L1 Use in the L2 Classroom: One Teacher's Self-Evaluation

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Abstract: Predominant, if not exclusive, use of the target language has long been considered an important principle of second language (L2) instruction. Previous research has attempted to quantify the amount of the first language (L1) used in the classroom and has explored the purposes or functions of teachers' 'lapses' into their students' L1. The present study is a detailed analysis of one teacher's language use during one semester of a university-level Spanish course. The goal is fivefold: to determine the amount of L1 used; to analyze the functions of L1 use; to compare the teacher's perceptions with her actual L1 use; to compare students' perceptions with the teacher's actual L1 use; and to identify motivations or reasons underlying her L1 use. The findings have implications for classroom practice and emphasize the value of self-recording in teacher development.

Résumé : Le fait d'employer principalement, sinon exclusivement, la langue cible est considéré depuis longtemps comme un principe important pour l'enseignement d'une langue seconde. Les recherches antérieures visaient à quantifier la langue maternelle (L1) employée dans la classe et à explorer les objectifs ou les raisons de ce recours à la L1 des étudiants par l'enseignant. La présente étude contient une analyse détaillée de l'emploi de la L1 par une enseignante, durant un semestre, dans le cadre d'un cours d'espagnol de niveau universitaire. L'objectif était en cinq parties : déterminer la quantité de L1 employée par l'enseignante, analyser les fonctions de l'emploi de la L1 par celle-ci, comparer les perceptions de l'enseignante à l'emploi réel de la L1 par celle-ci, comparer les perceptions des étudiants à l'emploi réel de la L1 par l'enseignante et déterminer les motivations ou les raisons de ce recours à la L1. Les résultats ont des répercussions sur la pratique de l'enseignement et soulignent l'importance de l'autoenregistrement dans le perfectionnement des enseignants.

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Introduction

Extensive, if not exclusive, use of the target language is a long-standing tenet of second language (L2) teaching. On a personal level, both my experience as a language learner and my training as a linguist have convinced me of the need to maximize L2 use in the language classroom; yet my beliefs are not always reflected in my practice, a common disjunction for many teachers (Blyth, 1995). The inconsistency between what I believe and what I do is further complicated by the fact that I do not really know what I do. That is, I know that I use English in my first-year Spanish courses, but how much do I actually use? My perception that I do not speak much English is likely influenced by my belief that I should not.

On the other hand, I am also disturbed by any unqualified assumption that avoidance of the L1 is synonymous with good teaching. At times I have felt ridiculous trying to avoid English at all costs in my Spanish classes. Though I recognize the acquisitional and affective value of negotiating meaning in the L2, even in the communication of a peripheral point, I find that the benefits of such negotiation decrease when students perceive it as excessive or unnecessary.

This study, then, documents an attempt to reconcile my pedagogical beliefs about L1 use with my teaching practices. Specifically, I seek to discover how much English I used in a first-semester Spanish course; to identify the functions or purposes for which I used it; to compare my perceptions, and those of my students, with my actual practices; and, finally, to critique my L1/L2 use in light of my own pedagogical belief system.

The fact that I, the teacher/researcher, am the main participant in this study creates obvious problems of objectivity. From the beginning of the project I knew of its purpose and focus, and it is possible that this awareness affected my classroom behaviour. For the most part, caught up in the multiple activities of presenting material, facilitating activities, monitoring small-group work, and so on, I was oblivious to the tape recorder; however, I do remember at least one distinct moment when I intended to say something in English but, aware that I was collecting data, did not. Conversely, I also recall instances in which I opened my mouth to speak English, remembered that the recorder was running, and proceeded anyway.

Consequently, this is not an empirical investigation with replicable and generalizable findings. I conducted this study not primarily as a linguist or as a researcher but, rather, as a language teacher. My aim was to learn about my own teaching, to become more aware of what I

63, 2 (December/décembre)

actually say in the classroom, and to improve the effectiveness of my pedagogy. Thus, though the findings of this self-centred study are very personal, I report them in hopes that my process of reflective evaluation might be applicable or stimulating for other language teachers.

