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Topic: Students' perceptions of the use of L1 in
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Abstract

In literature on English as Second Language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching and learning, the perspectives for and against the use of first language (L1) contributes to the existing classroom approaches: monolingual and bilingual approaches. On one hand, some linguists believe that the inclusion of L1 precludes second language (L2) acquisition and should be banished from their English classes, whereas others assert the advantages of L1 had on facilitating the learning of a L2. The purpose of this study was to investigate secondary school students' perceptions of the use of L1 in English language classroom. The present study also explored the factors contributing to their preferences of using L1 in class. The study was conducted on a sample of 60 secondary two students who were Chinese native speakers at a Hong Kong secondary school at the end of the first semester of the 2019-2020 academic year. The triangulated data were collected using a questionnaire and face-to-face semi-structured individual interviews with six students. The findings revealed that participants had positive attitudes towards the use of L1 while their inclinations were mostly influenced by their low level of English Language proficiency and the demand of L1 to be used as a facilitating tool in acquiring target language (TL) knowledge. In addition, different areas of language learning and occasions when students needed L1 were also identified. Drawing upon the results, the implications of L1 use in teaching and learning English were discussed to provide insights on how L1 can be intentionally used to develop L2 literacy.

Keyword: L1 use, second language acquisition, students' perceptions, English language classroom, Hong Kong

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Introduction

In the field of teaching and learning English as Second Language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL), there has always been an ongoing discussion of the use of L1 in English classroom and its role keeps changing in response to the advancement of ESL teaching approaches throughout the history (Galali & Cinkara, 2017). L1 was used extensively in L2 teaching and learning when it was believed that a foreign language (FL) could be learnt through direct translation which then was known as Grammar-Translation approach. Later, when Communicative Approach was introduced in ESL classrooms, it highlights the importance of naturalistic language acquisition for real communication and interaction instead of over-focusing on absolute phonetic accuracy and inductive memorisation of the TL grammatical knowledge, the use of L1 started to be challenged. In order to achieve its goal of developing learners' L2 communicative abilities and competencies, students should be widely exposed to TL input and be given the most opportunities to produce the language output. For this reason, L1 ought to be excluded (Topolska-Pado, 2011). However, some researchers pointed out that the positive impacts of L1 had on TL teaching and learning should never be neglected despite the new developments in the methodologies of English teaching (Brown, 2000; Nation, 2003; Schweers, 1999). With this regard, two opposing viewpoints exist concerning the effects of L1 used in the ESL and EFL classrooms: the inclusion and exclusion of L1.

The practical reason favours the banning of L1 in the ESL and EFL teaching and learning is its linguistic interference had on the effectiveness of L2 acquisition. Numerous scholars disclose that how the use of L1 discouraging L2 acquisition by leading to the excessive L1 dependence for classroom communication and interaction as well as depriving L2 input and output (Atkinson, 1987; Chaudron, 1988; Krieger, 2005; Liu, 2008; Richards & Rodgers, 2003). Ellis (1988) also suggested that a language immersion environment is prerequisite for the success of L2 acquisition and therefore, the use of L1 should be avoided to maximise the degree of L2 exposure to learners. However, Turnbull (2001) argued that maximising the TL use does not and should not mean L1 cannot be used deliberately as an effective strategy for improving students' TL proficiency with regard to the positive effects L1 had on ESL and EFL learning which have been demonstrated in numerous researches (Debreli & Oyman, 2016; Kroll & Stewart, 1994; Levine, 2003; Tian & Hennebry, 2016). Those scholar suggested that L1 can be served as an effective scaffolding tool, providing cognitive, affective and linguistic support to learners because teachers can use it as mediation for lexical and grammatical explanations,

creating comfortable atmosphere, improving classroom instructions and so on (Debreli & Oyman, 2016; Kroll & Stewart, 1994; Levine, 2003; Tian & Hennebry, 2016).

Such controversy over the issue of L1 in language teaching has attracted interest and research to explore the perceptions of teachers and learners toward the use of L1 in both ESL and EFL classrooms using qualitative (e.g. interviews) and/or quantitative (e.g. surveys) means. Those responses act as reliable sources of evidence to address whether L1 should be considered as a hinderance or facilitator of L2 acquisition and the potential implications of L1 in the classrooms. Though the previous studies have explored the perceptions of learners with different language backgrounds, such as Indonesian speakers (Resmini, 2019), Iranian speakers (Yaghobian, Samuel & Mahmoudi, 2018), Swedish speakers (Kizil, 2018), Spanish speakers (Arenas-Iglesias, 2006) and more, there are very limited studies based on Chinese-speaking communities, specifically in Hong Kong whose sociolinguistic context is rather unique. As a former British colony where English language has always been stood at an indispensable position not only in education, but also sectors like business, government and law, for such reason, it has gradually become a prerequisite for a prosperous career and prestigious social status and thus, the salient demand for high English proficiency in education has been remained firmly despite the political handover in 1997 and the rising educational preference for Putonghua (Chan, 2017). Taking such high expectation into account, schools are recommended to adopt communicative language teaching, such as Task-based language teaching to create a student-centred classroom and thereby, students ought to be given the most opportunities to be exposed to the authentic TL use according to the English Language Education Curriculum Guide issued by Education Bureau (The Curriculum Development Council, 2017). This may raise concerns on, to what extent, should L1 be incorporated in English teaching and learning and therefore, this paper focus on exploring students' perceptions of the use of L1 in English classrooms in a Hong Kong Secondary school with the hope in providing students' views on the issue.

Literature Review

In recent decades, monolingual classroom setting has been widely accepted and reflected in the ESL and EFL teaching materials, syllabus, and curriculum with a belief of nurturing learners' the fullest competence in the TL by means of a rich TL environment provided by teachers (Sarıçoban, 2010). Nevertheless, the complete deletion of L1 is debatable taken into account of its distinct role that carries various functions in promoting efficient L2 language learning and under the circumstance when L1 is used cautiously (Cook, 2001; Du, 2016). In Polio and Duff's analysis (1994) on teachers' language use in the tertiary ESL classroom, eight functions of L1 as a teaching tool have been identified: "classroom administrative vocabulary, grammar instruction, classroom management, a stance of empathy or solidarity, L1 practice by teacher with tutoring from students, L1 translations and explanations for unknown TL vocabulary, enhancing comprehension of TL knowledge as well as engaging students interactively" (1994, p.317). This explains that integrating L1 in the English classroom can promote effective TL teaching and learning and thus various studies indicate teachers hold positive attitudes on using L1 on account of the positive influences L1 had on facilitating English teaching and learning by providing a better understanding of the lesson and grammatical content, fostering students' confidence (Farzana, 2016 ; Hossein & Sediqe, 2015 ; Sali, 2014). The above illustrates teachers' perceptions using L1 in the language classrooms and the factors contributing to their use of L1. It is equally important to explore those areas from students' point of view because the prime rationale for using L1 in the ESL classroom is to assist students' L2 acquisition.

