

Loss and Gain: Revisiting the Roles of the First Language in Novice Adult Second Language Learning Classrooms

Yingqin Liu

Cameron University, Lawton, Oklahoma, USA

Annie Ping Zeng

University of Alaska, Anchorage, Alaska, USA

Abstract—In order to further understand the roles of first language (L1) in second language (L2) classrooms and explore new potential pedagogical insights for second or foreign language teaching, this article presents an empirical study that explores the attitudes of foreign and second language teachers and students on the use of L1 in L2 classrooms. A small group of L2 teachers and L2 novice students from a public university in Alaska participated in a combined qualitative and quantitative study (survey, individual interviews, and a focus group interview) given by the researchers in 2013. The study shows that the majority of the participants hold a very positive outlook on using L1 in their L2 learning process and they believe that the use of L1 can help build a meaningful connection between their L1 and L2 that it can promote L2 students' understanding on L2 grammar, culture, and syntax (especially at the beginning level). Participants all agreed that L1 use can help L2 teachers to make instructions and assignments easier for L2 students to understand. The findings support previous studies on positive effects of L1 on L2 learning classroom. The study concludes that the use of L1 in L2 classrooms can be treated as a naturally occurring phenomenon at various levels and for a variety of teaching and learning purposes and that it should not be avoided but be monitored for its conducive effects in L2 classrooms.

Index Terms—L1 use in L2 classrooms, multi-competence, L2 learner attitudes, L2 teacher beliefs

I. INTRODUCTION

The controversy concerning L1 use in L2 classrooms has been going on since foreign and second language teaching became widespread in the 18th century. Based on the promising findings of the research on the positive effects of using L1 in L2 classrooms (Moore, 2013; Martin-Beltran, 2010; Deller & Rinvolutri, 2002; and Cook, 2001), many L2 educators have encouraged the proper use of L1 in their L2 classrooms in different learning contexts. However, there are those who advocate total avoidance of L1 use in L2 classrooms. Additionally, much recent research has neglected the differences between L2 novice adult learners (i.e. studying the L2 from the very beginning) and L2 non-novice adult learners (i.e. having L2 learning experience from high schools or other secondary sources) when discussing L1 use in L2 classrooms. In order to further understand the positive functions of using L1 in L2 novice learners' classrooms and explore potential new pedagogical insights for second or foreign language teaching and learning, this article presents a study conducted at a public university in Alaska. Specifically, it investigates college L2 teachers' and L2 beginning foreign language learners' attitudes towards L1 use in foreign language classrooms and their attitudes on the benefits and drawbacks of using L1 (English) in their L2 (Chinese) classrooms. This paper is written from a background in teaching Chinese as a foreign language at a university in which L2 students are novice learners taking the L2 to meet a general education requirement in a U.S. university.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical and conceptual work, which informs this research includes arguments against L1 use, research supporting L1 use in L2 classrooms, and the multi-competence perspective (Cook, 2003) that provides a new lens for examining the L1 functions in the L2 classroom.

A. Arguments against L1 Use in L2 Classrooms

One argument against the use of L1 in L2 classrooms originates from the "naturalistic" language approach termed the Direct Method created by Charles Berlitz (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This approach insists that L2 learning should be more like L1: much active oral interaction, spontaneous use of the language, no translation between L1 and L2, and little or no analysis of grammatical rules (Brown, 2000). Here, the implied reason for avoiding L1 use seems to be that when children learn their L1, they have no other language to depend on and, thus, L2 learners should avoid using their L1.

Another argument against L1 use in L2 learning comes from contrastive analysis (CA). Formulated by Lado (1957) and influenced by the behaviorist theories prevalent at the time, CA suggests that difficulties in acquiring a new(second) language are derived from the differences between the new language and the native (first) language of a language learner (cited in Kramsch, 2007). Such a phenomenon is usually known as negative transfer of L1 to L2. In its strongest formulation, the CA hypothesis suggests that all the errors made in learning the L2 can be attributed to ‘interference’ by L1 (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Even though it became clear later that CA could not predict all L2 learning difficulties and errors, it was still regarded as useful in retrospective explanation of L2 errors.