Previous research

The importance of reflective teaching is well established, as evidenced by the growth of action research (Lacorte & Cabal Krastel, 2002), the development of exploratory practice (Allwright & Lenzuen, 1997; Allwright, 2003), and interest in an analysis of morals or values in language teaching (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002; Johnston, 2003). Furthermore, research of an introspective, reflective nature, including teachers' self-analyses (Dutertre, 2000) and the use of reflective journals (Yahya, 2000), plays an important role in teacher development (Borg, 2001; Richards & Lockhart, 1994).

The issue of L1 use is central in teacher training and development. Some maintain that use of the L1 enhances the L2 learning process and advocate its careful, limited incorporation into classroom practice (Atkinson, 1993; Cook, 2001; Kharma & Hajjaj, 1989; Macaro, 2005). Other researchers are more reserved in embracing L1 use. Turnbull (2001) maintains that teachers already use the L1 and, if anything, need encouragement to increase their L2 use. Additional support for this position comes from research that provides concrete suggestions (Chambers, 1991; Duff & Polio, 1990) for teaching more exclusively in the target language.

From a sociolinguistic point of view, on the other hand, the language classroom is a multilingual community in which monolingual native-speaker norms should not be imposed. Consequently, teachers should see their students as developing bilinguals or as 'multicompetent' users (Belz, 2003; Cook, 2005) whose extensive L1 knowledge complements their growing L2 knowledge.

Indeed, studies based on sociocultural theory have explored L1 use by language learners involved in collaborative activities (Antón & DiCamilla, 1999; Brooks & Donato, 1994; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003; Swain & Lapkin, 2000) and concluded that the L1 is a cognitive tool that can facilitate the completion of L2 tasks. Findings also indicate that 'judicious use of the L1 can indeed support L2 learning and use' (Swain & Lapkin, 2000, p. 268).

The quantity and functions of L1 use have also been analyzed. The results of studies focused on the *quantity* of L1 and L2 use by language teachers (Duff & Polio, 1990; Polio & Duff, 1994; Rolin-Ianziti &

Brownlie, 2002) and language teachers in training (Macaro, 2001) indicate wide variation. For instance, Duff and Polio (1990) documented target language use ranging anywhere from 10% to 100% in the classes they studied. In contrast, the *functions* of L1 use seem strikingly similar. Polio and Duff (1994) identified eight categories of common L1 use: classroom administrative vocabulary, grammar instruction, classroom management, empathy/solidarity, practising English, unknown vocabulary/translation, lack of comprehension, and an interactive effect in which students' use of the L1 prompts their instructor to use it. Though they apply different labels, other studies (Macaro, 2001; Rolin-Ianziti & Brownlie, 2002) refer to similar functions.

Many of these findings on L1 and L2 use are based on periodic observations in L2 and FL classrooms. By looking at one teacher/researcher's L1 use over the course of an entire semester, the present study provides a longitudinal perspective.

The study

Participants

This study was based on two distinct points of view: my perceptions as the teacher/researcher and those of the 15 student participants from my Spanish 101 class. My perceptions reflect nine years in the language classroom at two universities, first as a graduate assistant and then as an assistant professor. The majority of students, ranging in age from 18 to 22, were false beginners who had had some previous contact with the Spanish language. They represented a variety of majors and, for the most part, were taking Spanish to fulfil the university's language requirement.

Data collection

Data come from three sources: 24 audio-recorded class sessions, a reflective journal, and written questionnaires. I, as the instructor, wore a lapel microphone every day during class to record all my language use during one semester of Spanish 101, which met for two 75-minute periods each week. I also kept a journal, writing one entry after each class session, in which I noted observations about and reactions to my own language use. Specifically, after each class, I estimated the amount of English I had spoken and tried to recall the purposes for which I had used it. At times, I philosophized about my pedagogical practices, defending or criticizing my L1 use in certain situations. I also found

myself commenting on other pedagogical issues, exploring my own values, and reacting to the ups and downs of each class period and the general trajectory of the course. Finally, on the last day of class, students completed written questionnaires focused on their perceptions of and reactions to my use of English and of Spanish.