Debreli and Oyman (2016) found that a large number of Turkish students responded positively towards the use of L1 in English classrooms on the account of their demographic characteristics, education background and TL proficiency, in particular, those in higher age group had more demand on the use of L1 to fulfil their strong desire of full comprehension while female students were more supportive on the use of L1.. Not only was L1 considered as a scaffolding tool for understanding of difficult contents and new vocabulary items, but also an affective filter that creates a comfortable and stress-free learning environment to avoid eliciting frustration as a result of incomprehension. The similar results were also found in Yaghobian, Samuel and Mahmoudi's study (2018) revealing L1 could also be served as a cognitive tool for overcoming the communication barriers due to insufficient L2 language resources and pressure from L2 only language environment in addition to the solution to vocabulary and potential stress problems. The effects of learners' demographic characteristics had their perceptions on use of L1 were evident from the responses given by other English learners from studies

conducted by various scholars (Sa'd & Qadermazi, 2015; Wang, 2005; Yao, 2011). Drawing upon the results concluded by those scholars, students with low level of education and English proficiency level were more reliant on L1 and vice versa. To sum up, the findings from the above research show a statistical difference in students' preferences on the use of L1 with regard of their demographic characteristics, education background as well as English proficiency level and therefore, there is a need to conduct study with a more specific group of participants to explore deeper on their opinions on the use of L1 in English classroom.

Previous studies have discovered the general factors that influenced students' attitude towards the L1 used in English teaching and learning. In his study which investigated Iranian teachers' and students' perceptions toward the utilization of L1 in English classrooms, Tajgozari (2017) concluded the integration of L1 in the English classrooms is a learner-preferred strategy for students with lower education levels. It is found that 90% of elementary students, 73.3% of intermediate students and 52.1% of advanced students commented positively on using L1 in the classroom, while the overall findings indicated L1 can be used as a pedagogical tool for grammatical explanation and teaching instructions by teachers and facilitating in-class discussion. The EFL learners from Galali and Cinkara's research (2017) also perceived the use of L1 as a functional strategy that facilitates their English learning, especially for those with low language proficiency. Such findings call for a focused investigation of students whose English proficiency is low to explore their perceptions extensively on using L1 to cater for their needs in L2 acquisition.

Chinese learners' opposition of the complete exclusion of L1 in ESL classrooms was indicated in Tian and Hennebry's (2016) study whose participants were divided into three experimental groups according to the language use by the English teachers for lexical explanations: English-only, Chinese-only and a mixture of both Chinese and English. The results reflect either L2 or code-switching between Chinese and English was preferable by students while none of them support the idea of the banning of L1 because bilingual linguistic explanation allows them to have better comprehension of teaching instructions and thus, relieving the anxiety brought from an English-only environment. Taking the advantages of L1 and L2 correspondence as well as L1 translations also facilitates their L2 comprehension and memorization. Where the above research has placed a specific focus on Chinese student's opinions on using L1 for lexical explanation in ESL classroom, it needs also to further explore Chinese students' attitudes toward the use of L1 for different purpose in English Language teaching and learning. It is

known that learners' attitudes are one of the direct factors that determines the success or failure of the language teaching and learning (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011).

In light of the previous studies, the present study will be conducted to answer following research questions:

1. What are secondary students' attitudes towards the use of L1 in the English language classroom?
2. What are the factors contributing to students' preference of the use of L1 in the English language classroom?

Research Methods

Context of study

The study was conducted at a local secondary school that adopts Chinese as medium of instruction (CMI). 60 Secondary two students from three different classes which taught by three different English teachers whose mother tongue was Cantonese were chosen at random. All the participants were invited to complete a questionnaire while 6 of them who agreed to be the interviewees of the study after the completion of the questionnaire were then invited to do an individual interview. There were 4 interviewees from class 2A and 2 interviewees from class 2B. The survey and interviews were taken place at the end of the first semester of the academic year 2019-2020.

Participants

60 Secondary two students were invited to be the survey group of the current study to investigate their perceptions of the use of L1 in the English classroom. All of whom were native Chinese speakers whose mother tongue was either Cantonese or Putonghua and ranged in age from 11-16.

Instruments

Triangulation was employed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data by means of two distinct data collection tools: questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The questionnaire was constructed based on the two existing questionnaires developed by Al Sharaeai (2012) and Debreli and Oyman (2016) respectively which have been adopted in the previous research in the field as a constructive means for exploring learners' perceptions of the use of L1 in English classrooms. In regard to learners' education and English proficiency levels, the questionnaire was written in English and then translated into Chinese as accurately as possible. Some questionnaire items and the wordings used were deleted and modified to better suit the present study context, such as the school type, English Language policy and students' language background.

The major modification made in the questionnaire was replacing the phrase "first language" with "Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua)" to avoid students' confusion while several alternations were made to each section. Part 1 of the questionnaire is drawn from the first section of the

survey made by Al Sharaeai (2012) but 2 statements were deleted and consists of 8 items in total. Part 2 of the questionnaire includes 10 items in which the first 9 items were taken from the from the first section of the previous survey (Al Sharaeai, 2012) while the last statement was fetched from part II of the survey produced by Debrelı and Oyman (2016). The 4 items of part 3 of the questionnaire were all borrowed from part III of the survey produced by Debrelı and Oyman (2016).

Data Collection

The first phrase of data collection was to collect quantitative data via questionnaire (See Appendix A for the questionnaire) that consists of three sections. In the first section of the questionnaire, all the items used to collect students' personal information were developed by the researcher. In the second section of the questionnaire which consist of three parts, the first part includes 8 statements on the frequency of students' use of L1 in the English classrooms. Participants were asked to rate their frequency of the use of L1 in terms of "always", "usually", "sometimes" and "never". The second part aims to explore students' attitudes towards L1 used by themselves and teachers in classroom teaching and learning using the 4-Point Likert Scale (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree) (Joshi, Kale, Chandel & Pal, 2015). The last section investigates the opinions of participants on whether the inclusion of L1 in English teaching could be an effective academic tool. The completion of the questionnaire took approximately 10 minutes and it was taken place during the lesson time. Before taking part in the survey, students were clearly informed the aims of this study and the results of questionnaires would only be used for academic and research purposes.

The second phrase of data collection was to collect qualitative data via an individual semi-structured interview with 6 participants because face-to-face interview is useful when a research focuses on gaining insight and understanding (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). The interview was conducted in Cantonese based on the interviewees' preference. The interview included both open-ended questions and follow-up questions (See Appendix C for the interview questions) regarding to their opinions on the use of L1 in English language classroom. The interview tried to gain in-depth insight of students' attitudes toward the L1 used in language classroom through drawing upon their personal experiences and to give a holistic view on the topic. The interviews were audio recorded upon the consent of the interviewees and each interview was about 10 minutes in duration.

Data Analysis

The data gathered by the questionnaire was analysed by the statistical program SPSS 26 and the results were presented using tables as reference to answer the research questions.

As for analysing the interview responses, the recorded interviews were first transcribed and then the interview transcripts (See Appendix C for the interview transcripts) were studied thoroughly before categorising the related or co-occurring statements among the feedbacks given by the interviewees. Later, by means of thematic content analysis, the data was analysed to seek for emergent themes and the general consensus about their opinions on the use of L1 in English language teaching and learning as well as the personal factors influencing their preferences of using L1 by themselves and their English teachers. The extracted information was then used as the supplement to support the questionnaire findings in which the quotes from the interview were displayed as well as gave new insight into the discussed language issue.

