

A Project entitled

***The relationship of pre-service teachers' beliefs and practice of first language usage in
Hong Kong English lessons***

Submitted by

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Declaration

I, *Chung Yi Tak* , declare that this research report represents my own work under the supervision of *Dr. LEE, Wing Sze Wincy* , and that it has not been submitted previously for examination to any tertiary institution.

Signed _____

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Abstract

First language usage in English lessons has been a controversial issue for decades. This paper identifies the pre-service teachers' beliefs and actual L1 use, as well as makes comparison of them. A group of 38 pre-service English teachers were studied through self-report of their language use in teaching practice. Source of information included questionnaires and interviews. The results found that 'English-mainly' approach was preferred and students' English proficiency was the key factor influencing teachers' language choice. Besides, dealing with discipline problems and building rapport with students are the two main aspects for L1 use. For the comparison, it is found that most of the participants' actual language use matched their beliefs.

Introduction

Background

The role of first language (L1) in English as Second Language (ESL) classrooms remains to be a controversial debate in the field of English language teaching and learning. The arguments appear in two sides that some researches advocate the 'English-only' environment with complete exclusion of L1 while some advocate the 'English-mainly' environment with the maximization of English usage and minimization of L1 usage. It results in the arguments about whether students' L1 should be used and the optimal amount of L1 use in English classroom especially when both teachers and students share the same L1.

There are several arguments of the prevalence of 'English-only' teaching and learning approach and 'English-mainly' approach with the integration of L1 in English acquisition. Although there is not enough research evidence to support the saying that L2 is best learnt in L2-only environment (Lee, 2012; Tetiurka, 2016), many teachers still believe in it to teach with maximized interactions in English (Jacobs & Kimura, 2013). One of the main reasons for the L1 avoidance is the belief of L1 interference that learners may transfer errors from L1 learning habits to L2 learning (Macaro, 2005; Mouhanna, 2009). However, L1 and L2 are believed to be separate linguistic systems that not all the errors result from negative L1 transfer (Cook, 2001). Although the integration of L1 may also result in reliance on L1, it does help L2 learners to learn more effectively in a non-threatening environment (Hung, 2012). Students feel comfortable in learning through relating the knowledge to a more familiar language (Meiring & Norman, 2002). Besides, Cook (2001) stated that bilinguals think more flexibly than monolinguals. Translation of L2 into L1 and code-switching are natural and inevitable in L2 acquisition. It is argued that the total exclusion of L1 is infeasible as it is an essential tool in language learning which serves a number of functions (Eldridge, 1996; Macaro, 1997). Both high and low achievers can benefit from the judicious use of L1 (Careless, 2001). It is also regarded as a common strategy to compensate for the low L2 proficiency. Instead of the avoidance of using L1, teachers should emphasize the similarities and differences between L1 and L2 in teaching (Cook, 2001).

In Hong Kong, learners' mother tongue is mainly Cantonese and Chinese while English is taught as a second language. The English Language Teaching (ELT) approaches have changed from the use of translation into Chinese as the main teaching method to the reduction of Chinese use in the past few decades in Hong Kong. With the failure of Grammar-Translation Method that led to the idea of banning L1 use, the Communicative Language Teaching was adopted to maximize English use through various communicative learning activities in Hong Kong English curriculum (Curriculum Development Council, 2004). Apart from Hong Kong, some Asian countries have adopted the policy of maximizing English usage in English classroom with minimal L1 usage as assistance, for example, the revised English language curriculum by Ministry of Education in China (Wang & Lam, 2009) and the 'Teaching English through English' policy in South Korea (Jeon, 2008).

In spite of the advocacy of maximization of English to provide students with more opportunities to explore and use the language (Butzkamm, 2003; Turnbull & Arnett, 2002; Littlewood & Yu, 2011), the actual English use in the lessons depends heavily on teachers' decision (Bateman, 2008). Polio and Duff's (1994) study found that teachers seemed to be unaware of their actual language use in the lessons, especially pre-service teachers. Unless asked by the supervisors, they would not spend much time to reflect their language use. Besides, they have less teaching experience than the in-service teachers that makes it more difficult for them to decide the proper language use (Bateman, 2008). Even though the teachers support and adopt the 'English-mainly' approach, the actual L1 use may be different from their expectations due to various factors with students' language proficiency as the most influential one (Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Macaro, 1997).