Data analysis

First, all the recordings were transcribed. Then, the recordings/transcripts, journals, and questionnaires were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative analysis involved tallying questionnaire responses and timing, with a stopwatch,[1] the amount of English and the amount of Spanish I spoke throughout the semester.

As part of the qualitative analysis, the transcripts were coded, using the categories of L1 use identified by Polio and Duff (1994), and additional uses or functions were also noted. I then compared students' perceptions of my L1 use, as expressed in the questionnaires, and my perceptions, as expressed in the journal, with what the recordings indicated I had actually done. Finally, using the transcripts and journals, I identified several motivations underlying my L1 use.

Findings

The findings of this analysis will be divided into three sections: quantity of L1 use, functions of L1 use, and reasons or motivations underlying L1 use.

Quantity of L1 use

With respect to the overall quantity of L1 use, students' perceptions roughly coincided with mine. Table 1 presents students' responses to the questionnaire prompt, 'How much English does your teacher typically use?'[2]

Table 1
How much English does your teacher typically use?

Categories	Number of responses
A lot (most of the time)	1
Some	8
Very little	6
Never	0

Table 2
Did the amount of English your teacher used change over the course of the semester?

Categories	Number of responses
More English	2
Same	10
Less English	3

The students recognized that I did use English and, for the most part, described my English use as moderate. My perception was very similar. I believed that I spoke between 5% and 10% English in first-year language classes, a total that could also be roughly interpreted as 'some' or 'very little.'

Our perceptions differed, however, with respect to the pattern of my L1 use throughout the semester. Consider students' responses in Table 2.

The majority of students indicated that my use of English had remained relatively constant. Some students who reported a change in quantity offered explanations. For instance, Josh and Wendy[3] perceived a decrease in my English relative to their gains in listening comprehension:

> We understood more as time went on. (Josh)
> As we could understand more, more Spanish was spoken. (Wendy)

In contrast, other students perceived an increase in my use of English and attributed it to the escalating difficulty of course content:

> As difficulties arose more clarification was needed. (Kristopher)
> It got more complicated at the end of the semester. (Shelly)

My journal, specifically the increasing number of entries toward the end of the semester in which I expressed guilt over the amount of English I spoke in class, indicates that I shared Kristopher and Shelly's perception. Consider the following selections:

> *February 28 (Week 6)*
> I sometimes feel like I'm a little too free with English and am actually surprised as I consider how much I've used this week. I do feel a definite obligation to avoid English as much as possible and plan my lesson with transparencies, handouts, etc. to that end.

March 21 (Week 10)
I have really made a habit of doing announcements every day in English. I never intended to fall into this pattern, but I definitely have.

April 9 (Week 13)
I'm finding it harder and harder to use mostly Spanish as the semester progresses.

April 16 (Week 14)
I feel bad about my use of English today. I think I used it more than necessary – I used it to explain the concept of stem-changing verbs, but I probably could have explained them without it. I'm tired today and find that explaining anything is very difficult. I also realize that I have been relying on translation more than I need to.

Phrases like 'I'm a little too free with English,' 'I never intended to fall into this pattern,' 'I'm finding it harder and harder,' and 'I have been relying on translation more than I need to' convey a degree of regret. My belief in maximizing the use of Spanish never weakened; however, rather than restraining me from speaking English, it simply fed my sense of guilt (Cook, 2001) when I did.

These insights from teacher and student perceptions are more meaningful when compared with data that describe my actual English use. Table 3 indicates how many minutes of English I spoke during each class session and the percentage of teacher talk they represented. On the two dates marked by a dash I gave exams, and no formal teaching occurred.

Several observations can be made about the extreme fluctuations in my L1 use during the semester. First, when the percentages from Table 3 are averaged, total English use, in both whole-group and individual contexts, was 23%. My perception that my English use in Spanish 101 is approximately 5–10% percent is a clear underestimation, though it is important to note that this figure is not limited to whole-group instruction and includes comments made to individual students as they worked independently. Students' perceptions are accurate in the sense that 23% is neither 'never' nor 'a lot'; however, without precise definitions for 'some' and 'very little' from the student questionnaires, it is impossible to determine the exact degree to which student perceptions reflect my actual performance.