Results

In the following section, findings of the quantitative data collected from the questionnaire and the qualitative data gathered from the individual interviews regarding students' perceptions of the use of L1 in English language classroom, their needs for L1 academic support of and the influence of their English literacy on their perceptions are presented. The frequency of L1 used by students and should be used by teachers as well as the occasions when L1 to be used in English language teaching and learning by teachers are also explored.

Secondary students' attitudes towards the use of L1 in English language classroom

It is notable that 86.7% participants agreed to using L1 in English teaching and learning whereas 13.3% of them against the idea (refer to Table 1). For those who demand of L1 used because of its roles of acting as an academic role had on facilitating lexical, grammatical and conceptual understanding as well as an affective filter promotes positive feelings through reducing stress and eliminating the feeling lost as a result of incomprehension in the process of L2 acquisition. It also arouses their own cultural awareness. Having agreed on the positive influences brought from L1 on TL teaching and learning, it is found that nearly all students (98.3%) acknowledged the advantages of L1 had on their language learning: 18.3% believed it helped significantly, 25% reported L1 helped their studies quiet a lot, 40% said they got fairly much help from it, and 15% stated that it helped a little, whereas merely 1.7% viewed the use of L1 is useless. On the other hand, the number of students who responded positively to the use of L1 by their English teachers also outnumbered those against the practice.

Table 1: students' opinions on the use of L1 in English Language teaching and learning

| Questionnaire items | N=60 (%) |
|--|------------|
| 1.1 Should Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) be used in English classrooms? | |
| Yes | 52 (86.7%) |
| No | 8 (13.3%) |
| 1.2 Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) should be used in English classrooms because* | |
| • It helps me to understand difficult concepts better. | 46 (88.5%) |
| • It helps me to understand the new vocabulary items better. | 45 (86.5%) |
| • It helps me to feel at ease, comfortable and less stressed. | 27 (59.1%) |
| • It makes me feel more connected to my culture. | 15 (28.8%) |
| • I feel less lost in English classrooms. | 27 (59.1%) |
| 1.3 How often should be Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) used in English classroom? | |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Never | 0 (0%) |
| Sometimes | 41 (68.3%) |
| Usually | 12 (20%) |
| Always | 7 (11.7%) |
| 1.4 To what extent, do you think the use of Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) in the classroom helps you to learn English? | |
| Not at all | 1 (1.7%) |
| Very little | 9 (15%) |
| Fairly much | 24 (40%) |
| Quiet a lot | 15 (25%) |
| A lot | 11 (18.3%) |
| <i>*More than one option can be chosen</i> | |

Apart from discovering the usefulness of the use of L1 for English Language learning and teaching from the students' point of view, it is worth looking into how frequent L1 was used by students in different contexts to further explore the classroom functions of using L1. Based on the data generated from the first section of the questionnaire, over 80% of the participants adopted L1 as the means for classroom communication, such as chatting with peers concerning subject and personal contents, doing groupwork with groupmates who share the same mother tongue, speeding up the lesson task completion and compensating the lack of L2 language resources. It could be said that Chinese were used sometimes or more by most of the students whereas those who never spoke Chinese were relatively fewer in number. Besides, they also supported the idea of L1 should be tolerated as long as they are staying on-task and not having speaking lessons. Overall, almost all of students considered themselves used Chinese more frequently than English in class.

Relying on the previous findings on students' positive attitude towards the use of L1 and their perceived frequency of the L1 used by themselves, the use of L1 in English classroom, by common consent, should be allowed. This is evident in participants' opinions on the language classroom policy where most of them against the implementation of an "English Only Policy" (18.3% strongly disagreed, 56.7% disagreed) and expressed the preference of having the freedom to use Chinese (45% strongly agreed, 43.3% agreed). However, students' view on whether speaking only English in class would make themselves nervous and it is obligate to have an English teacher who can understand their mother tongue divided (Refer to Item 2.1 and 2.4 in Table 2). Taken together, most of the participants agreed that L1 should be used

occasionally to facilitate their language learning and classroom engagement (Refer to Item 1.3 in Table 1).

Table 2: students' opinions on the language classroom policy

| Questionnaire items | N=60 (%) | | | |
|--|-------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
| 2.1 In English class, it is best to have a teacher who can understand Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua). | 12 (20%) | 12 (20%) | 19 (31.7%) | 17 (28.3%) |
| 2.2 I think my English class should have an "English Only Policy". | 11 (18.3%) | 34 (56.7%) | 4 (6.7%) | 11 (18.3%) |
| 2.3 I want to be able to speak Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) in English class when I feel I need to. | 1 (1.7%) | 6 (10%) | 26 (43.3%) | 27 (45%) |
| 2.4 Having to speak English only in class makes me feel nervous. | 8 (13.3%) | 27 (45%) | 14 (23.3%) | 11 (18.3%) |
| 2.5 Using Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) in English can help me to learn English better. | 1 (1.7%) | 10 (16.7%) | 28 (46.7%) | 21 (35%) |

In addition, more than half of the participants (56.6%) responded positively towards teachers' use of L1 in English language classroom (Refer to Item 3.1 in Table 3). Students' demand for L1 academic support in the language learning classroom can further be seen from their opinions on the language learning areas where L1 should be used by teachers (Refer to Table 3). Most of the participants agreed and expressed that L1 should be used by teachers as an academic tool for facilitating the understanding of the lexical (35% agreed, 46.7% strongly agreed), grammatical (45% agreed, 45% strongly agreed) and conceptual (38.3% agreed, 41.7% strongly agreed) knowledge as well as a clarifying tool for giving classroom instructions (38.3% agreed, 28.3% strongly agreed) and a summarising tool for comprehending to conclude the lesson contents (28.3% agreed, 40.7% strongly agreed).

Table 3: students' opinions on the occasions when L1 should be used by teachers

| Questionnaire items | N=60 (%) | | | |
|--|-------------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|
| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
| 3.1 I like my teacher to use Chinese in English classroom. | 8 (13.3%) | 18 (30%) | 20 (33.3%) | 14 (23.3%) |

| | | | | |
|---|-------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 3.2 In the following situations, it is necessary for English teacher to use Chinese in the English classroom: | | | | |
| • To define new vocabulary items | 2 (3.3%) | 9 (15%) | 21 (35%) | 28 (46.7%) |
| • To explain complex grammar points | 2 (3.3%) | 4 (6.7%) | 27 (45%) | 27 (45%) |
| • To explain different concepts or ideas | 2 (3.3%) | 17 (16.7%) | 23 (38.3%) | 25 (41.7%) |
| • To give classroom instructions | 3 (5%) | 17 (28.3%) | 23 (38.3%) | 17 (28.3%) |
| • To summarise materials already covered | 2 (3.3%) | 17 (28.3%) | 17 (28.3%) | 24 (40%) |

For this reason, it is not surprising to collect similar results from the responses given by the interviewees in the interview. Students' tolerance toward the teacher's use of L1 were seen among the interviewees when they were asked how do they feel about the use of L1 by their English teachers (6 out of 6). Three of them gave similar responses and said that they would not feel anything special:

"Nothing in particular. Or I should say it is useful" (Student A)

"I do not have any special feelings towards the use of Chinese by my English teacher."
(Student B)

"I feel nothing at all." (Student D)

The others (3 out of 6) described it was normal for teachers using Chinese in teaching the language knowledge:

"I think it is rather normal for the teacher to use Chinese when teaching English."
(Student E)

Their use of L1 in class were agreeable among the interviewees except one of them said that using L1 in class would make him uncomfortable.

