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RETURN FROM EXILE: A CRITICAL LOOK AT THE
EFFICACY OF INCORPORATING L1 IN THE ESL/EFL
CLASSROOM

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In the field of second language acquisition, the role of the mother tongue in acquiring a brand new linguistic system in the form of a second language has been a controversial topic, and widely debated by many researchers. For a long time, experts in the field held on to conservative notions about the relationship between the L1 and L2, and, as a spill over effect, second language classrooms, especially in the areas of English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL), had completely banished the use of the mother tongue in second language instruction. Research and language acquisition paradigm in the past leaned towards an L1 interference model, which held the mother tongue accountable for most, if not all, challenges faced by learners in acquiring an L2.

Back in the 90s when I began my career as a teacher in Singapore, the theory of L1 interference was very popular in the teaching fraternity and academia. As a young teacher, I had followed a strict policy of not allowing the use of mother tongue in my L2 lessons. This was in fact a nation-wide phenomenon, as many of my peers in the teaching circle in primary schools in Singapore had practiced the same. Students who were in violation of the 'no mother tongue' rule in the English classroom were admonished, further reinforcing the belief that L1 interference was a leading cause for negative transfer and performance errors in L2, and signalling to L2 English learners that their mother tongue and English were two very separate entities, destined to never intermingle. Auerbach (1993) observes this anomaly even within supporters of language inclusiveness. Educators who may outwardly believe in an L1 inclusive ESL environment still insist that their students abide by an English only medium of communication in the classroom, and use a system based on rewards and penalities to systematically banish home languages from their lessons (Auerbach, 1993).

In their publication, Bokhorst-Heng and Silver (2016) confirm this practice through their observation that English and the mother tongue languages in Singapore schools continue to follow two separate world-views. There exists till today a lack of communication between mother tongue and English language teachers, and a systematic exclusion of L1 in the L2 classroom, despite extensive evidence from research suggesting the benefits of sharing and eliciting expertise in the second language through L1.

Two decades later, I moved to the Netherlands and continued my teaching career in an international school in Amsterdam. As an English Language Acquisition specialist in a cosmopolitan city with students from diverse, expatriate backgrounds, I had to re-align myself to changing perspectives in the field of second language acquisition. In addition to that, the general consensus and attitude towards L1 use in the school that I teach now is an inclusive one, which was very different to what I was used to back in Singapore and Jakarta, where I had also worked as a teacher for five years. This sparked my interest and I felt inspired to create ways to integrate L1 in my L2 classroom to facilitate the language acquisition process. It also served as a strong motivation for me to select this topic for my thesis study.

My own experience which took place five years ago propelled me to further investigate the benefits of acquiring an L2 or even L3 through the lens of an L1. While I was working in Jakarta, I had to prepare for the Dutch *inburgeringsexamen* (civic integration exam) in order to apply for a long-term visa for the Netherlands. As I was an absolute beginner in Dutch, my tutor, who was a teacher of Dutch language and culture at the Netherlands International School in Jakarta, relied predominantly in the use of my L1 (English) to help me acquire basic speaking, reading and listening skills in Dutch. I paid particular attention to how English was integral in Dutch lexical acquisition, noticing and benefitting from the wide range of cognates

shared between the two languages. It was not until I had gained some intimate knowledge of language acquisition as an adult did I start to appreciate the role of L1 in this complex process.

1.2 Return from Exile

Modern literature surrounding language acquisition points to a change in trend and attitudes involving the use of L1 in acquiring L2. Extensive studies involving primary research data have been undertaken to dispel the notion of L1 interference and, instead, encourage incorporating L1 in the classroom to facilitate L2 acquisition.

The hypothesis that differences in L1 and L2 were the major contributing factors in L2 learners' difficulty in acquiring a second language was prevalent amongst the behaviourist theorists in the 1950s and early 1960s. Stockwell, Bowen and Martin (1965) formulated and presented the *Contrastive Analysis* theory after having studied and compiled a comprehensive list of all the similarities and differences between the grammatical and sound structures of English and Spanish. This theory postulated that the L1 and L2 were two separate linguistic systems, and their inherent structural differences led to negative transfer, causing the L2 learner to make errors in performance (Cook, 2001). Thus, the simplest way of avoiding negative transfer was to altogether exclude the learner's native language from the domain of L2 learning (Ortega, 2013).