Objective of the research

Based on the arguments of 'English-only' and the 'English-mainly' approaches, this research paper aims to study the beliefs of Hong Kong pre-service English teachers in L1 use in ESL classroom, their practice of L1 use, and the relationship between their beliefs and actual practice. Most of the studies in this area focus on either teachers' beliefs or the functions of L1 without identifying whether their actual language use matches their beliefs. Since Polio and Duff's (1994) study found that there was a lack of awareness by teachers on their language use in classrooms, it is important to examine the relationship between their language choice and actual use and find out whether they realize the difference in between. Furthermore, very few studies about language use focused on the pre-service teachers' perspectives according to Turnbull & Arnett's (2002) review, especially in Hong Kong context. Under the influence of teacher training and teaching practice, their beliefs and language use may be different from those experienced in-service teachers. If their awareness of language use is weak, more teachers' training and education will be needed to enhance their awareness.

Research Questions

In this research, three research questions are asked.

- (1) What are the beliefs on L1 use in ESL classroom pre-service teachers?
- (2) What is the practice of L1 use in ESL classroom of pre-service teachers?
- (3) What is the relationship between beliefs of L1 use and actual practice in ESL classroom of pre-service teachers?

Literature Review

Teachers' beliefs can be formed by various factors including teaching and learning experiences, education policies, and others' perspectives (Hall & Cook, 2012; McMillan & Rivers, 2011). An 'English-mainly' policy instead of 'English-only' approach is suggested to provide more autonomy for teachers to decide language use based on local context (Macaro, 2009; McMillan & Rivers, 2011). Although there are a lot of factors affecting the language choice, teachers have the role of making the final decision of the language use in class. According to the research by Koizumi (2012), the amount of students' L1 use is mainly influenced by the teachers' instructions and nature of the task. Students tend to use more L1 if it is permitted by the teacher or when the task is a pair work or group work. Thus, teachers' judgement is a key factor of the extent of L1 and L2 use in English lessons.

Preference of 'English-mainly' approach

Recent studies found that scholars and teachers preferred the integration of L1 in L2 learning than L2-only with the positive influence of L1 use (Bateman, 2008; Mohebbi & Alavi, 2014; Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009). Schweer's (1999) survey and Tang's (2002) study found that both teachers and students were positive towards L1 use in classroom and L1 was actually used by most of the teacher participants. Furthermore, in Tan's (2017) research, all teacher participants found it impractical to exclude L1 use in L2 classroom because of its positive contribution to L2 learning. Yet, they agreed that L1 should not be overused and students' L1 use should be monitored in order not to interfere L2 learning by reducing the amount of comprehensible input.

Proportion of L1 use in lesson time in Asian countries

The proportion of language use varies among the culture in different countries. Littlewood and Yu's (2011) research on the amount of L1 use in English lessons at junior secondary schools in students' perspectives found that the overall L1 use in Hong Kong and Mainland were 20% and 64%, respectively. 60% of Hong Kong students remembered that less than 10% of the lesson time was conducted in L1 while over 60% of Mainland students revealed that L1 was used in over half of the lesson time. Even in the same country, the L1 use can vary greatly among teachers. Liu et. al. (2004) measured the amount of L1 use of thirteen high-school teachers through audio recordings in South Korea and found that it ranged from 10% to 90%, with an average of 40%.

Using L1 to support students' L2 learning

Contrary to the belief that L1 use reduces the exposure and use of L2, L1 can support teaching and learning process by reducing learning anxiety and enhancing comprehension (Tang, 2002). First of all, L1 helps facilitate students' understanding of the concepts and terms in English. There is no other means better than using students' L1 to provide the accurate concepts to them (Hung, 2012; Marian & Spivey, 2003). L1 can be used as input to scaffold students' learning. New knowledge can be built up on the translation of the language that both teachers and students are familiar with, without further explanation in target language that may lead to misunderstanding (Hung, 2012). In addition, using L1 can reduce students' affective barriers and anxiety in learning (Auerbach, 1993; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003). It can also enhance reluctant and fearful students' engagement in lesson activities (Harbord, 1992; Tang, 2002). Kahraman's (2009) research found that the use of mother tongue could enhance learners' motivation and reduce anxiety as it is regarded as a compensation for the lack of English proficiency. Learners were more confident and willing to participate in the in-class activities. Students with lower English proficiency tend to use L1 to comprehend content in L2, especially in understanding complex task instructions and vocabulary (Tan, 2017).

The three major functions of L1 use

L1 serves various functions in teachers' perspectives. Littlewood and Yu (2011) divided the functions into three dimensions, which were building up constructive teacher-students relationship, saving time in explaining complex concepts and unknown words, and managing the class. Their research found that the three main purposes of English teachers' L1 use in Hong Kong were sharing personal issues with students, providing definition of unfamiliar words and dealing with discipline problems. Liu et. al.'s (2004) study in South Korea also had similar findings that explanation of grammar and vocabulary and classroom management were the two most common reasons for code-switching to L1.