Because there are no established norms for quantity of L1 use, it is possible to evaluate the appropriateness of the English I spoke only in

Table 3
Actual L1 (English) use

Date		English use (rounded to nearest minute)	% of total teacher talk	Monthly average % of English use
January	15	16	30	18
	17	2	7	
	22	4	12	
	24	11	23	
	29	5	12	
	31	8	22	
February	5	6	16	22
	12	15	32	
	14	9	20	
	19	9	22	
	21	–	–	
	26	8	21	
	28	9	21	
March	5	4	10	17
	7	10	22	
	19	2	6	
	21	6	15	
	26	12	33	
	28	4	14	
April	4	7	15	42
	11	12	27	
	16	21	54	
	29	20	71	
	30	–	–	

anecdotal terms. Turnbull (2001, p. 536) refers to two Canadian studies in which 95% (Calman & Daniel, 1998) and 75% (Shapson, Kaufman, & Durward, 1978) were established as acceptable levels of L2 use. My L1 use is unacceptable by the first standard but acceptable according to the second. Establishing such guidelines raises a problematic issue of measurement and skirts the analysis of L1 functions, thereby implying that all uses of the L1 are equally justifiable. This issue will be further explored in the next section.

Second, data support the perception expressed by the majority of students that my English use did not change systematically over time. There is no evidence that I spoke more English at the beginning of the term, when students' language skills were less developed, nor that I spoke more English as course material became difficult; in fact, the two classes when I used the most English, on April 16 and April 29, were dedicated to reviewing for oral and written exams.

Rather than reflecting an overall, longitudinal pattern, spikes in my English use are closely tied to the particular activities of each class period. Consider the following three dates, when my English use peaked at over 30%. Though I spoke 70% Spanish on January 15, the first day of class, I also spent time in English outlining course requirements. On February 12, the first class after a snow day, I clarified numerous administrative issues: policies on weather-related cancellations and attendance, revised syllabus and due dates, the approaching midterm, students' first composition assignment, and tips for writing in the L2. On March 26 I also used English for administrative purposes: to inform students of a required cultural event, to explain a new activity, and to describe a poorly photocopied diagram on their quiz.

Finally, I used less English with these beginning language students in the first month of class (18%) than in the last month (42%). This change may reflect my concern over setting a high standard and giving students a clear picture, from the very first day, of my intention to teach primarily in the target language. Other possible explanations are explored in the next section.

Functions of L1 use

I used the L1 for various purposes in Spanish 101, several of which students noted on the questionnaire. Their open-ended comments were coded and are presented in Table 4.

These perceived uses correspond to the findings of previous research: namely, the use of the L1 for grammar instruction, for classroom management, and to compensate for a lack of comprehension. These functions, all confirmed in the data, were the most common purposes for which I used the L1.

My journal also refers to the uses students identified, as well as to other functions that I recalled carrying out in English during class. Consider the following entries:

> *January 24 (Week 1)*
> *[Classroom management]* Today was the first day for collecting workbooks – we're going to do it the same way all semester so I wanted to get off on the right foot. I explained it in English. I also talked about the quiz, explaining my system for grading homework, and gave some tips for memorizing vocabulary and for functioning in class when I speak all Spanish.
> *[Pre-listening activity]* I also flipped into English today before the video. I was trying to prepare students for something that would be very hard to understand. ... So, I gave them a run down of what to expect.

Table 4
For what purposes or in what situations does your teacher speak English?

Categories	Number of responses
To clarify (questions, directions, difficult points, grammar)	6
To give or explain directions	3
To compensate for lack of comprehension	6

February 26 (Week 6)
[Dealing with an unsuccessful vocabulary activity] I walked around speaking English trying to straighten things out but finally realized that the activity was flawed and stopped it.