The interactionists ushered in an era of revolutionary thinking in SLA that moved significantly away from the suggestion of L1 interference to understanding language acquisition by studying learner language (Ortega, 2013). For this purpose, Long and Sato (as cited in Ortega, 2013) introduced the methodologies of *Error Analysis* and *Performance Analysis*, and it soon became apparent that L1 could not be held responsible for all of an L2 learner's difficulties. In contemporary SLA narrative, the more neutral term *crosslinguistic*

influence is used to avoid using language that assigns blame and invites a broader perspective in the discussion of language development (Ortega, 2013, p. 31).

In the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Cook (2001) contends that the use of L1 has been deliberately avoided for over a century. According to him, most teaching methodologies since the mid 1880s follow the ideology behind the Direct Method, which generally refutes the existence of any benefits that can result from L1 use in the classroom. In the Direct Method, a typical EFL classroom is never bilingual, and any association with L1 can only lead to target language attrition. Howatt and Smith (2014), in their article, chart the history of teaching EFL, and, in fact, confirm that the Direct Method was generally responsible for setting the monolingual tone for subsequent schools of thought in EFL pedagogy. It is, at this juncture, worthwhile to note that the cornerstone of the Direct Method was built on the policy of 'No translation is allowed' (Howatt & Smith, 2014, p.84).

Chapter 2 of this thesis will a present balanced argument for and against the use of L1 in the L2 classroom, followed by a comprehensive literature review of qualitative and quantitative research that has been carried out to support L1 use in L2 acquisition.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will deal mainly with the theoretical frameworks relevant to this study. Firstly, I will investigate and present the works of researchers who are the proponents of the L1 interference theory. Research supporting a monolingual L2 classroom (Bhela, 1999; Ellis, 2005; Flege & Frieda, 1997; Ritchie, 1968; Taylor, 1975) generally does so because it is believed the use of L1 impedes progress in target language acquisition. In the following sub-section, I will take a critical look at these papers and highlight possible flaws or gaps in the argument. The next step in this section is to discuss the significant early research papers that advocate the inclusion of L1 in SLA. One of the early works that will be looked at in detail here is Atkinson (1987). Several modern quantitative research works with empirical evidence will be presented after that to tip the scales in favour of an inclusive SLA environment.

2.2 The Case for L1 Avoidance

In her article, Auerbach (1993) gives a detailed documentation of the sociocultural motivation behind the English only movement in the field of ESL. She mentions that the 'English-Only'-movement in ESL is promoted by a predominantly political agenda, and is not necessarily supported by convincing pedagogical evidence. The underlying axiom is that language is used as a tool for exerting power over its users. The goal is that by systematically excluding the native languages of the learners within the confines of the ESL/EFL classroom, the dominant native English language and culture remain in a favourably unchallenged position on a global scale, and is thought to drive a further wedge into the growing divide of developed and developing countries (Auerbach, 1993; Phillipson, 1997; Shannon, 1995).

In further exploring the political agenda of promoting global English hegemony, Atkinson (1987) describes a dearth of discussion surrounding L1 inclusion in the enterprise of English language teaching. He provides four reasons for this situation: Firstly, the direct translation method associated with grammar teaching (or also known as the *Grammar Translation Method*) was regarded as old-fashioned, had hardly been taken seriously, and was often treated as a joke (Cook, 2001; Howatt & Smith, 2014). Secondly, teacher training courses have almost always been dominated by native English trainers who are most likely monoglots, with little or no experience in multilingual teaching environments. It is, in fact, a wide practice in the hiring of teachers for ESL/EFL positions to favour native speaking candidates, over non-native or bilingual speakers (Cook, 2001). The third reason was Krashen's *Natural Approach* and his emphasis on comprehensible input, which was a big influence in language acquisition theory and had downplayed the impact of L1-L2 transfer in second language learning (Kharma & Hajjaj, 1989; Tang, 2002). The fourth and final reason was the popular misconception in the ESL/EFL teaching domain that one learns English by speaking only English in the classroom (Atkinson, 1987). This inarguably means that English is by default the designated medium of instruction and language of communication in the classroom, with a zero tolerance policy towards native languages.

Atkinson (1987) further points out that teacher training courses for Teaching English as a Foreign Language (popularly known as TEFL) lack a broad and L1 inclusive perspective, and curriculum designers, who, despite having a non-native speaking teacher clientele, avoid any mention of mother tongue use in their pedagogy. Even Ellis (2005), who is a prominent figure in the field of SLA, excluded any mention of using learners' L1 in the second language classroom as a tool to assist their cognitive processing of an L2. In fact, in the ten principles of instructed language offered by Ellis in his article, the learners' L1 is discredited as only being a source of distraction in L2 learning. In fact, he even cautions instructors against group

activities involving learners who share a native language background, as it might lead to excessive L1 use and therefore, impede any progress in L2 acquisition.

