writer who writes novels] *A novelist.***

103   **S** : (student inaudible)

104	**T : *Ah no, this doesn't mean romance.***
105	**S: *So it's just who writes the books***
106	**T :** *Voilà, c'est ça. Donc il écrit des romans...*[There you go, that's it. So they write novels] (Odette, Lesson 4)

TASK MANAGEMENT

Task management L1 episodes were those in which the L1 was used to explain task instructions or guide the students in task completion. In Example 6, Sally checks students' comprehension of the task in the TL (line 110 'ça va?' ['how's it going?']) but then uses the L1 to assist them in the task completion.

Example 6   Task Management L1 episode

110	**T :** *Ça va ?* [How's it going ?]
111	**S:** *Ça va.* [It's going well.]
112	**T : *Did you…****oui ? C'est juste ? Oui, c'est juste. Régardez le tableau parce qu'il y a d'autres expressions québecoises* [yes? It's right? Yes, it's right. Look at the board because there are some other Quebecer expressions.] ***Can you guess what they are in standard French ? What would you normally say for them ?*** (Sally, Lesson 2)

GENERAL CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Episodes where the L1 was used for classroom organization, behaviour management and homework (among other administrative matters) were coded as general classroom management L1 episodes. Such episodes often dealt with issues related to assignments and exams, and in response to students' questions. In Example 7, Odette uses the L1 to provide details about the exam. In Example 8, Sally uses the L1 extensively to provide details about the final assignment.

Example 7   L1 use for general classroom management/administration

123	**S: *Will there be just one written test?***
124	**T :** *Comment?* [Pardon ?]
125	**S: *Will there be just one written…***
126	**T :** *Euh, je ne sais pas. Peut-être un ou peut-être deux, je demanderai à Paul. Il n'y a aucune spécification ?* [Uh, I

don't know. Maybe one or maybe two, I'll ask Paul. Weren't there any specifications?] *No one's seen any specification on that one ? On LMS?*

127   **S:** *On the email he said just one...*   (Odette, Lesson 5)

Example 8   Use of L1 for general classroom management/administration

420   *T : J'avais prèsque oublié que votre dissertation sur « Etre et Avoir » c'est pour la semaine prochaine aussi.* [I had nearly forgotten your essays on « To Be and To Have". That's for this week too.]

421   *S1: When does it say that you were looking, reading through them ?*

422   *T : Oui, lundi.* [Yes, Monday] *If you want to send me a draft, it needs to be in by Monday because there's a lot of you (sic). If I get them by Monday I can get them back to you by Wednesday to give you time to correct them before Friday. If they come any later than Monday I can't look at them, ok?*

423   *S2: Which Monday?*

424   *S3: This Monday!*

425   *T : The Monday before it's due, so next Monday.*   (Sally, Lesson 4)

OTHER

This category includes a number of purposes which occurred infrequently in the data. It covered instances where the L1 was used to discuss cultural points, to build rapport with the students (e.g. telling jokes), or show an awareness of the presence of the researcher in the classroom. Example 9 below shows an instance (one of three such instances in that lesson) where Sally used the L1 to express an awareness of the presence of the researcher:

Example 9   Other L1 episodes (e.g. awareness of observation)

2   **T** *: Alors, je dois vous dire quelquechose.* [So, I have to tell you something] *Luckily (researcher's name) isn't recording how much English you guys are speaking. Parce que là, c'est une activité orale…(inaudible) de preference en français .* [Because this is a French oral activity about your favourite things] (Sally, Lesson 1)

RELIABILITY OF CODING

To check for coding reliability, another researcher was trained in using the coding categories and then coded a portion of the data (one lesson from each teacher). Reliability was calculated by dividing the total number of agreements by the total number of coded items and produced the inter-rater reliabilities score of 85% for L1 purposes.

FINDINGS

We present aggregate findings followed by findings for each of the teachers.

AMOUNT OF L1 USE FOR BOTH TEACHERS

Use of the L1 differed markedly between Odette, the NS teacher, and Sally, the NNS teacher. Table 1 below shows the total number of teacher turns (TL and L1), the number of L1 turns and the proportion they formed of all teacher turns for both teachers across the observation period.