March 7 (Week 7)
[Grammar-related questions] This class is remarkably inquisitive when it comes to grammar. I usually set things up in such a way that it's not necessary for me to speak much, if any, English. These students, however, ask an incredible number of questions about details that I don't intend to get into.
[Some cultural issues] We watched a video from the textbook today.... One of the Hispanic [heritage] students muttered, loudly, something about the family [on the video] having a lot of money. I felt that it was important that students understood that many average families have maids in Latin America, so I slipped into English.

March 21 (Week 10)
[Connecting with students] I remember cracking a joke, making a sarcastic remark at one point during class today. At the moment I did it I remember thinking consciously that I had used English. I was aware that the comment wasn't even necessary. Why would I use English for something that didn't even need to be said? I guess that one of the ways I try to connect with students is through humor and just trying to relate on a human level. I seem to rely on English for that.

April 4 (Week 12)
[Translation] I used a little English to help students figure out how to say a few things in Spanish. These were one-on-one teacher–pair encounters.

The recordings/transcripts verified that my journaling was quite accurate and that the instances I recalled had actually taken place. Because many of the functions for which I used the L1 have already been identified, or are clearly subsumed within the categories developed in pre-

vious research (Levine, 2003; Polio & Duff, 1994; Rolin-Ianziti & Brownlie, 2002), I will comment on only three of the preceding journal entries.

First, though there were numerous instances in which I used English for grammar-related issues, I also used Spanish to present and answer questions about grammar. In the following exchange, Student A makes an agreement error that Student B corrects; I then use the L2 to highlight *el problema* as an exception to the rule that most nouns ending in 'a' are feminine:

Student A: la problema
Student B: el
Teacher: el problema. Generalmente 'o' es masculino y 'a' femenino, pero tenemos excepciones y el problema es un, una excepción [*Generally 'o' is masculine and 'a' feminine, but we have exceptions, and* el problema *is an exception.]*

Thus, the fact that a teacher sometimes uses the L1 to deal with grammar-related issues does not mean that she does not also address those issues in the L2. The decision to use the L1 reflects a variety of factors, one of which is the difficulty of the grammar point, or, more specifically, the difficulty of making the grammar point comprehensible through the L2. There is evidence in these data that this variability also holds true for other functions. With respect to culture, for instance, I used the L2 to explain the source of Spanish speakers' two last names but reverted to English when talking about the fact that many Latin American families have maids.

A second observation about the functions I carried out in the L1 comes from the March 7 entry regarding cultural issues. Teaching about target cultures is an important objective in the L2 classroom that should be integrated into, not separated from, language study. Certainly, many aspects of the target culture can be highlighted in the L2 through visual images, realia, and so on, and, for strictly presentational purposes, teachers can likely find ways to portray cultural events or practices exclusively in the L2. However, if students make comments that reveal stereotypical understandings or inaccurate comprehension, teachers have two options: ignore remarks that cannot be addressed in the L2 or respond in the L1. It may not be possible to reach the deeper understanding of cultural products, practices, and perspectives recommended by language-teaching organizations like ACTFL using the level of Spanish that students comprehend in a first-year L2 course.

Third, in reference to the January 24 entry, using the L1 for a prelistening activity may have made the L2 video input more salient. As

also noted in the same day's entry, students' comprehension of the video was good. Without data to assess how students processed L2 input from the video, it is impossible to validate this anecdotal observation. However, the use of L1 to make L2 input more salient (Turnbull, 2001) is one of its most accepted functions.

Reasons or motivations for L1 use

As important as what I perceived that I had done and what I actually did are the underlying reasons or motivations that prompted me to use the L1 when, in Turnbull and Arnett's words, 'guidelines clearly prescribe the opposite' (2002, pp. 211–212). Though there are undoubtedly multiple reasons, I identified three that explain, in part, my use of the L1. I highlight these factors because, in my opinion, their pedagogical implications extend beyond the L1/L2 issue.