The earliest support for L1 avoidance, though, comes from the study of how monolingual children acquire their L1 in natural circumstances (Cook, 2001). In fact, this vast interest in L1 acquisition has influenced modern pedagogical strategies in building listening and speaking fluency in second language acquisition. Asher (1969), for example, demonstrates the success of mirroring the first language acquisition model in second language learning through the *Total Physical Response* approach. The speciality of this approach is that it emulates how young children learn their language and it is made up of a set of commands in L2, followed by a physical action (Asher, 1969). Hence, the proponents of L1 avoidance argue that, since, by definition, monolingual speakers of an L1 did not have a prior language system, the same logic should apply to L2 acquisition. Thus, according to this line of reason, learners of L2 have no compelling need to use their L1 to aid in language acquisition (Cook, 2001).

Teacher scepticism surrounding the use of L1 in EFL teaching is also a reason for excluding the mother tongue from SLA pedagogical approaches. Carless' (2008) investigation into issues faced by EFL teachers in secondary schools in Hong Kong revealed students' prevalent use of L1 Cantonese as a particular concern amongst teachers and teacher educators. Big EFL classes in terms of teacher-student ratio in Hong Kong is a key reason why mother tongue use is not effectively managed to aid in L2 acquisition. This has inadvertently led to negative emotions about the L1 in the classroom, and teachers use several measures such as language monitoring and reward systems to curtail the use of Cantonese during lessons and keep it under tight control, much like the practice of imposing fines described by Auerbach (1993). Carless (2008) highlights a lack of pedagogical knowledge and concrete lesson plan examples amongst EFL teachers on how to utilise L1 in their teaching methodologies as a

means to assist students reach success in L2 acquisition. According to him, it is because of this gap in knowledge that teachers do not consider the relationship between the cognitive complexity of tasks and the use of the mother tongue. Rather than using Cantonese as a scaffolding tool in the EFL classroom to break down complex language activities or communicative tasks into manageable units which can be effectively monitored and tracked, teachers regarded its use as deviant behaviour that interferes with their language teaching goals (Carless, 2008).

2.3 Research supporting L1 interference

Ritchie's (1968) definition of L2 learning in his investigation of phonic interference between L1 and L2 best describes the prevailing attitude at that time about native languages in the ESL classroom. According to him, the meaning of L2 learning is simply a way of eradicating any traces of the native language system. Ritchie's discussion is primarily concerned with tracking the possible phonological errors Japanese and Russian learners of L2 English can make and how these can be avoided by carefully planned phonological instruction that targets the potential erroneous utterances.

Taylor's (1975) research involving twenty native Spanish speakers learning English as a second language reiterates the similar belief that errors in the target language is a result of L1 interference. The participants took part in a Spanish to English translation test, and the outcome revealed transfer and overgeneralisation strategies amongst the elementary and intermediate L2 English learners. According to Taylor, these strategies lead to, again, what he labels as errors because learners inadvertently approach L2 with their native language structures.

Flege and Frieda (1997) tested 60 Italian immigrants who had moved to Canada sometime in the first 10 years of their lives. The research analysed the influence of the

participants' Italian mother tongue in producing native-like utterances in their L2 English. The subjects were divided into two groups according to their frequency of use of Italian in their everyday environment, and results revealed that those who had a high frequency of speaking Italian at home and in the workplace were identified as having a foreign accent when they spoke English. In a similar vein as the previously mentioned works, Flege and Frieda (1997) noted that more than the age of acquisition of second language learners, it was their pre-existing "language subsystem" that influenced their non-native accented English (p. 184). However, there exists evidence in SLA studies that native-like phonological competence in late learners of a second language is rare (Birdsong, 2007). Perhaps the assumption that having a native accent in L2 is equivalent to L2 proficiency or success should be altogether challenged. Bergmann, Sprenger and Schmid's (2015) experiment with German L1 monolinguals, German L2 learners and German L1 attriters showed that the fluency of L2 learners' spontaneous speech can be affected by the co-activation of their L1 and L2. L2 learners generally speak slower compared to the monolingual and attriter counterparts. Bergmann et al. conclude that the lack of speech fluency in otherwise proficient L2 speakers is an outcome of an L1-L2 competition, rather than an incomplete L2 acquisition (2015). As Cook (2001) explains it succinctly, L2 learner success should be pitched against the standards of other L2 learner peers, rather than being compared to native speaker proficiency. There needs to be a distinction between the success of L1 acquisition by native speakers, and the success of L2 learners becoming competent L2 users.