Table 1: Number of L1 turns and proportion of total turns (L1 & TL)

Lesson	Odette's class			Sally's class		
	Total turns	**L1 turns**	**% of L1 turns**	**Total turns**	**L1 turns**	**% of L1 turns**
1	102	4	3.92	48	27	56.25
2	131	11	8.40	164	87	53.05
3	105	2	1.90	169	85	50.3
4	77	16	20.78	100	54	54.00
5	66	13	19.70		n/a	
Total	481	46	9.56	481	253	52.60

From the outset, it is clear that Sally produced more L1 turns than Odette. Furthermore, Sally's level of L1 use was consistently high throughout the semester, (just over 50% of all turns). For Odette, L1 turns formed a fairly small proportion of all turns in the first three lessons, but seemed to increase quite dramatically towards the end of the semester.

ODETTE

Table 2 shows the number of wholly, predominantly and partial L1 turns across the five lessons.

Table 2: L1 turns for Odette

Lesson	Turns *wholly* in L1	Turns *predominantly* in L1	Turns *partially* in L1	Total L1 turns
1	0	0	4	4
2	1	0	10	11
3	0	0	2	2
4	3	0	13	16
5	2	1	10	13
TOTAL	6	1	39	46
% of total	13%	2%	85%	

As Table 2 shows, the majority of Odette's L1 turns across the observation period were partially in the L1 (85% in total). Turns wholly in the L1 averaged 7.5 words, ranging from 1 to 19 words. In fact, many of Odette's turns partially in the L1 contained only single L1 words.

SALLY

Table 3 shows Sally's L1 turns categorised as either wholly, predominantly or partially in the L1 across the four lessons.

Table 3: L1 turns for Sally

Lesson	Turns *wholly* in L1	Turns *predominantly* in L1	Turns *partially* in L1	Total L1 turns
1	4	13	10	27
2	16	36	35	87
3	15	43	27	85
4	18	29	7	54
TOTAL	53	121	79	253
% of total	21%	48%	31%	

Unlike Odette, most of Sally's L1 turns, in all four lessons were predominantly in the L1. Partial L1 turns were the next most frequent type of L1 turns. Overall, Sally's wholly L1

turns contained on average 13 L1 words, which was almost double Odette's average of 7.5 words for the same type of L1 turns.

L1 EPISODES

Table 4 below shows the number of L1 episodes for both teachers across the observation period. Because the total number of lessons observed was not equal, the average number of L1 episodes per teacher is also given. As the table shows, there were almost four times the average number of L1 episodes in Sally's classes than in Odette's classes.

Table 4: Number of L1 episodes

Lesson	Odette's class	Sally's class
1	4	15
2	10	50
3	2	35
4	12	18
5	12	n/a
Total L1 episodes	40	118
Average L1 episodes	8	29.5

PURPOSE OF L1 EPISODES FOR BOTH TEACHERS

ODETTE

Table 5 shows the distribution of purposes for all of Odette's L1 episodes. Across the observation period, Odette used the L1 predominantly for the purpose of talking about vocabulary (32.5%); this purpose appeared in all five lessons, but seemed to decrease over time. In contrast, L1 use for task management and for general classroom management increased as the semester progressed. For example, L1 use for task management increased from 12.5% in Lesson 3 to 62.5% in Lesson 5, when learners were required to complete grammar exercises. Use of the L1 for general classroom management tended to focus on issues related to assessment, coinciding with the looming end of semester exam (see Example 7 above). Grammar was the purpose of the fewest number of L1 episodes (12.5%), and peaked in Lesson 5, the grammar-based lesson. Thus the small number of grammar episodes may be due to the presence of only one grammar-based class (Lesson 5).