"Nothing special." (Student A)

"I think it is normal to use Chinese in class, so I don't have any special feelings in this regard." (Student C)

“Nothing in particular.” (Student D)

“It makes me feel more relaxed when using Chinese in class because it is easier for me to express myself and to be understood by the others.” (Student E)

“I don't really feel anything.” (Student F)

“Honestly, it's kind of awkward and strange using Chinese in class since it is something that should not be used in a second language classroom.” (Student B)

Factors contributing to students' preference of the use of L1 in the English language classroom

Taken into account that nearly three-quarters of the participants (Refer to Table 4) who perceived their English Language proficiency level as either average (46.7%) or poor (26.7%), it is reasonable for students to demand L1 to be used to a greater extent during English lessons to compensate the insufficient language resources, and as a useful teaching tool to help the understanding of difficult issues.

Table 4: Students' perceived level of proficiency

| | N=60 (%) |
|--|-----------------|
| 4.1 Level of English language proficiency | |
| Advanced | 2 (3.3%) |
| Intermediate | 14 (23.3%) |
| Average | 28 (46.7%) |
| Poor | 16 (26.7%) |

The direct relevance between students' level of TL proficiency and L1 dependency was once signified by the interviewees. When discussing the reasons why students use Chinese in the English lessons, three of them replied that not having sufficient linguistic resources poses difficult for them express themselves in English:

“I don't have sufficient vocabulary to present my ideas and thoughts to others, so it is hard for me to express myself in English.” (Student A)

“I use Chinese very often because I don't have a strong background in English. Not having sufficient vocabulary resources makes it difficult for me to communicate effectively.” (Student B)

“Because my English is poor and there are so many words that I don’t know. I can’t really express myself properly using English.” (Student F)

There was a high level of unanimous consensus among the questionnaire findings and the interview feedback on the academic benefits L1 had on facilitating the TL learning. When the interviewees were asked to evaluate on the L1 used by their English teachers, five of them stressed on the effectiveness and importance of teachers’ use of L1 as a scaffolding and clarifying tool so that they can learn the language in a better way:

“I think it is useful because it helps me to better understand the lesson contents, such as learning new vocabulary and grammar as well as understanding reading texts. I like it the best when the teacher uses Chinese to explain the complicated items because I can understand the contents instantly with the help from the Chinese explanations.” (Student A)

“I found it useful when my teacher used Chinese to teach vocabulary and grammatical items as well as sentence structures.” (Student B)

“I think it is useful because it helps me to better understand the knowledge and to avoid feeling lost because of incomprehension when teaching complicated grammatical items.” (Student C)

“I think it is useful because it enhances my understanding of the taught knowledge, for example, the reading texts and the comprehension questions, the definition of words and grammatical items. Using Chinese also makes it easier for me to process and absorb the knowledge taught in class.” (Student D)

“It is helpful because it facilitates my comprehension of the taught knowledge. I can grasp the knowledge instantly when the teacher uses Chinese to teach new vocabulary, grammatical rules and reading comprehension.” (Student F)

Whereas all of them shared the same view on using Chinese in giving classroom instructions was not necessary:

“I don't have a problem with that.” (Student B)

Discussion

To recapitulate, the present study focused on secondary school students' perceptions of the use of L1 in the English classroom and investigated the factors contributing to their preference of using L1. The data collection by means of questionnaire and semi-structured interview was taken place in a local secondary school and 60 students from three secondary two classes were invited to be the participants. Drawing upon their evaluation of the effectiveness of using L1 as an academic tool in class, the frequency of their L1 use as well as their opinions on their language choice in different occasions and the classroom language policy, as expected with reference to the previous studies (Debreli & Oyman, 2016; Galali & Cinkara, 2017; Tajgozari, 2017), students had positive attitudes towards the practice. It then continued to look into the reasons underlying the demand of L1 support in TL acquisition. It was obvious students with relatively low English Language proficiency had stronger were more inclined to use L1 to compensate the lack of linguistic resources and perceived it as an effective learning tool that provides both academic and non-academic support aids the TL teaching and learning. Such results that reveals the direct relevance between learners TL proficiency and for this reason, the need to use L1 as an appropriate academic tool in the English language classroom are consistent with the existing findings (Debreli & Oyman, 2016; Kroll & Stewart, 1994; Levine, 2003; Polio & Duff, 1994; Tian & Hennebry, 2016).

Students' positive attitudes towards the use L1 in English language classroom

With regard to the first research question, engaging L1 in English language teaching and learning was genuinely in favour by students who participated in the present study. Such positive attitudes towards using L1 in were evident from the data concluded from both the questionnaire and the interview which indicated students' opinions on the effectiveness of classroom mother-tongue instruction, the frequency of using L1 in class by themselves, their language choice on different occasions and the opposition of having a monolingual classroom setting. The approval of the mother tongue intervention is in line with the feedback drawn from other English learners with various language backgrounds from the previous researches (e.g., Debreli & Oyman, 2016; Galali & Cinkara, 2017; Sa'd & Qadermazi, 2015; Tajgozari, 2017; Wang, 2005; Yao, 2011). It was also deduced students' appreciation of L1 as a vital academic aid on supporting the learning of grammatical, lexical and concept knowledge as well as maintaining a pleasant learning atmosphere determined their attitudes towards the inclusion of L1. This similar view were shared by the language learners from Wang (2005)'s study where

83.5% of them considered Chinese as a functional tool when teaching new vocabulary while more than 70% of the Arabic EFL learners stressed on the usefulness of incorporating L1 for concept explanation (Alzamil, 2019). 43% of participants from Dujmovic's study (2007) shared the same view of the effect of L1 had on minimising the feeling of loss during the TL learning process. Students being comfortable with the inclusion of L1 was reflected in terms of how frequent should L1 be used while "sometimes" was the most preferable option among students which is in agreement with the views of the existing research (Debreli & Oyman, 2016; Tian & Hennebry, 2016).

Factors contributing to students' preference of the use of L1 in the English language classroom

Students' low English literacy

Based on the findings of the present study, students' perceived level of their English Language proficiency was an influencing factor giving rise to the demand for L1 which have been perceived as an useful tool to solve the linguistic problems encountered and scaffolded them to better comprehend the language knowledge in making the classroom learning more approachable. Using L1 in class was effective to cope with the cognitive demands imposed on students in the process of TL acquisition and served as an affective filter to reduce the feeling of being helpless due to incomprehension, in particular, for those who are low proficient learners. These findings are in accordance with the views of the learners from the studies (e.g., Debreli & Oyman, 2016; Galali & Cinkara, 2017; Tajgozari, 2017) in which the participants with expressed the necessity of L1 should be used as efficient academic aid for grasping the TL knowledge effectively. That being the case, it can be interpreted that students with low TL level would need more L1 support for both academic and non-academic support in the classroom teaching and learning as well as being more inclined to use L1 to a greater extent by themselves and the teachers. For this reason, it was reasonable to state that low level of English literacy is a determining factor contributing to learners' perception for the L1 used in the English language classroom.