Bhela (1999) also endeavours to relate frequency or types of errors in the target language English to native language interference. His research involved studying the L1 and L2 writings of four adult learners of English for errors in structure, semantics and spelling. Bhela also contends that errors of these forms can be traced back to the influence of the participants' L1 structures. As anticipated, Bhela found evidence from the analyses that suggests direct L1

interference in the participants' use of English in writing. Bhela (1999) was motivated by Dechert's (1983) proposition that the more structurally different the L1 and L2 are, the more likely that errors in L2 performance could be traced back to L1. The four participants in Bhela's research came from Cambodian, Italian, Spanish and Vietnamese backgrounds, and the age range was 21 to 65 years. One limitation with Bhela's research is that fossilisation may be a reason why correct structures in the target language are not attained despite repeated exposure and correction. Ortega (2013) provides several case studies involving advanced learners who struggle with attaining complete proficiency in aspects of the target language as a result of fossilisation. The incongruity between L1 and L2 in terms of syntactic structure or semantics is only one possible explanation for this. Other factors that can contribute to fossilisation are the amount of exposure to and quality of target language instruction, and the attitude of the learners towards the target language and its culture. Another limitation of Bhela's methodology is that the participants do not share the same native language. Testing participants from the same native background could have been a better option to obtain a more accurate reflection of L1 influence in L2 writing.

2.4 Early supporting research for L1 inclusion

By definition, L2 learners already have in place a complete linguistic system prior to learning the target language. Swan (1985), in his discussion of the Communicative Approach, notes that second language learners are not *tabula rasa* as they enter the classroom. It is the second language learners' L1 learning skills that provide the foundation on which L2 literacy skills are built on (Farukh and Vulchanova, 2016).

Cummins (2007), in an effort to revolutionise the field of second and foreign language education, actively promotes the use of L1 in multilingual classrooms, where learners might have a language majority or language minority background when learning English as a second,

foreign or additional language. A cornerstone of Cummins' belief lies in using bilingual teaching strategies that encourage bi-directional cross linguistic exchanges. Cummins' first step to this exchange is to trigger a learner's prior knowledge that has already been encoded in his L1. The L1 becomes significant in this case because, to quote Swan's tabula rasa condition, the native language must be summoned to activate the existing concepts, ideas and beliefs that have already been organised into the learner's mental database. This prior knowledge or schema that is represented in the L1 can be mapped onto the new medium of instruction, L2, to optimise learning (Cummins, 2007). Following that, Cummins also suggests developing interdependence between languages via several bilingual based classroom tasks. Cummins' (2007) rationale is that all languages share an inherent cognitive proficiency despite the surface-level, superficial differences between them. It is this common denominator that facilitates the transfer of literacy skills from one language to another. Some of these bilingual classroom approaches could be focusing on cognates between L1 and L2, and allowing students to write in their stronger language (usually L1) first before gaining enough target language writing skills. An example used by Cummins (2007) to demonstrate the use of cognates is explaining the English scientific term 'predict' to an L1 French speaker. This could be done by first using the Latin root 'dicere' (which means 'to say') as a starting point and attaching the meaning of 'pre' (meaning 'before') to the stem to make a semantic connection to the French equivalent 'prédire'.

Atkinson's (1987) ten-month long experiment with using learners' L1 in teaching monolingual ESL/EFL classes yielded positive learning outcomes, and below is his compilation of suggested techniques of incorporating the mother tongue in classroom pedagogical approach.

Table 1. Atkinson's (1987) suggested uses of L1 in the EFL classroom

	Function	Example
1.	Eliciting language	"How do you say 'X' in English?"
2.	Checking comprehension	"How do you say 'I've been waiting for ten minutes in Spanish?'"
3.	Giving instructions	Giving instructions in English and have students translate it into their L1
4.	Co-operation among learners	Learners compare and correct answers to exercises or tasks in the L1.
5.	Discussion of classroom methodology	Can be conducted in a mixture of languages or exclusively in L1
6.	Presentation and reinforcement of language	Using translation to trace structural similarities and differences between L1 and L2
7.	Checking for sense	If students write or say something in the L2 that needs clarifying, have them translate to L1 to realise the error
8.	Testing	Translation items can be useful in testing mastery of forms and meanings
9.	Developing useful learning strategies	When students do not know how to say something in the L2, have them think of different ways to say the same thing in the L1, which may be easier to translate

According to Storch and Wigglesworth (2003), learners' L1 can be utilised for a variety of functions while being engaged in cognitively demanding tasks in an L2 domain. The findings were based on their experiment involving twenty-four undergraduate ESL students of Indonesian and Mandarin Chinese backgrounds. As the subjects were involved in task oriented paired activities, their on-task interaction revealed the shared L1 being used for managing the activities and clarifying the purpose of each sub-task. Before embarking on the assignments in English, the subjects first resorted to L1 use to discuss strategies and negotiate roles. Further L1 use to disambiguate meanings of words was observed while participants were on-task. Storch and Wigglesworth's conclusion was that learners' L1 is a rich resource which is readily available to provide 'cognitive support' for target language acquisition (p. 760). Storch and Wigglesworth also briefly mention Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) and that using L1 will allow second language learners to function at a higher cognitive level while exploring L2.