Table 5: Purpose of L1 episodes (Odette)

Purpose	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5	Total Freq.	% of all episodes
Grammar	0	1 (20%)	0	0	4 (80%)	5	12.5%
Vocabulary	3 (23.1%)	6 (46.1%)	1 (7.7%)	2 (15.4%)	1 (7.7%)	13	32.5%
Task Management	0	0	1 (12.5%)	2 (25%)	5 (62.5%)	8	20%
General Classroom Management	0	1 (16.7%)	0	3 (50%)	2 (33.3%)	6	15%
Other	1 (12.5%)	2 (25%)	0	5 (62.5%)	0	8	20%
Total Episodes	4	10	2	12	12	40	100%

SALLY

Table 6 shows the distribution of purposes for all of Sally's L1 episodes. Sally predominantly used the L1 for task management (50.85%), followed by vocabulary (21.19%) and grammar (11.86%). Over time, the focus of Sally's L1 episodes was predominantly grammar and task management and, as with Odette, L1 episodes towards the end of the semester increasingly served the purpose of general classroom management (see Example 8 above).

Table 6: Purpose of L1 episodes (Sally)

Purpose	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Total Freq.	% of all episodes
Grammar	1 (7.14%)	7 (50%)	3 (21.4%)	3 (21.4%)	14	11.86%
Vocabulary	2 (8%)	18 (72%)	4 (16%)	1 (4%)	25	21.19%
Task Management	7 (11.67%)	20 (33.33%)	23 (38.33%)	10 (16.67%)	60	50.85%
General Classroom Management	0	2 (22.2%)	3 (33.3%)	4 (44.5%)	9	7.63%
Other	5 (50%)	3 (30%)	2 (20%)	0	10	8.47%
Total Episodes	15	50	35	18	118	

TEACHER INTERVIEWS

The interviews conducted with both teachers after the observation period elicited their attitudes towards L1 use in the FL classroom. Their views are presented below:

ODETTE

Reflecting on her teaching practice and, in particular, the little use of L1 in the classes observed, Odette expressed a strong belief in using the target language as much as possible. She wanted to use the TL to create an authentic language environment for students and to make the most of the limited amount of time shared with students (three hours in total per week).

> There's only three hours of class per week for twelve weeks, so every opportunity, it's a real communication situation when they talk with me.

Further, she believed that students wanted the challenge created by using the TL and that resorting to the students' first language sends them a message that they may not be capable of understanding the teacher's TL use:

> [Students] find that this exchange with you is really authentic. And it's almost the reason why they're doing French. So if you take that away from them…it's also

> believing in their own ability, I mean, they might not understand everything but if you start speaking in English, what are you trying to tell them? They might not be up for it, so, oh well, what the heck.

Odette thought that she used the L1 when something was particularly important, such as assignments and other administrative items, for certain grammar points which are difficult for students to grasp due to their subtlety (such as the difference between the two past tenses in French), and in personal communication with students either at the end of the class or via email.

She noted that there is no official departmental policy at her university regarding the use of the students' L1 in the FL classroom; this decision is left to individual teachers. She also felt that her use of the L1 was not related to her being a native speaker:

> 'I know teachers who are French who would use English so I don't know if it's that much a simple equation really.'

SALLY

Sally's use of the L1, like Odette, was very much a conscious decision. Sally related the use of L1 to notions of expediency:

> I tend to still sometimes go into English because, not because I can't explain it, but because I think we'll waste so much time if the students can't understand it. And I think that if I really, really, want them to understand a certain grammar point, asking them to also decode a whole load of content and vocab and terminology is just additional work which, you know, we can save that time and I can give them other things to do. We can get to the point more, it's easier.

She believed that, above all, she uses English to create a welcoming classroom environment:

> I crack stupid jokes, and I do it in English. 'Cause if I do it in French no-one's going to get it and then you think, well perhaps you could just leave it out anyway! But I think a big part of what I believe in the classroom is, first and foremost the class atmosphere. Because if there's a good class atmosphere people get over being intimidated and they find it easier to learn if they feel comfortable with one another.

Sally thought that she mostly uses the L1 with 'students [she] perceive(s) have the most difficulty'. Further, she noted that there are many international students studying French at her university, many of whom have an Asian, character-based, first language, which quite often makes it difficult for students to understand the target language.