Then, during the 1980s, Krashen’s (1981) Input Hypothesis claims that “an important ‘condition for language acquisition to occur is that the acquirer understanding (via hearing or reading) input language that contains structure ‘a bit beyond’ his or her current level of competence.... If an acquirer is at stage or level i , the input he or she understands should contain $i+1$ ” (p. 100). As Brown (2000) suggests, “an important part of the Input Hypothesis is Krashen’s recommendation that speaking not be taught directly or very early in the language classroom. Speech will ‘emerge’ once the acquirer has built up enough comprehensible input ($i+1$)” (p, 278) from exposure to target language (TL). Indeed, many L2 educators believe that Krashen, in fact, suggests that language acquisition occurs through maximum exposure to comprehensible input, and, thus, L1 should be disallowed in the L2 classrooms (Piske & Young-Scholten, 2009). This maximum exposure theory provides another reason for many L2 educators to take a strong line in rejecting L1 in L2 classrooms (Ford, 2009).

B. Arguments in Support of L1 Use in L2 Classrooms

Despite some of the arguments above, the practitioners of second language teaching have found that there are many reasons that support L1 use in L2 teaching.

One comes from the fifth hypothesis of Krashen’s Monitor Model- the affective filter hypothesis (1981). This rationale suggests that students of a foreign language will filter or block out the target language if they become nervous, bored, and frustrated due to the difficulty of the target language. Logically, this seems to make sense because students who are confused become upset about, resentful at, and resistant to learning the target language. When this situation occurs, students’ language acquisition becomes extremely difficult. Meyer (2008) states that, to prevent this phenomenon from happening, it is imperative that the students comprehend what is happening both administratively in the classroom and pedagogically with the target language (p.148). He also states that it is the students’ comprehension of the language classroom environment that can lead to the lowered affective filters while using the students’ L1 can increase comprehension and lower affective filters (Meyer, 2008, p. 148). Likewise, Brown (2000) uses the concept of language anxiety to describe this kind affective filter in the L2 classroom and suggests that it is composed of communication apprehension, fear of negative social evaluation, and test anxiety (p. 151). However, by using students’ L1, all the three components of this language anxiety can be mitigated. For example, communication apprehension can be reduced through allowing students to use their L1 to fully express their thoughts and ideas during class. Thus, the fear of negative social evaluation can be lowered since they can communicate directly with each other more clearly and then make positive social impressions on one another (Brown, 2000). Additionally, allowing basic instructions to be given in L1 can also help reduce test anxiety because increased comprehension of classroom interaction acts to decrease anxiety and increase motivation (Meyer, 2008, p.151).

Another important rationale for using L1 in L2 classroom comes from Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory, which posits that social interaction is the driver of individual development of knowledge and cognitive processes (Moore, 2013). According to Lantolf and Appel (1994), Vygotsky’s focus on the role of language as a mediating tool in the development of childhood cognition has been particularly appropriate to second language acquisition, where language is both the mediation tool and the object of learning. Thus, as Moore (2013) argues, using L1 may increase learner interaction in L2 classroom related to sociocognitive negotiation of pedagogic roles, intersubjectivity, and intrapersonal constructs of inner and private speech. Moore (2013) believes that these constructs feature heavily in studies into L1 use in L2 classroom as there is evidence that learners naturally and inevitably draw on their L1 in both private and inner speech (p.241).

A third important reason why L1 should be used in L2 classroom is based on the schema theory which suggests that cognitive knowledge is organized into interrelated patterns. These patterns are built on an individual’s previous experience regarding a given aspect of the experiential world (such as their first language) and allow the individual to hypothesize about future experience (Meyer, 2013). In fact, Ausubel’s (1963) meaningful learning theory shares the similar rationale with the schema theory. He suggests that humans relate “new events or items to their existing cognitive concepts” (Brown, 2000, p. 83), and meaningful learning occurs when new material is related or anchored to “relevant established entities in cognitive structure” (Brown, 2000, p. 83). As Cook (2001) further points out, the use of schema in L2 learning is like accreting knowledge from instances of incomprehension embedded in the comprehensible (p.101).