Vygotsky's sociocultural tradition, especially how it supports use of L1 in second language learning, is further explained by Antón and Dicamilla (1999) and Wells (1999). Antón and Dicamilla (1999) maintain that within the parameters of Vygotsky's ZPD, the cognitive development of a second language learner can be assisted by their L1. Vygotsky (1978) defined ZPD as the potential a young language learner has in accomplishing problem solving tasks under the guidance of an adult expert or in collaboration with peers. Antón and Dicamilla (1999) make a compelling argument that a learner's L1 has the potential to be utilised as a "semiotic tool" (p. 234) to assist beginning learners of a second language, especially if they have low proficiency, access the target language in the classroom. Before learners can develop independence in problem solving in the L2, as they operate within their ZPD, their L1 can behave as an intermediary to help them access the instructional language used in assigning learning tasks in L2. As second language learners mediate and transit from object-regulation (using translation dictionaries, online translation tools etc.), to other-regulation (obtaining assistance from teachers, members of the family, or caregivers), the use of their L1, especially with peers who share the same language background, is crucial for cognitive development to take place (Antón & Dicamilla, 1999; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). Antón and Dicamilla's observation of 10 adult L1 English learners of L2 Spanish led them to conclude that L1 plays indeed an integral role as a scaffolding tool, and facilitates learners to verbalise their inner speech and use it to connect with other second language learners through intersubjectivity. Learners are able to perform their L2 tasks and achieve their language learning goals with the aid of their mother tongue. This intersubjectivity was evident in the five pairs of participants, as they collaborated with each other to solve problems in their L1 English (for various functions such as verifying, validating, negotiating and limiting), while carrying out the tasks in L2 (Wells, 1999). Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) note that Antón and Dicamilla's research

proves L1 can be a tool to elicit and maintain interest in the classroom and devise strategies to help make challenging tasks accessible to learners.

Tang's (2002) research into the use of L1 Mandarin Chinese in an EFL setting also yielded encouraging results. He interviewed 100 English-major first year undergraduate students and 20 faculty members in a Beijing university. Through classroom observations, Tang found that Mandarin Chinese was mostly used for the purpose of clarification of word meanings. The use of Mandarin Chinese was especially instrumental in helping students with low English proficiency follow tasks, and to further explain and clarify abstract or culturally-specific words. Tang also noticed that the students' mother tongue was drafted by teachers to issue instructions to students, and sustain their interest in class (2002). Interviews with faculty members revealed the teachers' overall positive attitude in using L1 in the L2 classroom. They believed the judicious use of Mandarin Chinese in the classroom was both efficient and effective, as it freed up more time for students for target language practice. Furthermore, students with low proficiency in English benefit greatly from translations and explanations in Mandarin Chinese, especially when they encounter abstract or culturally-specific vocabulary in the target language. In an L2 only classroom, by contrast, the teacher has to be a language "contortionist" in order to explain and demonstrate the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary (Cole, 1998, p.11). This is also in line with Storch and Wigglesworth's (2003) and Atkinson's (1987) suggestions on the various uses of the mother tongue in learning an L2, such as to elicit language, check comprehension and give instructions, among others. The L1 functions, then, as a valuable resource not only to provide differentiated lessons, but to also keep second language learners feel included, especially when low level literacy skills keep them from following lessons in L2 (Auerbach, 1993). Indeed, as Cole (1998) notes, L1 can be used to rescue them from certain frustration at not being able to follow lessons in L2 in the early stages of L2 learning.

In a research similar to Tang's (2002), Kharma and Hajjaj (1989) found the mother tongue to be a useful tool in a homogeneous Arabic-speaking classroom setting with L2 English lessons. They also made use of questionnaires and interviews, as well as classroom observations, to arrive at their conclusion. Almost all teachers, especially those teaching in the lower intermediate classes with beginning L2 learners, were in favour of using Arabic in the classroom. Their use of L1, however, was far from arbitrary. There was a regular and systematic use of the mother tongue, which was to explain new vocabulary, grammar and difficult questions, and give instructions. As anticipated, in the secondary level, where learners were far more proficient and competent in the L2, the use of L1, by both teachers and students, was reduced by half.