Similarly, Sali (2014) categorized the functions of L1 use into three main functions that were academic, managerial and social functions. The sub-functions included explanation of English, translation, checking comprehension, managing discipline and building rapport. Among the three functions, it was found that a majority of teachers in Turkey preferred to use L1 for academic purposes as it could simplify the complex concepts to save lesson time for explanation (Sali, 2014). For managerial functions, L1 was regarded as a method to increase the seriousness of teachers' points (Cameron, 2001). If L2 was used to deal with discipline problems, teachers' real emotions of anger and disappointment might be failed to express. Moreover, teachers in Sali's (2004) research developed a more personal relationship with students and a sense of socio-cultural identity by using the shared L1.

Constraints of language use

Although some teachers may feel 'guilty' for using mother tongue to teach, there are several constraints of not using it. The most common one is students' low English language proficiency and others include the lack of teaching confidence in English and exam pressure (Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Liu et. al., 2004). They regard L1 as a tool to overcome these limitations.

Teachers play a crucial role to judge the amount of L1 use in classrooms and students' need is usually placed at the center in deciding language use. Comparing to Asian countries, the percentage of L1 use was relatively low in Hong Kong but it might vary among teachers' beliefs and practice. For the arguments of L1 use, recent studies found that 'English-mainly' approach was preferred in general as L1 serves several functions in L2 learning. There were three major functions including explaining difficult words and complex ideas, managing the class and building rapport. L1 use could facilitate students' learning cognitively and affectively. However, the maximization of English use in classrooms was encouraged since the comprehensible input of L2 would decrease with the overuse of L1. This research could identify whether the pre-service English teachers in Hong Kong share the same view towards language use and their actual practice in the three major functions.

Research Design

Targeted participants

The participants were local pre-service English teachers whose first language is Cantonese and Chinese. The participants involved in the research were 38 pre-service English teachers from the Education University of Hong Kong to ensure they receive similar teacher training. Four of them were male and the rest were female, and their ages ranged from 22 to 24. They were all Year 5 students who finished their teaching practice in the first semester at a local primary or secondary school.

Procedure

In this study, data was collected by structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews after the teaching practice. The sequential explanatory model suggested by Creswell et. al. (2003) is adopted to gather quantitative data through questionnaires in the first phase and followed by qualitative data through interviews. The participants were selected by convenience sampling that all of them were Year 5 pre-service English teachers studying at the same university. They were bilinguals whose first language is Cantonese. First, they were invited to participate in the research through email or phone. After signing the consent form, they were given a link to access the online questionnaire which took around ten minutes to finish. Then, six of them were chosen for the semi-structured interviews based on the analysis of the results from the questionnaire. Each interview took around 30 minutes at the university.

Questionnaire

An online questionnaire (Appendix II) was given to 38 participants to measure their beliefs towards the use of L1 in teaching English, their language choice and actual L1 use during teaching practice. The items of functions of L1 were selected from Bateman's (2008) research on pre-service teachers' perceptions of the language use in different classroom activities and modified from Mohebbi and Alavi's (2014) research on teachers' L1 use in English language classrooms. The previous one focuses on the language choice whereas the latter one focuses on the actual language use. Participants had to indicate their language choice in 15 classroom activities and how often they used L1 in 22 items in Likert scale.

Interview

Based on the results from the questionnaires, six participants were selected for the semi-structured interviews to understand more about their beliefs and actual use of L1 in teaching practice. All of them taught students with low or low to intermediate English proficiency.

Results and findings

Questionnaire

Pre-service teachers' beliefs in language use

The first part in the questionnaire addresses the first research question about beliefs in language use. The pre-service teachers rated in a five-point Likert scale table to indicate their degree of agreement of each statement. The first two statements showed whether they supported the 'English-only' or 'English-mainly' approaches and the last one revealed whether they believe that L1 is inevitable or it could be replaced by other means of teaching. Among the factors affecting their beliefs, only two factors were selected after comparing all the items with t-test. Levels of students and their English language proficiency were taken into consideration since they yielded statistical significance. The higher the mean scores, the higher the tendency of the respondents to agree to the statement.