Students' needs of the use of L1 in the English language classroom

Deriving from the unanimous consensus on the areas of language when L1 should be used among most of the students in the present study, the usefulness of L1 was highly acknowledged. This highlighted that teachers' use of L1 is highly needed for different academic purposes, such

as teaching vocabulary and grammar rules, facilitating classroom communication, explaining difficult concepts as well as summarising the lesson contents. This again provided evidence to how L1 could be used as a teaching tool by scaffolding students to overcome cognitive, affective and linguistic obstacles and hence improves the English literacy classroom teaching. These positive influences of L1 had on teaching TL were in keeping with those that have not only been identified by the participants, but also the learners and teachers in the previous studies (Debreli & Oyman, 2016; Farzana, 2016; Hossein & Sedique, 2015; Kroll & Stewart, 1994; Levine, 2003; Polio & Duff, 1994; Sali, 2014; Tian & Hennebry, 2016). Given that L1 is perceived as a teaching strategy to nurture the development of the TL language skills, students' inclinations in that regard is predictable and rational. This can also come to the conclusion that using L1 in English language Teaching and learning is a student-preferred learning technique as to satisfy students' needs during the process of acquiring L2 knowledge. The inclusion of L1 in class makes the language content intelligible to students through providing linguistic facilitation when experiencing difficulties in comprehending the grammatical rules, new concepts, vocabulary and materials in the English language classroom. In addition, L1 can also be acted as a compensation of in the L2 production stages before becoming a more proficient TL user who can properly express themselves to conduct effective classroom discussion using the TL.

Moreover, there was an interesting finding with regard to how affective factors influencing students' attitudes towards the use of L1. Given that the majority of the participants expressed their opposition of having an "English Only Policy" in class and preferred using Chinese as their classroom language choice to a greater degree for both lesson and non-lesson related discussion. However, it is seen that more than half of the students disagreeing with the statement of "Having speaking English only makes me feel nervous." which is incompatible with the result of having less than half of the learners disagreed from the study conducted by Arenas-Iglesias (2006). From this, it can be assumed that there is a possibility that students' use of L1 may be related to their personal language preference that is independent from their TL proficiency levels. A similar response was brought from one of the interviewees who explained that the reason why she used L1 in class was, by her personal habits, to communicate with others using Chinese.

Conclusion

The current study investigated students' perceptions of the use of L1 in the English language classroom in a Hong Kong Secondary school and the factors contributing to their preferences. Through employing the mixed method data collection strategies by means of questionnaire and semi-structured interview, both quantitative and qualitative data were successfully drawn from 60 secondary two students to provide the insights into the mother tongue classroom intervention from the English learners' opinions. The findings indicated positive attitudes towards using L1 in the English Language teaching and learning were shared by the majority of the students. The positive tendency to use L1 was reflected from students' evaluation of the effectiveness of using L1 in different areas of teaching and learning, the frequency of their L1 use in class as well as their preferences of language choice under various circumstances and the classroom language policy. With regard to students' low literacy of English Language, mother tongue was perceived as a facilitating and scaffolding tool to be used when defining new vocabulary items, explaining complex grammatical rules and concepts, deconstructing reading texts, giving classroom instructions and summarising lesson contents to tailor their TL deficiency. The presence of L1 also provided reliable affective support to minimise the occurrence of negative emotions, such as feeling stressed, lost or frustrated in the process of attaining TL skills. The results have also shed light on students' personal habits on their language preference could possibly be a factor shaping one's perception of the use of L1 regardless of the L2 abilities which require further research on the subject to explore more on its effects.

Likewise, students' views on when and how L1 should be appropriately used as an academic tool to enhance the comprehension of the TL knowledge and besides, overcome any difficulties that may arise due to TL insufficiency. This also provide useful information for teachers to make reference to when making decisions on the quality and quantity of L1 to be used in the L2 classroom.

Taken together, the effectiveness of L1 as a beneficial L2 acquisition tool should be recognised and L1 can be tolerated as if it is strategically employed by teachers, especially among low-level students. L1 should be used as a scaffolding tool when teaching new vocabulary, grammatical and conceptual knowledge, deconstructing reading texts to enhance students' understanding and resolve potential misunderstandings. Students' comprehension of the lesson

contents means lowering their affective filters and thus, helps to create a more comprehensible language learning classroom. On top of that, allowing L1 to be used by students not only mitigates the language anxiety due to their inability to adequately express themselves using TL only, but also enables them to conduct effective classroom communication, like requesting clarification as well as articulating thoughts and ideas in the process of acquiring TL literacy skills to produce mature TL output.

The present study was limited in several ways because the time available to collect data from a wider range of language learners with different educational levels is constrained by practicum time and deadline for submission. The subject of the study was restricted to a relatively small group of junior secondary students at one school which seen not to be appropriate to represent the whole population of English learners. Future work needs to be done which takes this into consideration and extends the research to more students in diverse settings for a holistic picture of the L1 role plays in the English language classroom. On the other hand, the present study merely explored the students' opinions on the use of L1 in classroom teaching and learning and therefore, future work should also offer access to the viewpoints from other stakeholders, such as both pre-service and in-service English teachers, students with diversified backgrounds, curriculum policy makers, educators and parents to further discuss the issue of L1 use in TL acquisition. All of whom are the vital sources of information contributing to the development of a TL language policy which not only safeguards students' TL acquisition, but also ensures its feasibility, acceptability and effectiveness.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

Al Sharaeai, W. A. A. (2012). Students' Perspectives on the Use of L1 in English Classrooms. (Master's thesis, Iowa State University, Iowa, United States). Retrieved from: <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3905&context=etd>

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Questionnaire

問卷調查

Students' perceptions of the use of L1 in English language classroom in a Hong Kong Secondary school 香港中學生對在英文課內使用母語的看法

The aim of the research is to investigate the students' perceptions of the use of L1 in English language classroom in Hong Kong secondary schools while the results drawn from the research will be used to provide a more comprehensive view on the use of L1 from students' point of view to further facilitate the English acquisition.

是次研究計劃的目的是調查香港中學生對在英文課內使用母語的看法。研究結果將會有助教育者更全面地了解學生的需要，從而訂立更有效和合適的教學法幫助學生學習英文。

Personal Information 個人資料 (please tick the correct boxes 請在合適的地方填上)

- Gender 性別: Female 女 Male 男
- Age 年齡: 11-12 13-14 15-16 17-18
 18 or above 18 或以上
- First language 母語 Chinese 中文 English 英文 Other 其他:
 Cantonese 廣東話 _____
 Putonghua 普通話 _____
- English proficiency 英文程度 Poor 差 Average 平均 Intermediate 中級 Advanced 高階
- Education level 教育程度 Secondary 1 中一 Secondary 2 中二 Secondary 3 中三 Secondary 4 中四

Part 1 第一部分

Please read the following statements that show some common reasons why ESL students speak their first language (such as Chinese, Spanish or Arabic) in their English classes. How often do these reasons apply to you when **YOU ARE** in your English classroom? Please check the boxes next to each reason:

以下是以英語為第二語言的學生在英文課堂上使用中文(廣東話/普通話)的常見情況，請細閱以下的選項並選擇合適的頻率以表示你在下列情況中使用母語的頻率

| | Never 從不 | Sometimes 有時 | Usually 經常 | Always 常常 |
|---|-------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1. I speak Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) in English class because I want to chat with my classmates about topics that may not be connected to class. 因要和同學交談有關課堂以外的話題，所以我在英文課堂上使用中文(廣東話/普通話)。 | | | | |
| 2. I speak Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) in English class because I am explaining a new point in the lesson to a classmate. 因要向同學解釋課堂內的一個新論點/想法，所以我在英文課堂上使用中文(廣東話/普通話)。 | | | | |
| 3. I speak Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) in English class because I need to ask a classmate to explain a point in the lesson for me. 因要請教同學有關課堂上的內容，所以我在英文課堂上使用中文(廣東話/普通話)。 | | | | |
| 4. I speak Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) in English class because I need to check the meaning of a new word or concept during the lesson. 因要查看課堂上新學的字詞解釋或概念含義，所以我在英文課堂上使用中文(廣東話/普通話)。 | | | | |
| 5. I speak Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) in English class because I cannot think of the correct word in English when talking to my classmates. 因未能找到合適的英語詞彙和同學溝通，所以我在英文課堂上使用中文(廣東話/普通話)。 | | | | |
| 6. I speak Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) in English class because my classmates start talking to me in Chinese while we are working on a task. 因在分組活動時先有同學和我用中文(廣東話/普通話)溝通，所以我在英文課堂上使用中文(廣東話/普通話)。 | | | | |
| 7. I speak Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) during English class when I talk about personal things with my classmates. 當我和同學談論私事時，我在英文課堂上使用中文(廣東話/普通話)。 | | | | |
| 8. In English class, I speak Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) with my groupmates who speak Chinese because we want to finish class activities faster. 為了加快完成在英文課堂上所進行分組活動，我和與我的組員選擇使用中文(廣東話/普通話)溝通。 | | | | |

Please continue to the next page 請翻頁繼續填寫問卷

Part 2 第二部分

Please read the statements below that show different opinions and preferences ESL students had about using their first languages (such as Chinese, Spanish or Arabic) in English language classrooms. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with these opinions. Please check the boxes next to each statement:

以下是以英語為第二語言的學生對在英文課堂上使用中文(廣東話/普通話)的意見和取向，請細閱以下的選項並表達你在多大程度上同意或不同意該意見或取向：

| | Strongly disagree 非常不同意 | Disagree 不同意 | Agree 同意 | Strongly agree 非常同意 |
|--|-----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. In English class, it is best to have a teacher who can understand Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua). 英文課堂上，若老師能明白/懂得/理解中文(廣東話/普通話)是最好。 | | | | |
| 2. I think my English class should have an “English Only Policy” . 我認為英文課堂應有「只能說英文」的課堂政策。 | | | | |
| 3. I want to be able to speak my Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) in English class when I feel I need to. 當需要時，我想在英文課堂上使用中文(廣東話/普通話)。 | | | | |
| 4. It's not important to speak only English in class as long as I am completing the course tasks. 英文課堂上，若我是在做堂課，是否只說英文不太重要。 | | | | |
| 5. Speaking my Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) with my classmates between and during class activities should be okay as long as the course is not a speaking class. 只要不是英文口語課堂，在進行課堂活動時使用中文(廣東話/普通話)和同學溝通是可接受的。 | | | | |
| 6. I think I speak in Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) more often than I speak English in English class. 我認為自己在英文課堂上使用中文(廣東話/普通話)多於英文。 | | | | |
| 7. Having to speak English only in class makes me feel nervous. 課堂上只能說英文會使我緊張。 | | | | |
| 8. I like my teacher to use Chinese in English language classroom. 我喜歡老師在英文課堂上使用中文(廣東話/普通話)。 | | | | |

| | Strongly disagree 非常不同意 | Disagree 不同意 | Agree 同意 | Strongly agree 非常同意 |
|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| 9. In the following situations, it is necessary for English teacher to use L1 in English language classroom: 我認為英文老師在下列情況使用中文(廣東話/普通話)必需的： | | | | |
| a. to define new vocabulary items 定義/解釋新的英文詞彙 | | | | |
| b. to explain complex grammar points 解釋複雜的文法/語法 | | | | |
| c. to explain different concepts or ideas 解釋不同的概念 | | | | |
| d. to give classroom instructions 傳達課堂指令 | | | | |
| e. to summarize materials already covered 總結課堂上已教授的內容 | | | | |
| 10. Using Chinese in English language classroom can help me to learn English better. 英文課堂上使用中文(廣東話/普通話)能幫助我更好地學習英文。 | | | | |

Please continue to the next page 請翻頁繼續填寫問卷

Part 3 第三部分

Please read the statements below and express your opinion on the use of Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) in English language classroom. 請細閱下列選項並表達你在英文課堂上使用中文的評價
(please tick the correct boxes 請在合適的地方填上☑)

1. Should Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) be used in English language classrooms? 中文(廣東話/普通話)應在英文課堂上使用?

Yes 是

No 否

(Please continue to Question 2 請跳至第2題)

(Please continue to Question 3 請跳至第3題)

2. Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) should be used in English language classrooms because...

中文(廣東話/普通話)應在英文課堂上使用因為...

(You can choose more than one 你可選擇多於一個)

It helps me to understand difficult concepts better

能更有效地幫助我理解複雜的概念。

It helps me to understand the new vocabulary items better.

能更有效地幫助我理解新的英文詞彙。

It helps me to feel at ease, comfortable and less stressed.

能讓我感到輕鬆、舒適和沒有太大壓力。

It makes me feel more connected to my culture.

能增加我對自身文化的歸屬感。

I feel less lost in English classrooms.

使我在英文課堂上較少感到失落或迷失。

Others 其他：

3. How often should Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) be used in English language classroom?

中文(廣東話/普通話)應在英文課堂上多常使用?

Never 從不

Sometimes 有時

Usually 經常

Always 常常

4. To what extent, do you think the use of Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) in English language classroom helps you to learn English?

在多大程度上，你認為在英文課堂上使用中文(廣東話/普通話)能幫助你學習英文?

Not at all

Very little

Fairly much

Quite a lot

A lot

沒有作用

很少程度

一定程度上

很大程度上

極大程度上

The end. Thank you for your participation

問卷調查已完結。感謝你的參與。

Appendix B: Questionnaire Results

Table 5: Frequency of students using Chinese in English language classroom

| Questionnaire items | N=60 (%) | | | |
|---|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Never | Sometimes | Usually | Always |
| 5.1 I speak Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) in English class because I want to chat with my classmates about topics that may not be connected to class. | 2 (3.3%) | 30 (50%) | 15 (25%) | 13 (21.7%) |
| 5.2 I speak Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) in English class because I am explaining a new point in the lesson to a classmate. | 2 (3.3%) | 26 (43.3%) | 22 (36.7%) | 10 (16.7%) |
| 5.3 I speak Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) in English class because I need to ask a classmate to explain a point in the lesson for me. | 7 (11.7%) | 20 (33.3%) | 14 (23.3%) | 19 (31.7%) |
| 5.4 I speak Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) in English class because I need to check the meaning of a new word or concept during the lesson. | 11 18.3% | 19 (31.7%) | 22 (36.7%) | 8 (13.3%) |
| 5.5 I speak Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) in English class because I cannot think of the correct word in English when talking to my classmates. | 12 (20%) | 21 (35%) | 14 (23.3%) | 13 (21.7%) |
| 5.6 I speak Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) in English class because My classmates start talking to me in Chinese while we are working on a task. | 6 (10%) | 20 (33.3%) | 21 (35%) | 13 (21.7%) |
| 5.7 I speak Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) in English class because When I talk about personal things with my classmates. | 6 (10%) | 13 (21.7%) | 23 (38.3%) | 18 (30%) |
| 5.8 I speak Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) in English class because to finish class activities faster, so I speak Chinese with groupmates who speak Chinese. | 5 (8.3%) | 25 (41.7%) | 20 (33.3%) | 10 (16.7%) |