Finally, Cook’s (2003) notion of multicompetence also provides some support for L1 use in L2 classroom. This theory suggests that second language users should not be viewed as imitation monolinguals in a second language; rather, they should be seen to possess unique forms of competence, or competencies, in their own right (Cook, 2003). Jarvis and Pavlenko (2008) claim that “[t]he multicompetence approach allows us to theorize the interaction between multiple languages in the speaker’s mind as a natural and ongoing process...” (p.17). Cook (2003) further suggests that a multicompetence perspective allows for languages to be viewed as part of a larger system rather as separate entities in a

learner's mind, and since L1 and L2 are in the same mind, they must form a language supersystem at some level other than being completely isolated systems. Similarly, Cenoz and Gorter (2008) explain that bilinguals and multilinguals can use languages in different ways because they can code-switch between languages and also because there is interaction between their competence in the different languages that form their linguistic repertoire (p. 272). One implication we can draw from Cook's multicompetence theory seems to be that students' L1 actually serves as a resource for their L2 learning rather than simply a negative transfer as traditionally defined. According to Lightbown and Spada (1999), most teachers and researchers do not doubt that students use knowledge of their first language (and other languages they may familiar with) to decipher the target language (as cited in Meyer, 2008, p. 152).

III. METHOD

A. Research Questions

1. What are beginning Chinese student learners' and beginning Chinese instructors' attitudes towards using their first language (English) in their second language (Mandarin Chinese) classrooms respectively?
2. What are the proper occasions for L1 to be used in L2 (Mandarin Chinese) classrooms? What is the proper time L1 should be avoided in L2 (Mandarin Chinese) classrooms?
3. What are the advantages of and disadvantages of using students' L1 in their L2 learning classrooms from the beginning Chinese student learners' perspective and from the beginning Chinese instructors' perspective respectively?

B. Participants

Twenty-one (21) full-time college students taking Introductory Chinese 101 at a public state university in Alaska participated in focus group interviews and a survey questionnaire. These students were at the first semester to learn Chinese (level 1) and were without any previous Chinese learning background. Five (5) instructors teaching Introductory Chinese 101 at the same university participated in the individual interviews. The instructors were all native speakers of Chinese language, which is different from that of the students'. Although most of them encouraged students to use L2 language (Chinese) whenever possible in and out of class within their abilities, the instructors themselves did use both English and Chinese to explain grammar and others.

C. Data Collection

During November 2012, one of the researchers conducted the student survey questionnaire on the university campus, and during December 2012, one of the researchers administered focus group interviews with the student participants and individual interviews with the instructor participants.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the research results and discusses the findings in the form of responses to the three research questions presented at the beginning of this article.

The research question 1 will be discussed first:

1. What are the beginning Chinese student learners' and the beginning Chinese Instructors' attitudes towards using student first language (English) in their second language (Mandarin Chinese) classrooms respectively?

First, the results of the focus group interviews with the students in Chinese 101 show that the participants held positive attitudes towards L1 use in L2 classrooms and believed that using their L1 (English) in their L2 classroom was helpful for the L2 learning process. During the 2012 focus group interview, all the student participants (seven) stated that they felt comfortable using L1 (English) in their L2 (Chinese) class, and six of them admitted that they used about 50% of their L1 (English) during their Chinese class period. All of them also claimed that they believed that their Chinese instructors should not avoid using L1 (English) in their L2 (Chinese) class, especially at the beginning level.

Additionally, the survey results with the student in Chinese 101 further demonstrate the participants' approval and positive attitudes towards using L1 in their L2 classes (see TABLE 1).