Both tables show that the respondents tended to disagree to the complete exclusion of L1 in ESL classroom, especially those who taught S1-3 students. For the second statement, most of them agreed to the maximization of English use and the minimization of L1 use. The relationship between this statement and the level of students was statistically significant ($p=0.008$). Pre-service teachers who taught S1-3 students mainly chose 'disagree' while those who taught primary students mainly chose 'agree' or 'strongly agree'. Similarly, most of the respondents agreed that L1 is inevitable in English learning with a significant relationship to students' English proficiency ($p=0.023$). Three respondents who taught students with high proficiency disagreed while the rest of them tended to agree to the statement.

Table 1 The relationship between the beliefs on L2 use in ESL classroom and level of students

	Level of students	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
7a. English should be taught in an 'English-only' approach with the complete exclusion of L1.	P1-3	20	2.75	0.91
	P4-6	10	2.80	1.14
	S1-3	4	1.50	0.58
	P1-6	4	2.25	0.50
	Total	38	2.58	0.98
7b. The use of English in ESL classrooms should be maximized and the use of L1 should be minimized.	P1-3	20	3.90	0.72
	P4-6	10	4.10	0.99
	S1-3	4	2.50	0.58
	P1-6	4	4.00	0.00
	Total	38	3.82	0.87
7c. The use of L1 is inevitable in English learning.	P1-3	20	3.85	0.75
	P4-6	10	3.30	1.25
	S1-3	4	3.25	0.96
	P1-6	4	3.25	0.50
	Total	38	3.58	0.92

Table 2 The relationship between the beliefs on L2 use in ESL classroom students' English proficiency

	English Proficiency	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
7a. English should be taught in an 'English-only' approach with the complete exclusion of L1.	low	6	2.50	1.22
	low-inter	18	2.50	0.86
	inter-high	5	2.60	0.89
	high	3	3.67	1.53
	mixed	6	2.33	0.82
	Total	38	2.58	0.98
7b. The use of English in ESL classrooms should be maximized and the use of L1 should be minimized.	low	6	4.00	1.10
	low-inter	18	3.67	0.91
	inter-high	5	3.40	0.89
	high	3	4.67	0.58
	mixed	6	4.00	0.00
	Total	38	3.82	0.87
7c. The use of L1 is inevitable in English learning.	low	6	4.00	0.89
	low-inter	18	3.61	0.78
	inter-high	5	3.80	0.45
	high	3	2.00	1.00
	mixed	6	3.67	1.03
	Total	38	3.58	0.92

Language choice and actual language use

The second part of the questionnaire focused mainly on the second research question about practice of L1 use of pre-service teachers. Among the functions of L1 in the questionnaire, six items from questions 8 and 9 were chosen for comparison according to the three major functions categorized by scholars. The rest of them were deleted due to no equivalent pairs or redundancy. In the following, the first figure shows which language is preferred by the participants while the second one indicates how much L1 was actually used in the teaching practice.

Figure 1 displays that the pre-service teachers chose to use the least L1 in teaching new vocabulary (3%). Besides, less than 20% of them chose to use mostly L1 to explain grammar concepts. Although most of them preferred to use 'nearly all in L2' or 'mostly in L2' for these two situations, one-third of them were neutral to choose 'half L1, half L2'. On the other hand, nearly half of the respondents would use 'mostly in L1' or 'nearly all in L1' in providing clarification (40%), building rapport with students (44%) and giving individual help (48%). Dealing with discipline problems was the situation that a majority of them choose to use more L1 (71%).