> …an English speaker would look at French and understand 25% of it, but international students, even though they speak English, they'll look at something in French and even

> if they know the word in English they won't make the connection, it's really weird,
> because they're going three ways.

She also felt that avoidance of the L1 in her classroom is hindered by the presence of English in the course textbook. Sally noted that choice of textbook (and the language(s) of that book) is something she has discussed with her colleagues. As is the case with Odette's university, there is no departmental guideline at Sally's university on use of the L1 in the FL classroom; decisions are left to individual teachers. Sally admitted that language choice in the FL classroom is an often debated issue which *'personally I have never really resolved.'*

DISCUSSION

Our findings show the amount of L1 use by the two French teachers varied greatly. Sally had five times the number of L1 turns compared to Odette, almost nine times the number of wholly L1 turns (53 to 6), and an average word length of wholly L1 turns almost double that of Odette's (13 words and 7.5 words respectively). The study found that L1 turns formed about 50% of all turns in Sally's class and that this proportion remained constant over the semester. That is, the passage of time did not affect the already high level of Sally's L1 use. In contrast, in Odette's class, there seemed to be an increase in the proportion of L1 turns towards the end of the semester. Odette's controlled language choices became more relaxed as the semester wore on.

 A number of researchers have reported that the most frequent use of the L1 is for explaining vocabulary, or when using administrative vocabulary (e.g. Kramer, 2006; Polio & Duff, 1994). Our study also found that the L1 was used for vocabulary. Indeed the use of L1 to translate vocabulary was the most frequent use of L1 in Odette's data (32%). However, it is worth noting that Odette showed a decline across the five lessons in use of the L1 to discuss vocabulary; in the cultural discussion classes of Lessons 1 to 4. This may be due to the continuation of discussion themes across these lessons. For example, Lessons 2 and 3 discussed social issues in France and Australia; vocabulary that was unfamiliar in Lesson 2, therefore, may have become familiar by Lesson 3. This was not the case, however, in the use of L1 for administrative vocabulary related to general classroom management. Lessons towards the end of semester (Lessons 4 and 5) showed a large increase in the amount of L1 used for general classroom management in the data of both teachers. This increase may be explained by the impending exams and assessments (see Examples 7 and 8 above), and perhaps reflect teachers' desire to alley student anxiety and ensure that important instructions are clearly understood (see also Duff & Polio, 1990).

The present study found an overwhelming majority of Sally's L1 use was for task management (56.43%). The predominance of L1 use by Sally for this purpose may be reflective of the organization of this class; there was only one three-hour class per week, and

classes incorporated a variety of tasks such as dictations, oral activities, and comprehension exercises. Despite the predominance of these meaning-based activities in Sally's class, said to be conducive to TL input (Kim & Elder, 2005), Sally often had to resort to the L1 to explain to the students what they were required to do. Macaro (2001) too found that the L1 in his study tended to be used to provide task instructions. In contrast, Odette's first four observed lessons tended to be more lecture styles and whole class discussions. In such classes, the procedural instructions seemed less complex, and this too may explain the lower level of L1 use by Odette for task management. In contrast, in Lesson 5, the grammar focused lesson which involved a greater range of activities, there was a noticeable increase in use of L1 for the purposes of task management. Past studies have highlighted activity-type to be a factor in teachers' use of the L1 (Rolin-Ianziti & Brownlie, 2002; Taylor, 2002). It may be that a communicative, task-based approach may in fact lead to more teacher L1 use than teacher-centred approaches.

On the surface, the large difference in the amount of L1 used by the two teachers could be attributable to the native speaker status of the teacher. Sally, the NNS, consistently used the L1 to a much greater extent than Odette, the NS. However, the two teachers in the present study expressed the opinion that use of the L1 was very much a personal choice, not related to their native-speaker status. Other studies have also found that the native-speaker status of the teacher does not explain differences in L1 use (Duff & Polio, 1990; Kim & Elder, 2005; Kraemer, 2006; Rolin-Ianziti & Brownlie, 2002). Neither did the L1 use relate to the teachers' teaching experience or teacher training, since both held postgraduate qualifications and were highly experienced teachers. Rather, the most salient theme emerging from the interviews was that both teachers were guided by their goals and beliefs about what makes for an optimal L2 learning environment in their specific teaching context, and it is these goals and beliefs that may help to explain their different amounts of L1 use across the observation period.