TABLE 1
THE RELATED SURVEY RESULT FROM CHINESE 101 (NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS=21)

Questions 5-9	Multiple Choices (N= the students who made the choices)				
	a	b	c	d	e
5. Do you think the appropriate use of the English language in second language class by your teacher is helpful for you learning?	Not much--1	Somewhat--2	Not sure--0	Indeed--7	Extremely--9
6. Do you agree that Chinese instructors should use Chinese only in class?	Disagree--8	Not sure--1	Somewhat agree--7	Agree--4	Strongly agree--0
7. Do you think English can help you construct knowledge and compare linguistic or cultural information between English and Chinese when you learn Chinese in and out of class?	Not much--0	Not sure--0	Somewhat helpful--3	Helpful--15	Very helpful--2
8. Do you use English language cues to help you understand the Chinese language or make notes?	Not very often--1	Sometimes--5	Frequently--8	Always--4	N/P
9. Do you use English language cues to help each other during the class teamwork or group study?	Not very often--3	Sometimes--4	Frequently--8	Always--4	N/P

The results of individual interviews with the Chinese instructor participants also show that the four of the five participants held a supportive attitude towards using L1 in L2 class. Most of them agreed that using L1 (English) in L2 (Chinese) was necessary and useful for them to help their L2 students learn Chinese. For example, 80% of them (three) described that during a L2 class period, their L1 usage might vary from 25%-50%. As one participant stated, “[s]ometimes, the students feel they understand the new language better when we use English during teaching...” (personal communication 3, December 3, 2012). Another claimed “[m]y students are new Chinese learners. They would like to have English to help them to understand” (personal communication 1, December 1. 2012). A third participant argued that when he or she used students’ L1 during the L2 class time, “[t]hey are secure and satisfied that they understand better about what I am teaching and they are catching the cultural as well as grammatical points” (personal communication 4, December 3, 2012). Furthermore, all of the instructor participants stated that they believed that L1 (English) should not be avoided in their L2 (Chinese) class. One participant stated “I don’t think so [avoid using L1]. It is really hard to explain the grammar points or cultural differences in Chinese sometimes, especially for the beginners” (personal communication 3, December 3, 2012). Another commented that “[u]sing English in teaching Chinese makes it easier for students understanding the study. [It is] more effective, especially for adult” (personal communication 4, December 4, 2012) while one interviewee pointed out that “[s]ometimes, using English helps students avoid misunderstanding” (personal communication 5, December 4, 2012).

It was remarkable that participants in both groups all realized the importance and necessity of using L1 in the beginning L2 classroom. This shared understanding on using L1 in the beginning L2 classrooms helps shed light on the participants’ approval and supportive attitudes towards using L1 in the novice L2 classrooms. The findings also further show that at the novice level, there is a natural tendency in which both L2 educators and L2 learners will turn to the L1 for assistance for various purposes such as lowering affective filters, providing scaffolding for novice learners, and making the classroom a more comprehensible place (Meyer, 2008). These findings tend to agree with several previous studies such as Anton and Dicamella (1998) who found L1- a useful psychological tool in the early stages of second language leaning. Brook and Donato (1994) also claim "L1 use is a normal psycholinguistic Language teaching process that facilitates L2 production , allows the learners both to initiate and sustain verbal interaction with one other" (p. 268).

In the following, the research question 2 will be discussed:

2. According to the instructors and the students respectively, what is the proper time for the L1 to be used in L2 (Mandarin Chinese) learning classroom? What is the proper time the L1 should be avoided in L2 (Mandarin Chinese) classroom?

The following TABLE 2 and TABLE 3 summarize the results based on the data analysis from the focus group interviews with the student participants and the individual interviews with the instructor participants in response to the second research question.

TABLE 2
THE RESULTS FROM THE STUDENT FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

The Proper Time or Occasions for Using L1 in L2 Classrooms	The Student Participants (N= 7)
-- When we learn vocabulary and sentence patterns, English can help us undusted words more and understand the structure more	The student participant 1
--When the teacher compares two languages and tell stories, English can help us remember the Chinese words better.	The student participant 2
-- When the teacher tells culturally related stories, English makes it easier for us to understand them.”	The student participant 4
-- When we need to ask questions, English helps us to express ourselves more clearly and understand the answers better.	The student participant 3

TABLE 3
THE RESULT FROM THE INSTRUCTOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

The Proper Time or Occasions for Using L1 in L2 Classrooms	The Instructor Participants (N= 5)
-- English was used when I assign students homework and make announcement.	The instructor participant 1
-- I use English when I teach difficult grammar rules and new words or after class when helping individual students with grammar usage.	The instructor participant 2 The instructor participant 4
-- When dealing with complicated language points and comparing the two cultures, I use English more.	The instructor participant 3 The instructor participant 4
-- I use English when I need to tell stories demonstrating some Chinese cultural themes and explain grammar.	The instructor participant 5

TABLE 2 and TABLE 3 show that students and instructors all agree that L1 (English) should be used in L2 (Chinese) classroom when dealing with grammar, culture, new words, and administrating class activities.