Figure 1 Pre-service teachers' language choice

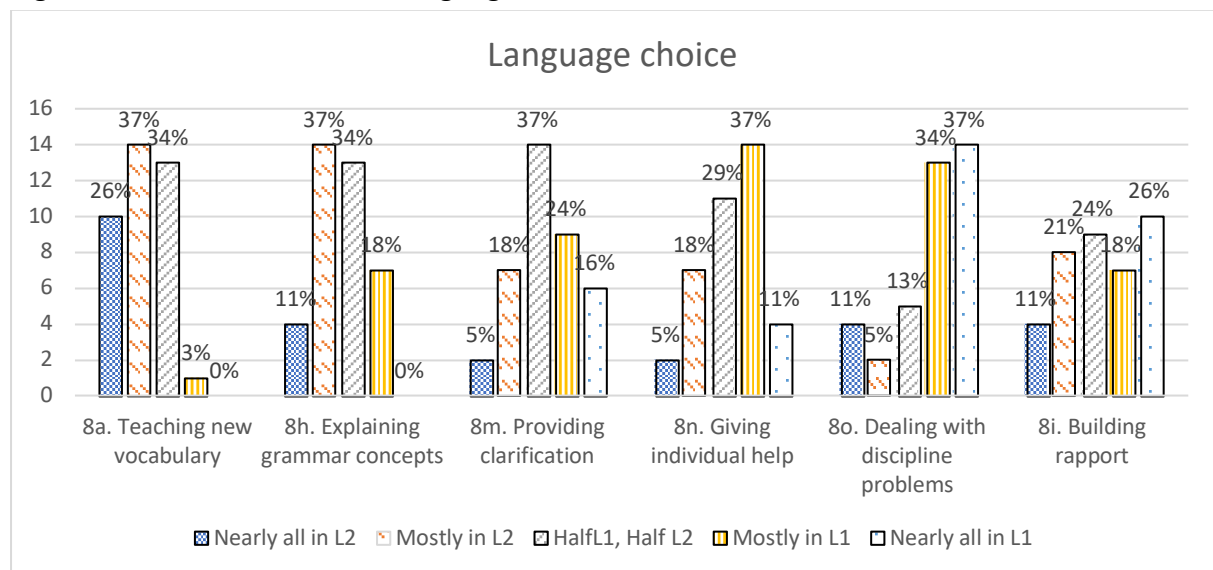


Figure 2 Pre-service teachers' actual L1 use

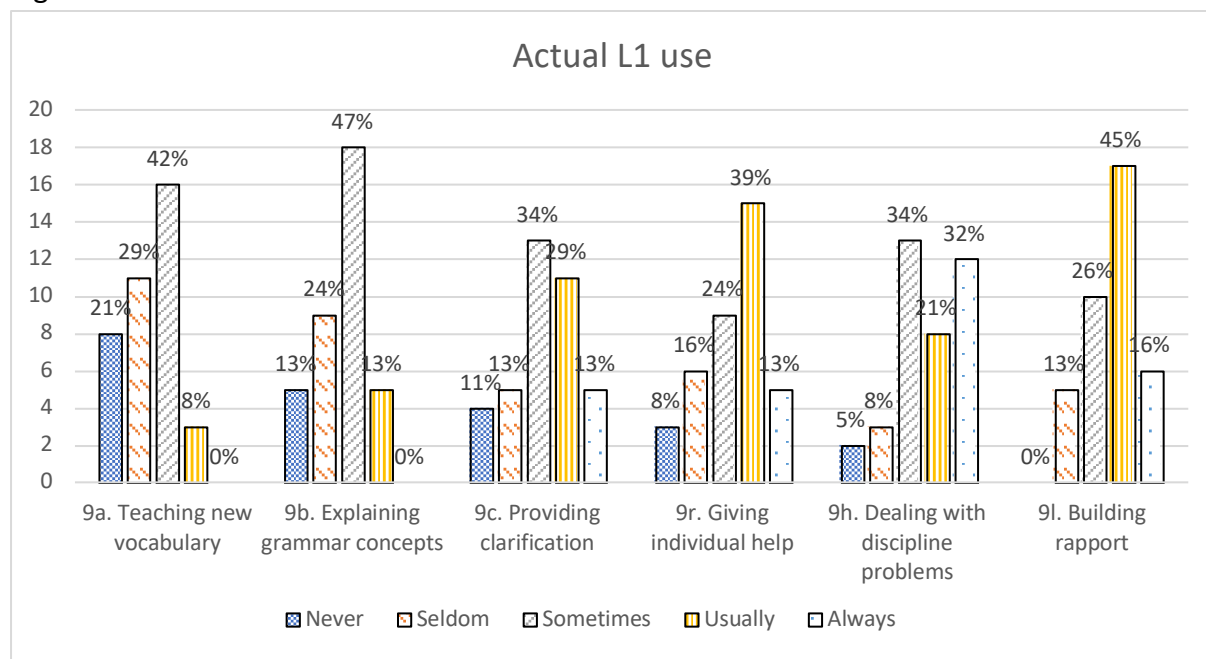


Figure 2 shows the pre-service teachers' actual L1 use in their teaching practice. Similar to their language choice, teaching new vocabulary and explaining grammar concepts were the two situations that they used least L1 with 8% and 13% for 'usually' and none for 'always'. Furthermore, over half of them always or usually used L1 in giving individual help (52%), dealing with discipline problems (53%) and building rapport (61%). One-third of them always used L1 to handle discipline problems, which is the highest among the six items.

Comparison of language choice and actual L1 use

In order to identify whether the pre-service teachers' language choices matched their actual language use in the teaching practice, their responses in the six chosen items were compared. It gave a general idea of the relationship between the beliefs and practice in each item. Number 1 to 5 were assigned for the five scales from 'Nearly all in L2' to 'Nearly all in L1' in question 8 and from 'Never' to 'Always' in question 9. The difference in each item was calculated and shown in the following table. 'Positive' indicates less L1 was used than expected while 'Negative' means more L1 was actually used.