First, as a teacher I feel a moral obligation to my students. I define 'morality' here not in the traditional sense of right or wrong but, rather, in reference to the value-laden decisions that I as a teacher make on a moment-by-moment basis (Johnston, 2003). For example, every semester I teach students of diverse ethnic backgrounds, and in the 101 class highlighted for this study I struggled with the pronunciation of one student's name. One day, when I called on him, his response made it clear that, once again, I had mispronounced his name. I replied, '*¡No! Yo quiero hacerlo correctamente*' ['No, I want to do it right'], and tried again. He laughed and mockingly pronounced his name several different ways. At this point, I was truly concerned about his feelings and unconsciously switched to English, the language that, quite frankly, was the most 'real' for all of us: 'Hey, I'm a language teacher. I can learn to say your name. Help, say it really slow.' Though my pronunciation efforts ultimately failed, I did verbalize my good intentions and, I hope, communicated interest in and respect for this student.

The point of this example is that my concern about my students as individuals, as human beings, at times transcends my concern for their L2 acquisition process. On the day of this mispronunciation incident I wrote in my journal,

> Should this encounter have been avoided so as not to use the native language in class? No way. There are issues of feelings and respect and rapport that, for me, are more important than how much Spanish my students learn.

Obviously, these kinds of relational concerns do not preclude L2 use in every case, but, if a choice must be made, I will probably opt for the L1.

This approach to establishing rapport or solidarity ties with students is somewhat controversial. Polio and Duff (1994) note that this use of English may indeed create a pleasant atmosphere, but, they add,

> While this may have positive affective consequences, it nonetheless prevents students from receiving input they might be exposed to in 'real life' social situations outside the classroom and reinforces the notion that *English*, not the FL, is the language for genuine communication in the classroom. (p. 322)

I agree that, far too often, the L2 is a topic rather than a means of communication in L2 classrooms. However, in some learning situations, namely when students study an L2 simply to fulfil an academic requirement, positive affective consequences are not peripheral; in fact, I would argue that some students who enter the classroom fearful, or even resentful, do not learn well without them. Thus, there are moments when my sense of moral obligation to a student, in this case concern about communicating respect and creating a positive environment, overrides my belief in maximizing L2 use.

Second, I, as a language teacher, have multiple goals (Cook, 2001); language acquisition is not my only objective. In addition to equipping my students to become proficient users of Spanish, I want to help them recognize the difficulty of learning a language, better understand the relationship between language and the realities it describes, and avoid stereotypical ideas about Hispanic cultures. These objectives are not always possible to achieve through the L2. One particular instance occurred when my Spanish 101 class viewed a segment from the video that accompanies our textbook. The linguistic objective was listening comprehension; they were to put several historical events in chronological order. After viewing the segment, one student criticized idealized representations of Mexican history, highlighting the Spanish conquest and the contemporary situation in Chiapas as counter-examples.

Though pursuing his comment in Spanish was impossible so early in the course, this student's critique grabbed his classmates' attention and, in my opinion, warranted further consideration. I affirmed his observation and opened the topic to the whole class for discussion. In my journal I noted the following reflections on my use of English in this situation:

> *February 26 (Week 6)*
> In my opinion this discussion was extremely important. Developing an awareness that reality and representation can be very different when

> looking at other cultures is a central part of the language learning experience. We should leave our students with tools to help them interpret language and cultural matters on their own. Skills and approaches for thinking about what they observe. At times students are so challenged with just understanding the language, as in the case of this video, that they don't have the capacity to evaluate or critique it. I also like the fact that the students learned from each other. Josh, the student who spoke up, taught his classmates something – his observation hadn't even occurred to me. I wanted them to see me entertain his comments, let him have his say, and hopefully realize that their observations, whether positive or negative, will be just as welcome.

This student's comment related to an important objective of the course: interpreting representations of other cultures in non-stereotypical ways. Furthermore, I highly value the teaching/learning that takes place between students; this comment presented an opportunity for them to share their knowledge and shape our agenda.

The third reason for my L1 use was much more negative; I was humbled to find instances throughout the transcript in which I could explain my use of English by nothing other than my own laziness. In several journal entries toward the end of the semester I made comments such as 'I'm tired and have a hard time forcing myself to be disciplined' (April 9) and 'It's hard to feel disciplined enough to use all Spanish at the end of the semester' (April 29). Other language teachers report similar feelings: 'I know from personal experience that it is tempting to use the L1 to save time, especially when one is tired or when students are particularly agitated' (Turnbull, 2001, p. 536). Though laziness did not underlie a large proportion of my L1 use, it is pedagogically unsupportable, no matter how infrequent, and is the likely target of previously mentioned efforts to establish exclusive, or near-exclusive, L2 use as the norm.