These results tend to agree with previous research on the positive functions of L1 in L2 classrooms (Schweers 1999; Atkinson, 1987; and Auerbach, 1993). For instance, Schweers’ (1999) study shows that L1 (Spanish) was used mainly in explaining difficult concepts such as grammar and new vocabulary. He explains that “starting with the L1 [Spanish] provides a sense of security and validates the learners’ lived experiences, allowing them to express themselves. The learner is then willing to experiment and take risks with English [L2]” (Schweers, 1999, p.7). Cianflone’s (2009) research on L1 use in English courses at the University of Messina in Italy also shows that the students and the teachers

were favorable to L1 use in terms of explanation of grammar, vocabulary items, difficult concepts and for general comprehension. He suggests that students preferred L1 use and teachers also subscribed to using L1 judiciously (Cianflone, 2009). Finally, the findings also support Swain's (2000) and Lapkin's (2000) assumption that L1 can help move the class tasks along, facilitating L2 classroom activities, particularly for low proficiency students and on complex class activities.

The following TABLE 4 and TABLE 5 summarize results from the focus group interviews with student participants and the individual interviews with the instructors in response to the proper time or occasions for avoiding L1 in the L2 classroom.

TABLE 4
THE RESULTS FROM THE STUDENT FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

The Proper Time or Occasions for Avoiding L1 to be Used in L2 Classrooms	The Student Participants (N= 5)
-- If our teacher speaks too much English in class, we won't learn Chinese.	The student participant 1
-- We need more Chinese input, so we can hear the tones and how it is supposed to be.	The student participant 2
-- Direction and housekeeping in English helps the lower level students understand better, as we progress, more Chinese can be used.	The student participant 4

TABLE 5
THE RESULTS FROM THE INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTOR INTERVIEWS

The Proper Time or Occasions for Avoiding L1 to Be Used in L2 Classrooms	The Instructor Participants (N= 5)
-- If I must list one, it probably will be the situation when something can be easily understood by the students, I am still using English (L1) to explain, which makes the situation being more verbose.	The instructor participant 1
--When teaching vocabulary and texts, too much English (L1) may make students become dependent on their first language, but using Chinese (L2) properly in teaching will help students to concentrate in class and reinforce their language memory.	The instructor participant 2
--When teaching oral Chinese, it is better to use Chinese (L2) as much as possible. If English (L1) is used too often for instructions or explanations, students will most likely reply on their mother language too much, thus, missing the chances of practicing the new language, and thus limit students' exposure to Chinese (L2).	The instructor participant 3 The instructor participant 5
-- Some new words and expressions should not be taught in English (L1).	The instructor participant 4

TABLE 4 and TABLE 5 demonstrate that the instructors had a clearer impression of when not to use L1 than did the students. However, the findings show that both the students and instructors were aware of the possible negative effects of relying on L1 use in L2 classroom.

Finally, the research question 3 will be discussed:

3. What are the perceived major advantages of and disadvantages of using students' first language in their second language learning classrooms from the beginning Chinese student learners' perspective and from the beginning Chinese instructors' perspective respectively?

The results based on the data analysis on the two open questions from the survey with the student participants provide rich answers from the students. TABLE 6 and TABLE 7 summarize the student participants' opinions on the advantages and disadvantages in their L2 (Chinese) learning process when their L2 instructors use L1 (English) in the L2 (Chinese) classroom.