In table 3, it is found that around half of their actual practice matched the language choices in most of the items with the highest in dealing with discipline problems and the lowest in building rapport. Comparing the results, a higher percentage in 'Negative' than 'Positive' in teaching new vocabulary, explaining grammar concepts and giving individual help. The biggest difference found in the use of L1 in building rapport with students. For 'Positive', around one-third of them used less L1 than they expected in providing clarification when students had difficulties in understanding in English.

Table 3 Comparison of the language choice and actual L1 use

	Number of participants		
	Positive	No difference	Negative
(1) Teaching new vocabulary (8a, 9a)	6 (16%)	21 (55%)	11 (29%)
(2) Explaining grammar concepts (8h, 9b)	8 (21%)	20 (53%)	10 (26%)
(3) Providing clarification (8m, 9c)	12 (32%)	19 (50%)	7 (18%)
(4) Giving individual help (8n, 9r)	7 (18%)	23 (61%)	8 (21%)
(5) Dealing with discipline problems (8o, 9h)	8 (21%)	26 (68%)	4 (11%)
(6) Building rapport (8i, 9l)	6 (16%)	17 (45%)	15 (39%)

Based on the two figures about language choice and actual L1 use, the participants chose to and used more L1 in dealing with discipline problems and building rapport with students. For academic purposes related to vocabulary and grammar concepts, they preferred and actually used more English than L1. In the comparison table, around half of their actual language use in teaching practice matched their preferences of language choice. Building rapport, teaching new vocabulary and explaining grammar concepts are the three main items that the participants underestimated their L1 use.

Interview

Based on the statistical results from questionnaires, six semi-structured interviews were conducted to help explain the quantitative results and address the third research question about the difference in beliefs and actual practice. The interviews were transcribed and categorized into the following themes for analysis.

Preference of 'English-mainly' approach to support teaching and learning

All of the six participants believe that there is a need of L1 in English teaching. Four of them used to think it is feasible to teach English in an 'English-only' environment but their beliefs changed after the teaching practice mainly because of students' low English proficiency. Even though some tried to use visual aids and simplify the wordings to facilitate understanding, students still found it difficult to understand in English. Thus, they had to use L1 as assistance in teaching. Moreover, they thought using students' L1 to teach could help reduce their fear towards learning English and enhance the effectiveness of teaching. Although integration of L1 can help their teaching, three of them stated that they still tried to minimize the L1 use in English lessons as their role in teaching is to maximize students' exposure of English in English lessons.

Students' English proficiency as a crucial factor

Students' English proficiency is the main factor affecting the interviewees' language use mentioned by all the them. For students with low and intermediate English proficiency, they found it hard to use entire English to teach as some students were unable to understand in English and failed to follow the instructions. Another key factor is the limited

lesson time. Using translation was also the simplest and quickest way for students to understand without confusing them with extra English terms to explain a particular vocabulary item. Besides, there were other factors mentioned by the participants including students' family background, school policy on language use, topic of teaching, their own learning experiences and expectations from colleagues.

Percentage of L1 use and proportion in three major functions

All the interviewees used L1 in their teaching practice from approximately 10% to nearly 60% of their lesson time to low level or low to intermediate level students. L1 use can be divided into academic, managerial and social functions. For academic functions, L1 was used only when necessary such as teaching abstract new vocabulary and complex grammar concepts that are difficult to explain with other aids. However, in dealing with discipline problems and building rapport, more L1 was used and some of the interviewees directly switched to L1.

In handling students' misbehaviors, using Cantonese could give students a signal that the teacher was going to tell them something serious and they had to pay attention to it. As they are not directly related to academic issues, the interviewees found it acceptable to use more L1 to make the messages clear to students. 'I am more fluent in L1 when I try to point out their discipline and behavioral problems. If it is in English, students will think I am just joking or being nice, don't take it seriously', said an interviewee. Another interviewee stressed that 'Cantonese is more effective to get the authority'. Since most of their students were weak in English, they found it meaningless to punish or scold students in English. Students might even misunderstand or ignore teachers' words. A change of language can also draw students' attention. Thus, some of them directly switch to L1 for discipline problems to show authority and express anger.

In building rapport with students, they also tended to use more L1 than English as students were more willing to share in L1. As both the teachers' and students' share the same L1, it was more comfortable and easier for students to share their feelings in L1. One interviewee shared that he sometimes included 'funny jokes, idioms, colloquial terms' in the lessons to enhance the interaction. He thought it would be useless if students didn't understand the jokes and terms in English, so he chose to use L1.