There has been extensive primary research done to explore the impact of L1 in the field of second language writing. Uzawa (1996) conducted research into the quality of L1, L2 and L1 to L2 writings of 22 Japanese intermediate ESL students studying at a Canadian college. The study examined the participants' 'think aloud' processes as they were engaged in all three types of writing processes, as well as the quality of their L1 and L2 writings, as assessed by English and Japanese native-speaker judges. The findings were very relevant to the discussion of how beneficial L1 use is to beginner or intermediate learners of L2. Firstly, the students' attention patterns in their writing revealed that their focus on the quality of language use was very much higher in their Japanese to English translation tasks, when compared to their independent L1 and L2 writings. The translation task, it seemed, freed the students from metacognitive processing, and allowed them more freedom to improve their overall quality of writing. The L1 to L2 translated writing contained interesting use of vocabulary, and had good grammatical structure. The students' independent L2 writing, on the other hand, was rushed, and was lacking in structure, details and proper development of ideas. Uzawa's study helps make the case for translation as an important aid in L2 learners' writing tasks in the target

language.   In the conclusion of her article, Uzawa observes that second language learners become more sensitised to language use through translation exercises.   On the contrary, when writing tasks are undertaken in L2 in isolation, the learner is over-burdened with the mental activity of not only generating ideas but also organising their thoughts, and in the process, underperform significantly than the expected "i + 1" level (Uzawa, 1996, p. 288).

Woodall's (2002) similar study to track the use of L1 in L2 writing also lent support to Uzawa's (1996) findings.   Twenty-eight participants who were intermediate to advanced second language learners of English, Spanish and Japanese in a university in the US were tested for their 'think aloud' process while writing in the L2.   Woodall's experiment revealed that language switching from L1 to L2 was controlled by three variables: task difficulty, L2 proficiency and language family.   Learners who had to switch between cognate languages (English and Spanish in Woodall's study) tended to produce high quality L2 writing, as compared to students who switched between English and Japanese, or vice-versa.   Woodall's contention in his article is that two languages can fully function and work in tandem during the L2 writing process.   However, not all L1 influence in that process can be verbalised, and it remains very much a mental activity similar to Vygotsky's concept of 'inner speech' (Antón & Dicamilla, 1999; Wells, 1999; Woodall, 2002).   Explicit encouragement of the use of L1, for example, through 'think aloud' procedures, can exploit the learners' metacognitive/metalinguistic dialogue to aid in L2 writing tasks (Wells, 1999).   Woodall (2002) also suggested looking at L2 writing as a developmental process.   According to this approach, as a learner graduates from intermediate to advanced proficiency in L2, his L1 needs in the area of L2 writing shift from low-level cognitive processing (such as word choice and sentence-level editing) to higher-order operations (organising and drafting).

Wang and Wen's (2002) research also confirms that the writing process L2 learners undergo is indeed a bilingual affair. Their study involving 16 English major undergraduate students of L1 Chinese background showed that L1 Mandarin Chinese was used anywhere from 24% to 32% in the L2 writing process. The 'think aloud' method revealed valuable information about the impact L2 proficiency had in the amount of L1 used in the target language writing process. The research tracked participants' use of L1 in activities like content building and planning of their writing. Participants who were first year students with considerably lower L2 proficiency used more L1 in their writing process as compared to fourth year students. In fact, year 3 and 4 students' use of L1 in their thought process during L2 writing was reduced by more than half as compared to year 1 students. Furthermore, the type of writing also determined the amount of L1 students used in their L2 writing process. Expository writing, like the argumentative piece participants had to write, entailed the use of more L2 (and considerably reduced L1) in the cognitive process. The narrative genre, such as story writing based on picture prompts, however, was more suitable for the participants to approach first in their L1 (Wang & Wen, 2002). Participants in Wang and Wen's study cited the informal nature of narrative writing as the reason to depend on their L1 for planning and organising the content and ideas before engaging in L1 to L2 translation. Wang and Wen's findings are in part supported by Van Weijen, den Bergh, Rijlaarsdam and Sanders (2009) research with L1 Dutch speakers of English. Their study confirmed that more proficient L2 writers tended to use less L1 for cognitive support in the writing process. Another study on L2 writing done by Wang (2003) with 8 adult Mandarin Chinese L1 ESL learners in Toronto confirmed that L1 is used for creating ideas, vocabulary selection and metacomments in L2 writing. Metacomments refer to a writer's thoughts and deliberations on the writing process and comments on the language task (Van Weijen et al., 2009). Van Weijen et al.'s (2009) also supported Wang's (2003) findings that L1 was used for cognitive activities in preparation for