TABLE 6
SUMMARY OF THE STUDENT PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON ADVANTAGES OF USING L1 IN L2 CLASSROOMS

Type of Advantages of Using L1 in L2 Classrooms	The Student Participants (N= 21)
1). Helping build a connection between L1 and L2 that makes learning L2 easier 2). Helping L2 students understand L2 grammar, words, and meaning faster	-- When the teacher uses English along with the foreign language, it helps me make connections and understand the material better. If only Chinese is used, I become confused and frustrated because I can't connect the words with their meaning (The Participant 1). -- In the rare occasion that an idea is too far from my knowledge base, using English sets me on the right track (The Participant 6). -- I learn the words more by saying in English and Chinese, and also when we are building sentence structure (The Participant 9). -- Due to our limited exposure to Chinese vocabulary, sometimes the proper or improper usage are hard to define using only Chinese that we are familiar with, but using English bridges the gap (The Participant 15). -- The teacher knows how to explain Chinese words by comparing term to English words to help us understand better (The Participant 8). -- When the teacher uses the English cue, it's only to help describe the words that we are learning and how it applies in the language. I find this is very helpful in making sure I don't use the wrong words for the statement I'm making (The Participant 3). -- It is really hard to study Chinese, so the instructor uses both Chinese and English. Especially, this is beginning class, so English must be used to help understanding (The Participant 4). -- You can ask questions about the concepts you don't know (The Participant 11). -- You can ask the teacher about sentences and words for clarification (The Participant 17). -- To explain difficult aspects of grammar, it is very helpful to have our teacher help hard parts in English (The Participant 20).

TABLE 7
SUMMARY OF THE STUDENT PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON DISADVANTAGES OF USING L1 IN L2 CLASSROOMS

Type of Disadvantages of Using L1 in L2 Classrooms	The Student Participants (N= 21)
May making students rely on their L1, thus receiving less L2 input for L2 students to practice L2	-- It is disadvantageous speaking English because it takes the class out of a certain mindset, which makes it easier to learn foreign language (The Participant 14). -- It encourages people depend on English even when we have vocabulary in Chinese (The Participant 15). -- It becomes distracting; sometimes, I will wait until my professor uses English before I attempt to figure out what the word is (The Participant 19). -- If I stick with English, I will not be able to learn Chinese (The Participant 4).
No- disadvantage perception	-- Seven participants claimed that they believed that there was no disadvantage, and as one of them said 'I don't really think there is a disadvantage. When instructors use only the foreign language, I believe it actually makes the language harder to understand.'

TABLE 6 and TABLE 7 demonstrate that the student participants have identified two major advantages: using L1 in L2 classroom can not only help L2 learners build a connection between L1 and L2 but also help L2 students understand L2 grammar, words, and meaning. Additionally, only some of the participants believe that one major disadvantage of using L1 in L2 classroom is that it can make L2 students rely on their L1, thus receiving less L2 input to practice L2.

The results of the individual interviews with the instructors provide answers about the instructor's perspectives. TABLE 8 and TABLE 9 summarize the instructor participants' perspectives on the advantages and disadvantages when they use L1 in their L2 classrooms.

TABLE 8
SUMMARY OF THE INSTRUCTOR PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVE ON ADVANTAGES OF USING L1 IN L2 CLASSROOMS

Type of Advantages of Using L1 in L2 Classrooms	The Instructor Participants (N= 5)
Being efficient in explaining language points and grammar, thus keeping class moving on easily	-- Sometimes, comparison of English and Chinese will help students to understand and remember Chinese language better (The instructor participant 3). -- Using English can save time on having students making guess on what teachers are trying to get across. Grammatical differences can be explained in a short amount of time to help students with a better unstinting between Chinese and English (The instructor participant 5)
Helping students understand instructions more quickly and easily and better receive the language knowledge	-- Since English is students' first language, using it makes class effective and help students better understand the teaching (The instructor participant 4).

TABLE 9
SUMMARY OF THE INSTRUCTOR PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVE ON DISADVANTAGES OF USING L1 IN L2 CLASSROOMS

Type of Disadvantages of Using L1 in L2 Classrooms	The Instructor Participants (N= 5)
May limiting the important L2 language learning environment, thus impeding students' exposure to authenticity of L2 language	-- Using too much mother language will affect learning the new language; it slows down students' acceptance of another language (The participant 3). -- It may draw back the development of the target language logical system, which is a very important goal in helping the students to acquire the target language (The participant 1). -- Using L1 may result in students' less practice in L2 and then less language circumstance (The participant 4). -- Using L1 may reduce the opportunities for students to listen and speak Chinese but an L2 learning environment can help students focus on L2 learning better (The participant 4).