Perceptions of the effectiveness on L1 use

In teaching students with low to intermediate English proficiency, the interviewees agreed that there is a need to use L1. It was also more effective to teach with L1 as assistance. One of them said, 'I think that having the aid of L1 is better in understanding complicated concepts or in understanding instructions or vocabulary.' Another interviewee shared his view towards English learning that forcing students to use only English would result in less engagement as they were not able to follow. As long as L1 could improve

students' motivation and engagement in the lesson, it should not be completely excluded in English learning.

Although L1 could facilitate English learning in certain aspects, interviewees expressed several concerns in the language use. As an English teacher, they were clear that they had to provide students with more opportunity in using English in the lesson. Although they tried to use other strategies to replace L1 use, some students still could not understand. Thus, L1 became the simplest way to help the students even though they knew that they should not rely on L1. L1 was regarded as the last resort. Another concern is the over-reliance on L1 by students. Some of them found that some students ignored English version and simply waited for the Chinese translation. Using L1 might result in students relying too much on L1 and not paying attention to English. It negatively affected their English learning.

In their future teaching, all of them chose to continue using L1 as assistance to teach weaker students either in the same approach or with a better control of L1 use. However, they would not involve L1 in lesson planning. It was used only when necessary within the lessons. If the students were with high English proficiency that are able to understand entirely in English, most of the interviewees were certain that they would not use any L1 in English teaching while two of them would still use L1 in dealing with discipline problems.

Discussion

For the first research question about pre-service teachers' beliefs in L1 use, the results of this study showed that the participants were positive towards the need of L1 in English learning in general. Participants preferred more on 'English-mainly' than 'English-only' approaches that matches the priori studies (Bateman, 2008; Cook, 2001; Tan, 2017). They were clear that they had to keep L1 to a minimum. Besides, students' language proficiency was identified as the key factor leading the change of beliefs and increase in L1 use. Some of the participants realized that complete exclusion of L1 was impractical after teaching students with low to intermediate English proficiency.

Addressing the research question about the practice of L1 use, Hong Kong pre-service teachers used more L1 in managerial and social functions and least L1 in academic functions. The result is different from Sali's (2014) study that L1 was most commonly used for academic functions. In teaching unknown vocabulary and complex grammar concepts, they tended to use other aids and means to replace L1 and it was regarded as the last resort. It was because they were not directly related to the subject content. Since L1 is more mutually understandable by teachers and students, they tended to use more L1 to save time and make the messages clear to students. The percentage of L1 use based on teachers' own reflection ranged from 10% to 60%, which is dissimilar to Littlewood and Yu's (2011) research findings with 20% in average based on students' memory. The diversity in percentage reflects that teachers have great autonomy to control language use in classroom.

Contrary to the possibility of teachers lacking awareness of their language use, the majority of participants' beliefs matched their actual practice of language use in the six selected items. Results from questionnaires found that more L1 was actually used than expected in teaching vocabulary, explaining grammar and building rapport. Since they did not intend to involve L1 in their lesson planning, most of them chose to use entire English to teach subject content. However, when it came to the actual teaching, many of them realized that they had to use some L1 translation. Although they planned and tried to adopt several strategies to avoid directly using L1, some students still found it difficult to understand only in English. Thus, more L1 was actually used in these two aspects. On the other hand, the least difference found in the function of dealing with discipline problems as it was a usual practice to use L1 to draw students' attention and strengthen the effect of the messages.

Whether L1 should be used and the optimal amount of L1 use in English classroom are the major concerns regarding the language use by many teachers. This study may help ease their concerns, especially for pre-service teachers who do not have much teaching experience. Through comparing the beliefs and actual practice, the awareness of teachers' language use may also be raised. In future teaching of students with low English proficiency, the interviewees chose to continue using L1 to facilitate understanding. However, they thought they need more practice in order to find a proper way of using L1 that would not result in over-reliance on it.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this research is the small sample size for statistical analysis. Another possible limitation is related to data collection. Since the data collected by questionnaire about pre-service teachers' actual L1 use were only based on their reflection and self-report, the results may be biased and not accurate enough. In the future study, lesson observation can be included to have a more comprehensive and objective study on their actual L1 use through calculating the percentage of L1 use and its functions.

Conclusion

To conclude, most of the pre-service teachers in the research thought that there is a need of learners' first language in English lessons in Hong Kong, especially for learners with low English proficiency. 'English-mainly' approach is generally preferred. Among the six functions of L1 use, they chose to and actually used more L1 in dealing with discipline problems and building rapport than teaching new vocabulary and explaining grammar concepts.