Table 6: Students' opinions towards their L1 using English language classroom

| Questionnaire items | N=60(%) | | | |
|--|-------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
| 6.1 It's not important to speak only English in class as long as I am completing the course tasks. | 1 (1.7%) | 20 (33.3%) | 29 (48.3%) | 10 (16.7%) |
| 6.2 Speaking Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) with my | 0 (0%) | 6 (10%) | 32 (53.3%) | 22 (36.7%) |

| | | | | |
|--|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| classmates between and during class activities should be okay as long as the course is not a speaking class. | | | | |
| 6.3 I think I speak in Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) more often than I speak English in English class. | 2 (3.3%) | 13 (21.7%) | 33 (55%) | 12 (20%) |

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Adopted from:

Al Sharaeai, W. A. A. (2012). Students' Perspectives on the Use of L1 in English Classrooms. (Master's thesis, Iowa State University, Iowa, United States). Retrieved from: <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3905&context=etd>

1. Do you use your first language in class? How often?
你會在英文課堂上使用中文嗎? 你使用的頻率是?
2. In what types of situations do you use your first language in class?
你會在什麼情況下於英文課堂上使用中文?
3. How comfortable are you using your first language in class?
你在英文課堂上使用中文會有什麼感覺?
4. Do you prefer speaking English or your first language in English class? Why?
你會在英文課堂上偏好使用英文還是中文? 為什麼?
5. Does your teacher ever use your first language in class? If so, is it useful?
Distracting?
你的英文老師曾在英文課堂上使用中文嗎? 你認為這是有幫助還是分散你的注意力?
6. What do you think about a teacher using your first language to teach English?
當你的英文老師在英文課堂上使用中文, 你會有什麼感覺?
7. When do you use English outside the English classroom?
除英文課堂外, 你會在什麼情況下使用英文。
8. Is there anything else you'd like to share with me about your experience using your native language versus English in English classes?
除以上提及的情況外, 你有沒有什麼關於在英文課堂上使用中文的經歷可分享。

Appendix D: Interview Transcripts

Date: 4th December

Interviewee: Student A

L1: Cantonese Sex: Male Age: 12 English proficiency: Poor

I: Do you use Chinese in English lessons?

A: Yes, I use Chinese in English lessons.

I: Can you tell me how often you use it in one single lesson, please use percentage to represent the amount of Chinese used in class.

A: I would say it is used for 90% of the lesson time.

I: Why?

A: I don't have sufficient vocabulary to present my ideas and thoughts to others, so it is hard for me to express myself in English.

I: Do you chat with your classmates using English? And why?

A: No, because it is more convenient to use Chinese to discuss personal matters.

I: What about talking to the teacher, like asking questions about the lesson contents or making requests?

A: It depends. If I can use English to express my thoughts using English, then I will use English. If not, I will be code-mixing but if it doesn't work this does not work, I will use Chinese instead. As for making simple requests, like "May I go to toilet, please!", I speak in English.

I: Can you tell me when you will use Chinese in class.

A: Like what I have mentioned before, if I can express myself in English, I'll speak in English. If not, I would switch to Chinese.

I: How do you feel about using Chinese in class?

A: Noting special.

I: Do you prefer speaking English or Chinese in class? Why?

A: I prefer using English over Chinese in English lessons because it is a marker of intelligence and stylishness.

I: Let's move on to talk about the use of Chinese by your English teacher. Does your teacher ever use Chinese in class? If yes, do you think is it useful or distracting?

A: Yes, and I think it is useful because it helps me to better understand the lesson contents, such as learning new vocabulary and grammar as well as understanding reading texts. I like it

the best when the teacher uses Chinese to explain the complicated items because I can understand the contents instantly with the help from the Chinese explanations.

I: What about giving classroom instructions? Which one is better, English or Chinese?

A: I don't think there's a need for the teacher to use Chinese when giving general classroom instructions like "Pass your homework to the front", "Put away your books and notes".

I: How do you feel about the teachers' use of Chinese?

A: Nothing special. Or I should say it is useful.

I: Lastly, do you use English outside the English classroom, if yes, when?

A: Yes, besides speaking as much as English I can in class, if I bump into our NET teacher, Mr. Roberts or having Language Art lessons with him, this is no way for me not to speak English since I'm talking to a foreigner who can only understand English. Outside of the school, I will speak English when I feel like I want to use the language. This happens twice a week and each time lasts for approximately 1-2 hours till I can no longer express myself using my existing language resources. And there's one more point to add, I would do this to anyone around me even though they may not be an English speaker.

I: Is there anything else you'd like to share with me about your experience using your native language versus English in English classes?

A: No comment.

Date: 4th December

Interviewee: Student B

L1: Cantonese

Sex: Male

Age: 12

English proficiency: Poor

I: Do you use Chinese in English lessons? If yes, please use percentage to represent the amount of Chinese used in one single lesson.

B: Yes, I use Cantonese in English lessons and I would say Cantonese is used for 70-80% of the lesson time. I use Chinese very often because I don't have a strong background in English. Not having sufficient vocabulary resources makes it difficult for me to communicate effectively and therefore, I use Chinese for most of the time.

I: In what occasions do you use Chinese in class?

B: Mostly when there are things that I don't understand, and I would like to ask explanation or clarification. Other than that, I chat in Chinese with my classmates.

I: What about making requests in class like "May I turn on the fan or can I throw the rubbish, please?", do you use English or Chinese?

B: English.

I: How do you feel about using Chinese in class?

B: Honestly, it's kind of awkward and strange using Chinese in class since it isn't something that should be used in a language learning classroom. If possible, I try to use as much as English I can and reduce the amount of Chinese used in class.

I: What will you do if you don't know how to use English to express yourself?

B: I'll ask for help from my classmates or look up the dictionary afterschool. By doing so, I've learnt more words and become more capable to express myself in the similar situations.

I: Do you prefer speaking English or Chinese in class? Why?

B: Given that my English proficiency is so weak, I prefer using Chinese. There are so many English words that I don't know which makes it really demanding for me to use English to communicate with others.

I: Let's move on to talk about the use of Chinese by your English teacher. Does your teacher ever use Chinese in class? If yes, do you think is it useful or distracting?

B: Yes. I think it is useful when the teacher uses Chinese to teach vocabulary, grammatical items and sentence structures, in particular, for the complicated ones since I can understand the contents better. But if you ask me, I prefer the teacher to use simple English phrases to explain the meanings of the new words. But when it comes to teaching reading

comprehension, the use of Chinese is important for enhancing my understanding of the passages, such as the main ideas of each paragraph and the feeling or message behind the text.

I: What about giving classroom instructions? Which one is better, English or Chinese?

B: English since I don't have a problem with that.

I: How do you feel about the teachers' use of Chinese?

B: I do not have any special feelings towards the use of Chinese by my English teacher.

I: Do you use English outside the English classroom, if yes, when?

B: I need to use English when playing computer games since the players are often foreigners who can only speak English, so I have no choice but to use English.