TABLE 8 and TABLE 9 demonstrate that the instructors saw two major advantages for L1 (English) in their L2 (Chinese) classrooms. One is that using L1 can help them efficiently explain language points and grammar, thus helping the class move easily. The other is that it can help students understand instructions quickly and easily, and thus students may better receive the language knowledge. However, they all agreed that the major disadvantage of using L1 in L2 classroom is that it can limit students' exposure to the authenticity of L2 language learning.

The findings for the third research question support Allford's (1999) conclusion that employing the mother tongue is entirely compatible with extensive use of the target language, which is being complemented, rather than undermined by cross-lingual comparisons (as cited in Crawford, 2004, p.16). These findings also support Martin-Beltran's views (2010) that, by using L1 in some L2 language contexts, the students were able to create a linguistic bridge, draw on multiple resources to meaningfully communicate, and create new opportunities for L2 learning. In other words, using L1 properly helped students engage in cross-linguistic comparisons, which can help them see the similarities and differences between the grammatical rules of two languages. Thus, they might understand L2 usage better. Just as Carless (2008) argues, consciousness-raising strategies in using L1 seek to raise student awareness of the formal property of a language feature. In such a case, Carless (2008) further explains that the L1 may help students to formulate hypotheses about language and support them in developing explicit understanding about how grammar operates in the L2. Similarly, Deller and Rinvulcri (2002) also suggest that students can profitably use L1 to make comparisons between the grammars of their first and second languages.

On the other hand, the results also raise some legitimate concerns such as what Carless (2008) describes, in that the “use of the L1 does seem to be a humanistic and learner centered strategy, with potential to support student learning, but at the same time involving a risk of failing to encourage L2 practice and communication” (p.336). So, clearly, we need to seek a balanced and flexible strategy of L1 use in the novice L2 classrooms.

V. CONCLUSION

This study shows that using L1 in L2 novice learners’ classrooms has more advantages than disadvantages. There are some pedagogical implications we can draw from this study. First, since both L2 instructors and L2 novice learners believe that using L1 in L2 student learning process is useful, they all need to develop a clearer awareness and understanding of how and when L1 naturally occurs in the context of the L2 beginning classroom (Moor, 2013) and how and when L1 use would benefit both L2 instructors and novice L2 learners most. Second, L2 instructors should treat the use of L1 at the novice L2 learners’ classroom as a transitory and facilitative strategy to assist beginning L2 learners to cope with their SL affective factors such as their frustrations and the new language challenges. Thus, the L2 instructors should avoid overusing L1 and minimize the possible negative effects of students receiving less L2 input due to the L1 exposure in class. Finally, drawing insight from Cook ‘s (2000) multicompetence perspective that L1 and L2 coexist and interact with each other in L2 learners’ minds, we can conclude that exploring L1’s positive functions in L2 learning process and applying them into L2 classrooms make for a worthwhile effort for both L2 instructors and beginning L2 students. Therefore, L2 teachers must not feel guilty when making necessary use of L1 in second language teaching (Halasa & Al-Manaseer, 2012), and L1 should be treated as a useful resource at the novice L2 learning classrooms for various purposes. We also recommend that future studies may focus on conducting comparative studies, in which they might compare learning results from classes encouraging L1 use in the L2 classrooms with those from classes discouraging L1 use in the second /foreign language classrooms. Thus, we may fully understand the loss and gain of using L1 in L2 classrooms.