Word count: 5,023 words

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Appendices

Appendix I – Consent form template

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**The relationship of pre-service teachers' beliefs and use of students' first language in
ESL classrooms in Hong Kong**

I _____ hereby consent to participate in the captioned research supervised by Dr. LEE, Wing Sze Wincy and conducted by CHUNG, Yi Tak, who are staff / students of Department of Curriculum and Instruction in The Education University of Hong Kong.

I understand that information obtained from this research may be used in future research and may be published. However, my right to privacy will be retained, i.e., my personal details will not be revealed.

The procedure as set out in the **attached** information sheet has been fully explained. I understand the benefits and risks involved. My participation in the project is voluntary.

I acknowledge that I have the right to question any part of the procedure and can withdraw at any time without negative consequences.

Name of participant

Signature of participant

Date

Appendix II – Questionnaire

Basic information

1. Sex
(M, F)
2. Is Cantonese your first language?
(Yes, No)
3. Did you have your teaching practice in this semester?
(Yes, No)
4. How long was your teaching practice?
(< 6 weeks, 6-10 weeks, a whole semester)
5. Levels of students
(Primary 1-3, Primary 4-6, Secondary 1-3, Secondary 4-6)
6. English language proficiency of students in general
(low, low-intermediate, intermediate-high, high, mixed)

Beliefs on L1 use in ESL classroom

7. Do you agree to the following statements about L1 use in Hong Kong ESL classrooms?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. English should be taught in an 'English-only' approach with the complete exclusion of L1.					
b. The use of English in ESL classrooms should be maximized and the use of L1 should be minimized.					
c. The use of L1 is inevitable in English learning.					

Functions of L1 use in ESL classroom

8. Which language should be used for the following activities?
(L1 refers to Cantonese and Chinese; L2 refers to English)

Activity	Nearly all in L1	Mostly in L1	Half L1, Half L2	Mostly in L2	Nearly all in L2
a. Teaching new vocabulary					
b. Starting class/ conducting daily routines					
c. Correcting students' work as a class (quizzes, homework, etc.)					
d. Conducting pre-reading or pre-listening activities					
e. Giving instructions for classroom activities					
f. Asking questions to check students' reading or listening comprehension					
g. Debriefing with the whole class after pair or small-group activities					
h. Explaining grammar concepts					
i. Engaging in casual conversation/building rapport with students					
j. Presenting information about the target culture					
k. Discussing cultural issues as a class					
l. Explaining instructions for assignments or projects					
m. Providing clarification when students don't understand in English					
n. Giving individual help to students					
o. Dealing with discipline problems					

9. Indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements and practiced them in ESL classrooms in your teaching practice according to the scale below.
(L1 refers to Cantonese and Chinese; L2 refers to English)

L1 functions in L2 learning classroom	Always	Usually	Somet-imes	Seldom	Never
a. I used L1 to teach new vocabulary.					
b. I used L1 to explain grammar.					
c. I used L1 to provide clarification when students do not understand in L2.					
d. I used L1 to provide feedback and explain students' errors.					
e. I used L1 in giving written corrective feedback on students' composition.					
f. I used L1 to give meta-linguistic knowledge, in particular about discussing the tasks, such as the objective and the steps of tasks.					
g. I used L1 in administrative issues like exam announcement.					
h. I used L1 in dealing with discipline problems in class.					
i. I used L1 to establish or assert authority.					
j. I used L1 at the end of the class to answer possible questions.					
k. I used L1 to encourage and comfort students.					
l. I used L1 to build rapport with students.					
m. I used L1 in giving personal comments.					
n. I used L1 in making humorous comments.					
o. I used L1 in presenting information about the target culture, in particular discussing cross-cultural issues.					
p. I used L1 to supervise and guide students when they perform a task collaboratively.					
q. I used L1 to conduct pre-task activities, namely pre-listening and pre-reading.					

r. I use L1 in giving individual help to students.					
s. I use L1 to save time in lengthy task explanation.					
t. I use L1 in making contrast between L1 and L2.					

Appendix III – Interview questions

1. Did your beliefs in L1 use change?
2. What factors affect your beliefs on L1 use in ESL classrooms?
3. How much L1 was used in your teaching?
4. What did you mainly use L1 for?
5. What were the factors leading to the switch from English to L1?
6. What were the constraints in language use during teaching practice?
7. In the design of a learning task or learning activities, how did you integrate L1 into the three stages, which are presentation, practice and product?