Sally, like the male teacher in Taylor's (2002) study, L1 use was guided by her goal of creating a welcoming, non-threatening language learning environment in a class where students' L2 proficiency varied widely. Odette's minimal use of L1, on the other hand, was guided by her beliefs about what constitutes an optimal L2 learning environment for her students. In such an environment maximizing exposure to the L2 shows students that they are capable of understanding the TL. McMillan and Turnbull's (2009) study found that teachers' beliefs about L1 use were shaped considerably by their perceptions of how anxious they felt that their students would feel about their TL abilities.

External factors such as class organization, timetabling, and French/English class materials may have also influenced the amount of L1 use. Sally's class ran once a week for three hours, which may have contributed to her high level of L1 use. As Guest and Pachler (2001) note, 'a whole lesson is a long time for pupils to concentrate' in the TL (p. 91). While Turnbull (2001) and Satchwell (1997) argue that L1 use takes precious time away from use

of the TL, Sally felt that, as she only saw her students once a week, switching into the L1 would actually save time rather than, as Turnbull argues, waste it. Learners' L2 proficiency may have also played a part. As noted earlier, learners' L2 proficiency in Sally's class was more heterogeneous than in Odette's class, and clearly Sally felt the need to accommodate the learners' different proficiency levels in her instruction.

CONCLUSION

The present study found the amount of L1 use to vary greatly between two teachers of intermediate-level, university French courses. Although on the surface it may seem that L1 use was related to whether the teacher is a native speaker or a non-native speaker of the TL, closer analysis shows that it is more likely teachers' beliefs and goals which influenced L1 use in the present study. Other factors such as the teachers' perceptions of student ability in the class, the organization of classes, and the pedagogical approaches adopted may have also contributed to the participating teachers' amount of L1 use.

The current attitude towards L1 use seems to be that a judicious use of the L1 is justifiable and indeed inevitable in FL classes. This stance is reflected in a number of national L2 curriculum documents (see Littlewood & Yu, 2011). However, we note that what constitutes 'judicious use' is not well defined. Does Sally's level of L1 use qualify as an acceptable level? Sally seemed to be a bit uneasy about the amount of her L1 use, and noted that it is of concern to the language teachers at her university. These sentiments suggest that the use of L1 use in FL classes needs to be discussed openly in teacher forums, so that agreed upon guidelines about acceptable levels of L1 use can be developed. This is the conclusion that Turnbull and Dailey-O'cain (2009) reach as well: a call for more open discussions about the use of L1 in teacher education – pre-service and in-service, that will lead to more enlightened professionals.

Both teachers in our study reported no institutional guidelines. Macaro (2005, cited in McMillan & Turnbull, 2009), a leading researcher on L1 use, suggested a threshold of 10–15% of L1 use, claiming that beyond this threshold the use of the L1 may have a negative impact on L2 learning. However, Macaro admitted that no study had demonstrated a causal relationship between exclusive TL use and improved L2 learning. In his more recent research (Macaro, 2009) an attempt to link the amount of L1 use and vocabulary learning produced no conclusive evidence. Thus future studies on L1 use need to investigate the effect of L1 use on L2 learning. For instance, we need studies that examine whether the teacher's use of L1 encourages learners to also use the L1 in the class.

Ultimately, however, it is the language teachers that need to establish benchmarks for L1 use. It may be that in certain contexts, the use of the L1 is more justified than in others. To establish such benchmarks, action research can provide teachers with important evidence that

could be used to inform their discussions and decision-making about what is the optimal level of L1 use in their FL classrooms.

REFERENCES

Brooks-Lewis, K.A. (2009). Adult learners' perceptions of the incorporation of their L1 in foreign language learning and teaching. *Applied Linguistics*, *30*(2), 216–235.

Cook, V. (2001). Using the first language in the classroom. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 57 (3), 402–423.