REFERENCES

- [1] Anton, M., & DiCamilla, F. (1998). Socio-cognitive functions of LI collaborative interaction in the L2 classroom. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 54, 3, 414-442.
- [2] Atkinson, D. (1987). The mother tongue in the classroom: a neglected resource? *ELT J*, 41(4), 241-247.
- [3] Auerbach, E. (1993). Reexamining English only in the ESL classroom. *TESOL*, 27(1), 9-32.
- [4] Ausubel, D. (1963). Cognitive structure and the facilitation of meaningful verbal learning. *Journal of Teacher Education* 14, 217-221.
- [5] Brooks, F.B., & Donato, R (1994). Vygotskian approaches to understanding foreign language discourse during communicative tasks. *Hispania*, 7, 262-274.
- [6] Brown, H. D. (2000). Principles of language learning and teaching. 4th ed. New York, NY: Longman.
- [7] Carless, D. (2008). Student use of the mother tongue in the task-based classroom. *ELT Journal*, 62(4), 331-338.
- [8] Cenoz, J., & Corter, D. (2008). The linguistic landscape as an additional source of input in second language acquisition, *IRAL*, 46, 267-287.
- [9] Cianflone, E. (2009). L1 use in English courses at university level. *ESP World*, 8(22), 1-6.
- [10] Cook, V. J. (2001). Using the first language in the classroom. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 57, 3, 402-423.
- [11] Cook, V. J. (2003). The changing L1 in the L2 user’s mind. In V.J. Cook (Ed.), *Effects of the second language on the first* (pp. 1-18). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- [12] Crawford, J. (2004). “Language choices in the foreign language classroom: Target Language or the learners’ first language?” *RELC*, 35(1), 5-20.
- [13] Deller, S., & Rinvoluceri, M. (2002). Using the mother tongue: Making the most of the learner’s language. Kiel, WI: Delta Publishing.
- [14] Ford, K. (2009). Principles and practices of L1/L2 use in the Japanese university EFL Classroom. *JALT Journal*, 31(1), 63-80.
- [15] Halasa, N. H., & Al-Manaseer, M. (2012). The use of the first language in second language learning reconsidered. *College Student Journal*, 46(1), 71-81.
- [16] Jarvis, S., & Avlenko, A. (2008). Crosslinguistic influence in language and cognition New York, NY: Routledge.
- [17] Kramsch, C. (2007). Re-reading Robert Lado, 1957, Linguistics across Cultures. Applied linguistics for language teachers. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 17(2), 241-247.
- [18] Krashen, S. (1981). Second language acquisition and second language learning. Oxford: Pergamum.
- [19] Lantolf, J. P., & Appel, G. (1994). Theoretical framework: An introduction to Vygotskian approaches to second language research. In Lantolf, J. P., & G. Appel (Eds), *Vygotskian approaches to second language research* (pp. 1-32). Westport, CT: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- [20] Martin-Beltran, M. (2010). The two-way language bridge: Co-constructing bilingual language learning opportunities. *The Modern Language Journal*, 94(ii), 254-277.
- [21] Meyer, H. (2008). The pedagogical implications of L1 use in the L2 classroom. *Maebashi Kyoai Gakuen College Ronshyu*, 8, 147-159.
- [22] Moore, Paul. (2013). An emergent perspective on the use of the first language in the English-as a foreign language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, 97(1), 240-253.
- [23] Piske, T., & Young-Scholten, M. (2009). Input matters. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

- [24] Richards, Jack.C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language Teaching*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- [25] Schweers, C. W. Jr. (1999). Using L1 in the L2 classroom, *English Teacher Forum, April-June*, 6-13.
- [26] Swain, M., & Lapkin, S. (2000). Task-based second language learning: The uses of the first language. *Language Teaching Research*, 4, 251-274.
- [27] Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological process*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Yingqin Liu is an associate professor of English in the Department of English and Foreign Languages at Cameron University, Lawton, Oklahoma, USA. She obtained her doctoral degree in Technical Communication and Rhetoric from Texas Tech University in 2007. She also holds an MA in English from Western Kentucky University (2002), USA. Her research interests include intercultural communication and rhetoric, second language writing and teaching, and business communication and has published several articles in a variety of journals.

Annie Ping Zeng is an assistant professor of Chinese at the University of Alaska Anchorage. She obtained PH. D in 2005 in Instructional Psychology and Technology from Brigham Young University, USA, specializing in second language education. She received her MA in English Language and Linguistics in 1998 from the University of Reading, UK. Her research interests range from Chinese linguistic pragmatics to teaching Chinese language and culture internationally.