L2 writing. According to them, in fact, learners engage in extensive metacognitive processing in L1 while involved in L2 writing (Van Weijen et al., 2009). Another interesting observation made by Van Weijen's team was that learners were likely to operate in L1 when engaged in cognitive activities that were not directly involved in L2 text generation. According to this prediction then, writing processes such as goal-setting, structuring and gathering ideas, in addition to self-instruction and metacomments, are likely to occur in the learner's L1 than the target language. Unlike Wang and Wen's (2002) and Van Weijen et al.'s (2009) results, though, Wang's (2003) study found that learners with high L2 proficiency did actually resort to considerable L1 use in their writing, but for different purposes than those with low L2 proficiency. Beginning L2 learners with low proficiency approached the writing task by first translating the instructions into L1 in order to understand the task requirements. Following that, they composed writing ideas, generated lexical choices and organised the content and syntactic structure in their L1 (Wang, 2003). To make up for their lack of L2 proficiency, they resorted to word for word or phrasal translation from Mandarin Chinese to English. More advanced learners used their L1 on a macro-level before embarking on the writing project. Their use of L1 was sophisticated as they adopted it to establish writing objectives and activate their schema (Wang, 2003), similar to Van Weijen et al.'s (2009) goal setting activity. Learners then proceeded to use L2 writing strategies to carry out the writing task. This is reminiscent of Woodall's (2002) developmental approach to L2 writing, where L1 use evolves from low-order operations to higher order cognitive thinking and processing skills as L2 proficiency increases. Despite the varying results in the studies presented here, the underlying message is clear: The L1 is undeniably a powerful psycholinguistic tool for the second language learner to attain success as a competent L2 user.

Apart from L2 writing, research has also shown the effectiveness of using L1 in teaching new vocabulary to second language learners. Bouangeune (2009) conducted an

experimental study to test the efficacy of using L1 to teach 169 EFL learners of Laotian background in the National University of Laos. A big concern at the time of study was the students' underachievement in their English language skills. The medium of instruction in the EFL classes was English and communication in Lao was not permitted in the classroom. Bouangeune's control and experimental groups were given a set of vocabulary items to learn, and while the experimental groups received instruction in both English and Lao, the control groups did not receive any L1 input in the vocabulary teaching. The experimental groups used the translation method (from English to Lao, and vice versa) to understand the meanings and usage of new vocabulary words, and these were translated and discussed in isolation and in context. The results from the pre and post tests administered to the different groups showed that students in the experimental groups had better retention of the new vocabulary learnt and were able to recall the meanings of the words in isolation and use them correctly in context. Bouangeune (2009) notes that the translation method was especially convenient to help learners distinguish the meanings of near synonyms or polysemous words, and to avoid any confusion that may arise with their usage in different contexts.

One important function of using L1 in the L2 classroom is to establish a positive affective learning environment for the community of students, especially in a monolingual class. Following Auerbach's (1993) discussion of the socio-political motivation behind the English-only movement in the teaching of ESL/EFL and the power relations between linguistic and cultural groups, the solution she provides to counteract this divide is to allow students to feel comfortable with using their L1 as they begin their L2 learning, especially when they are absolute beginners with little or no target language knowledge. Banning L1 in the classroom at the early stages has the effect of alienating learners and stripping them of their native and cultural identities, since the L1 is intimately connected with these ideas. As Auerbach (1993) notes, sooner or later, the second language learner of English decides to become a risk-taker,

and starts experimenting with the target language. The learners' L1 acts as an intermediary in this process, by first supporting the learner by validating their experiences and expressions, and allowing them to make the transition thereafter (Auerbach, 1993).

Schweers' (1999) research into the use of Spanish in English language classes at the University of Puerto Rico revealed a substantial support for the idea espoused by Auerbach (1993). The powerful role played by Spanish in English acquisition was evident through Schweers' lesson observations and questionnaires administered to teachers and students involved in the research (Schweers, 1999). A high percentage of students interviewed were in favour of L1 use in the second language classroom. Besides the reasons cited for the use of L1 in L2 classrooms in the prior studies mentioned in this section, Schweers' respondents also remarked that using Spanish in the L2 classroom made them feel comfortable and self-assured. What was equally fascinating was the positive attitude of the faculty members towards the use of Spanish in their English language lessons. Some of the affective reasons offered by the teachers for including L1 in their classroom strategies and pedagogical approaches were to establish a good rapport with their student community, reduce teacher-student distance, value the students' native background and identity, cultivate a community feeling, establish a student-centred environment, and build the assurance that English was not a replacement for their native language (Schweers, 1999). It is what Carless (2008) calls a "humanistic and learner-centred strategy" to accord the native language its due recognition in the second language domain (p. 336).