Cook, V. (2008). *Second Language Learning and Teaching*. London: Hodder Education.

Crawford, J. (2004). Language choices in the foreign language classroom: target language or the learners' first language? *Regional Language Centre Journal*, 35, 5–20.

Duff, P. & Polio, C. (1990). How much foreign language is there in the foreign language classroom?. *The Modern Language Journal*, *74*(2), 154–166.

Ellis, R. (1984). *Classroom second language development*. Oxford : Pergamon.

Guest, R. & Pachler, N. (2001). Teaching in the target language: A critical appraisal. In N. Pachter & K. Field (Eds.), *Learning to teach modern foreign languages in the secondary school: A companion to school experience* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Guthrie, E. M. (1987). Six cases in classroom communication: A study of teacherdiscourse in the foreign language classroom. In J. Lantolf & A. Labarca (Eds.), *Research in Second Language Learning: Focus on the Classroom*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex

Kim, S. H. & Elder, C. (2005). Language choices and pedagogic functions in the foreign language classroom: A cross-linguistic functional analysis of teacher talk. *Language Teaching Research*, *9*(4), 355–380.

Kraemer, A. (2006). Teachers' use of English in communicative German language classrooms: A qualitative analysis. *Foreign Language Annals*, *39*(3), 435–450.

Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon.

Levine, G. (2003). Student and instructor beliefs and attitudes about target language use, first language use, and anxiety: Report of a questionnaire study. *The Modern Language Journal, 87*(3), 343–363.

Littlewood, W. & Yu, B. (2011). First language and target language in the foreign language classroom. *Language Teaching*, *44*(1), 64–77.

Macaro, E. (2001). Analysing student teachers' codeswitching in foreign language classrooms: theories and decision making. *The Modern Language Journal*, *85*(4), 531–548.

Macaro, E. (2009). Teacher use of codeswitching in the second language classroom: Exploring 'optimal' use. In M. Turnbull & J. Dailey-O'Cain, (Eds.), *First language use in second and foreign language learning* (pp. 35–49). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

McMillan, B. & Turnbull, M. (2009). Teachers' use of the first language in French immersion: Revisiting a core principle. In M. Turnbull & J. Dailey-O'Cain, (Eds.), *First language use in second and foreign language learning* (pp. 15–34). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Oates, M.D. & Dubois, J.F. (2003). *Personnages*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin

ARTICLES

Polio, C. & Duff, P. (1994). Teachers' language use in university foreign language classrooms: A qualitative analysis of English and target language acquisition. *The Modern Language Journal*, *78*(3), 313–326.

Rolin-Ianziti, J. & Brownlie, S. (2002). Teacher use of learners' native language in the foreign language Classroom. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, *58*(3), 402–426.

Rolin-Ianziti, J. & Varshney, R. (2008). Students' views regarding the use of the first language: an exploratory study in a tertiary context maximising target language use. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, *65*(2), 249–273.

Satchwell, P. (1997). *Keep Talking : Teaching in the target language*. London: CILT.

St. Onge, S. & St. Onge, R. (2007). *Interaction: Révision de grammaire française*. Boston: Thomson Heinle.

Storch, N. & Aldosari, A. (2010). Learners' use of first language (Arabic) in pair work in an EFL class. *Language Teaching Research*, *14*(4), 355–375.

Taylor, A.M. (2002). L'alternance de code chez deux enseignants de français langueseconde, niveau debutant, dans l'enseignement assisté par ordinateur. *La Revue Canadienne des Langues Vivantes*, *58*(4), 623–652.

Turnbull, M. (2001). There is a role for the L1 in second and foreign language teaching, but…*The Canadian Modern Language Review*, *57*(4), 531–540.

Turnbull, M. (2006). Employons le français en français de base! *La Revue Canadienne des Langues Vivantes*, *62*(4), 611–628.

Turnbull, M. & Dailey-O'Cain, J. (2009). Concluding reflections: Moving forward. In M. Turnbull & J. Dailey-O'Cain, (Eds.), *First language use in second and foreign language learning* (pp. 182–186). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.