Implications for language teaching

These motivations, both positive and negative, have implications for language teaching. I do not believe that instructors should compromise their sense of moral obligation to their students, nor that they should sacrifice valuable objectives for the sake of exclusive, or nearly exclusive, L2 use. On the other hand, laziness is pedagogically inexcusable; it must be identified through thoughtful, honest self-analysis and remedied with effort and strategic lesson planning.

Though moral obligations and multiple objectives may seem too subjective to serve as effective criteria for evaluating L1 use, I maintain that L1 use is, in fact, a subjective issue. The appropriate quantity of L1 use by teachers cannot be defined universally, as a fixed percentage, because it is inseparably linked to the underlying function or purpose. Though any amount of 'purposeless' L1 use – use that stems from laziness, for instance – is unacceptable, L1 use that reflects other functions may justifiably be extensive in some circumstances. One must also keep in mind that certain lessons may lend themselves more readily to meeting multiple objectives; consequently, extensive L1 use may be more justifiable on one day of class than on another.

As a starting point, language teachers should identify, and perhaps re-evaluate, their moral obligations to their students and their objectives for the language learning process. These personalized factors or values are helpful in revealing inconsistencies between personal beliefs and teaching practices. Arguably, teachers could use this personal set of pedagogical values to justify virtually any classroom practice, but a personalized approach that allows teachers to maintain their own beliefs can also be meaningful and empowering. Such an approach requires focused reflection, critical thinking, and honest analysis rather than blind, perhaps half-hearted, adherence to a professional guideline or simple surrender to one's own laziness. Ideally, it reflects a bottom-up, rather than a top-down, vision of a thoughtful pedagogy growing out of a sense of ownership and a set of beliefs informed by research, training, and experience. Consequently, instead of trying to influence teachers' behaviour by mandating L2 use, particularly when teachers' practices suggest that such a mandate is impractical, it may be more appropriate to create opportunities for teachers to study their own contexts and reach realistic, local conclusions. 'Judicious' L1 use will likely look different in different classrooms.

Conclusions

The findings of this analysis reveal that the quantity and functions of my L1 use were similar to those reported in previous research; though some of my perceptions and those of my students were accurate, others were not. As evidenced by the fact that I believe L2 use should be maximized, yet 'unnecessarily' used the L1, my pedagogical beliefs are not always reflected in my classroom practice. Rather, in certain teaching situations, another set of beliefs, also pedagogical but more relational in nature, overrides my beliefs about the process of L2 acquisition and my adherence to professional guidelines. This additional set of beliefs, the

reasons or motivations underlying my L1 use in the present study, consists of factors that I consider both positive (such as moral obligations to my students and multiple objectives for language teaching) and negative (sheer laziness).

As previously noted, the recordings and reflections described in this highly personal study offer no generalizable results but do highlight an effective technique for self-evaluation that is applicable to a variety of pedagogical topics. Language teachers, for example, may wish to explore the potential impact of their L1 use on their students' L2 use. They may study their use of interrogatives and evaluate the degree to which their questioning practices are meaningful and push students to think critically. Regardless of the topic for analysis, recording and evaluating one's teaching practices is an important part of professional development and, as in this study, constitute a first step toward understanding one's linguistic and pedagogical choices in the classroom.

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Notes

1 Though the use of other technologies would have produced more precise measurements, the reflective purpose and subjective nature of this study made such measurements unnecessary.
2 This question reveals a flaw in the questionnaire design. The meaning of possible responses ('a lot,' 'some,' and 'very little') should have been delineated by a range of percentages (i.e., 'very little' = 1–5%, etc.). Such clarification would have limited the number of possible interpretations of these terms and facilitated more meaningful comparisons with the actual data.
3 Student names given here are pseudonyms chosen by the author.

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