I: Is there anything else you'd like to share with me about your experience using your native language versus English in English classes?

B: No.

Date: 10th December

Interviewee: Student C

L1: Cantonese

Sex: Female

Age: 12

English proficiency: Average

I: Do you use Chinese in English lessons? If yes, please use percentage to represent the amount of Chinese used in one single lesson.

C: Yes, I use Chinese in English lessons and I would say Cantonese is used for 50% of the lesson time. Mostly for talking with my friends and the teacher.

I: Can I say that you use Chinese mainly for communication?

C: Yes, because it is my personal habit to speak to chat with others using Chinese.

I: Does your English proficiency affect your language preference when talking to others?

C: No, it has nothing to do with my English proficiency. Even if I can express myself in English, I still prefer using Chinese.

I: So how do you feel about using Chinese in class?

C: I think it is normal to use Cantonese in class, so I don't have any special feelings in this regard.

I: Can you describe your language preference in class, English or Chinese?

C: Same as the previous, I prefer speaking Chinese mostly because it is my personal habit. Also, I sometimes find myself having difficulty to articulate properly using English, especially when I encounter words that I don't know how to pronounce. This is also part of the reason why using Chinese is more preferable.

I: Have you done anything to improve your English then?

C: Yes, I do look for ways to improve my pronunciation through listening to English songs more often though this won't change my preference of using Cantonese to express myself and speak to others in class.

I: Let's move on to talk about the use of Chinese by your English teacher. Does your teacher ever use Chinese in class? If yes, do you think it is useful or distracting?

C: Yes, my English teacher sometimes uses Chinese in teaching. I think it is useful because it helps me to better understand the knowledge and to avoid feeling lost because of incomprehension when teaching complicated grammatical items.

I: Do you think there's a need to use Chinese in other language learning areas, such as teaching vocabulary and reading as well as giving classroom instructions.

C: Not really and I think I can comprehend almost everything my teacher said using English

only, except for the difficult ones.

I: How do you feel about the teachers' use of Chinese?

C: Nothing special because I think it is normal for her to use Chinese given that she mostly uses Chinese to explain vocabulary and grammatical knowledge.

I: Do you use English outside the English classroom, if yes, when?

C: Not much. I seldom use English outside the classroom. I sometimes text my family using English.

I: Can you tell why?

C: Because I want to improve my English. My parents will correct the mistakes I made, so I can learn more from time to time.

I: Is there anything else you'd like to share with me about your experience using your native language versus English in English classes?

C: I have nothing to say.

Date: 10th December

Interviewee: Student D

L1: Cantonese Sex: Male Age: 12 English proficiency: Average

I: Do you use Chinese in English lessons? If yes, please use percentage to represent the amount of Chinese used in one single lesson.

D: Yes, I would say Cantonese is used for 50% of the lesson time.

I: Can you tell me in what situations you will use Chinese in class.

D: Mostly when I can't express myself in English, like I don't know how to pronounce the words or can't put my thoughts into words using English. When I'm talking to my English teacher, I'll use English. But if I don't know how to pronounce the words or can't find the exact words to express that I wanted to say, I'll use Chinese. I also use Chinese when talking to my classmates.

I: How do you feel about using Chinese in class?

D: Nothing in particular.

I: Do you prefer speaking English or Chinese in class? Why?

D: I prefer speaking English because I feel more comfortable when speaking the language in class compared to using the language outside of the English classroom.

I: Let's move on to talk about the use of Chinese by your English teacher. Does your teacher ever use Chinese in class? If yes, do you think is it useful or distracting?

D: Yes. I think it is useful because it enhances my understanding of the taught knowledge, for example, the reading texts and the comprehension questions, the definition of words and grammatical items. Using Chinese also makes it easier for me to process and absorb the knowledge taught in class.

I: How about using Chinese to give classroom instructions?

D: It is no need for me.

I: How do you feel about the teachers' use of Chinese?

D: I feel nothing at all.

I: Do you use English outside the English classroom, if yes, when?

D: I might use some common English phrases, like "Thank you", "Sorry", "Excuse me" in daily conversation. Other than that, I rarely speak English outside the classroom.

I: Is there anything else you'd like to share with me about your experience using your native language versus English in English classes?

D: No.

Date: 10th December

Interviewee: Student E

L1: Cantonese Sex: Male Age: 12 English proficiency: Average

I: Do you use Chinese in English lessons? If yes, please use percentage to represent the amount of Chinese used in one single lesson.

E: Yes, I use Cantonese in English lessons and I would say Cantonese is used for 90% of the lesson time.

I: Can you tell me in what situations you will use Chinese in class.

E: I'll use it for classroom communication, like raise a question to the teacher or talking casually to my classmates about homework or personal matters.

I: How do you feel about using Chinese in class?

E: It makes me feel more relaxed when using Chinese in class because it is easier for me express myself and to be understood by the others.

I: Do you prefer speaking English or Chinese in class? Why?

E: I prefer speaking English because it is rather normal to use the language in class.

I: Let's move on to talk about the use of Chinese by your English teacher. Does your teacher ever use Chinese in class? If yes, do you think is it useful or distracting?

E: Yes. I think it is useful because it's easier for me to articulate my ideas and thoughts when talking to her. Other than that, it is not necessary for her to use Chinese in teaching since I can understand almost everything she taught in class even if she uses English only.

I: How do you feel about the teachers' use of Chinese?

E: I think it rather normal for the teacher to use Chinese when teaching English.

I: Do you use English outside the English classroom, if yes, when?

E: I speak English when I'm hanging out with foreigners because it's the common language we shared the same.

I: Is there anything else you'd like to share with me about your experience using your native language versus English in English classes?

E: No.

Date: 10th December

Interviewee: Student F

L1: Cantonese Sex: Female Age: 12 English proficiency: Poor

I: Do you use Chinese in English lessons? If yes, please use percentage to represent the amount of Chinese used in one single lesson.

F: Yes. I would say Cantonese is used for 90% of the lesson time because my English is poor and there are so many words that I don't know. I can't really express myself properly using English.

I: Can you tell me in what situations you will use Chinese in class.

F: I would say almost everything, like talking to my teacher and chatting with my classmates.

I: How do you feel about using Chinese in class?

F: I don't really feel anything.

I: Do you prefer speaking English or Chinese in class? Why?

F: I prefer speaking Chinese because it is more convenient for me to express myself and for others to understand me as well. Also, just like what I've said my English is poor, so using English only is impossible.

I: Have you done anything to improve your English then?

F: Not really.

I: Let's move on to talk about the use of Chinese by your English teacher. Does your teacher ever use Chinese in class? If yes, do you think is it useful or distracting?

F: Yes. It is helpful because it facilitates my comprehension of the taught knowledge. I can grasp the knowledge instantly when the teacher uses Chinese to teach new vocabulary, grammatical rules and reading comprehension

I: Do you agree that Chinese should be used by the teacher when giving classroom instructions?

F: That is not an issue for me.

I: How do you feel about the teachers' use of Chinese?

F: I think it is normal for the teacher to use Chinese, so I do not have any special feelings in this regard.

I: Do you use English outside the English classroom, if yes, when?

F: No. I rarely use the language.

I: Is there anything else you'd like to share with me about your experience using your native

language versus English in English classes?

F: No.