2.5 Modern SLA research

Modern literature on research into the use of L1 in ESL and EFL teaching abound in the areas of vocabulary acquisition, grammar, reading, speech fluency and corrective feedback in writing. Teacher attitudes in the second language classroom will also be a focal point here.

This section will look into presenting a number of these studies which have used primary research data to substantiate the findings. All the works discussed here have been published in journals in the last 6 years, therefore giving us an overview of how the use of L1 in ESL/EFL environments has evolved and is seen as producing positive outcomes in terms of learner success in target language acquisition.

The articles from Jingxia (2010), McMillan and Rivers (2011) and Yavuz (2012) about teacher attitudes toward the use of L1 in the EFL classroom in three different countries give us some insight into how changes have been taking place with regards to the place of native languages in second and foreign language education. Jingxia's (2010) assessment of how often teachers engage in Mandarin Chinese-English code-switching in EFL classes in three Chinese universities reveal a robust use of the mother tongue for attaining language teaching and classroom management goals. The lesson observations showed that although the main language of instruction was English, teachers resorted to the use of L1 for specific purposes such as refining the students' understanding of vocabulary and grammar points, as well as monitoring comprehension of instructional and reading texts. All teachers who were interviewed regarded the L1 as a facilitating tool that made their lessons efficient and effective. In addition, Mandarin Chinese was also seen as a pass for gaining the students' trust and to establish a common understanding with them. Besides students' lack of proficiency (and the challenging nature of the English textbooks), the teachers in Jingxia's (2010) study also pointed out the challenge that comes with English and Mandarin Chinese belonging to two different language groups as an added motivation for including L1 in their instructional approach.

McMillan and Rivers (2011) studied the results from an online survey done by 29 native speaker EFL teachers working in a Japanese university. A substantial number of responses to the survey questions showed that teachers were generally in favour of a judicious use of

Japanese even while teaching the communicative approach in the EFL classroom. The benefits of using L1 cited by the respondents were similar to those mentioned in the previous studies, such as facilitating communication between L2 learners, comparing and contrasting grammatical structures between the two languages, and mediating language for collaboration between beginner and intermediate learners as they are on task, also known as intersubjectivity (McMillan & Rivers, 2011; Antón & Dicamilla, 1999). Teacher respondents who were in favour of a wholly monolingual teaching approach cited reasons such as student laziness in using L2 and target language attrition for their choices. The counter-argument provided by McMillan and Rivers (2011) for the above-mentioned allegations by the minority of their respondents, though, was that they were unfounded and not supported by research in the study of second language acquisition. Instead, their suggestion was that passive or seemingly uncooperative learners in the EFL classroom may in actual fact be involved in the learning process through intersubjectivity with their peers, which may not always be immediately obvious and observable by instructors. McMillan and Rivers (2011) also refer to how learners' different learning styles and learning curves shape their attitudes and responses in class, and for some of these learners, L1 may offer a safe platform to approach and process the L2. However, one major obstacle to L1 use in the foreign language teaching classroom is the school management or administrators, as was seen in the case of the private Japanese university the respondents belonged to. As part of their promotion as a unique language school providing native speaking teachers and English-only lessons, the school had come down hard on its teachers to be intolerant towards the L1 and create a monolingual classroom environment. Regrettably, in such situations, EFL teachers may not possess any decision making autonomy about the use of languages in their lessons according to their experience, teaching philosophy and personal belief system.

Another research into teacher attitude towards L1 use in the EFL classroom was undertaken by Yavuz (2012) in Turkey. Out of 12 teachers who were interviewed, 11 were in favour of L1 use in the classroom, and had made it an integral part of their pedagogical approach in the classroom. Teaching big classes in terms of teacher to student ratio meant that teachers had to depend heavily on L1 use to engage students' attention during lessons. Another reason given by the respondents was that the language medium used in national exams was Turkish, instead of L2 English, which, unfortunately, only served to diminish student motivation for target language practice (Yavuz, 2012). On that note, a further investigation to find out the actual benefits that L2 learners can reap from using their L1 was conducted by Calis and Dikilitas (2012). They reached out to 28 elementary L2 English students with Turkish L1 background. Through thoroughly administered questionnaires and interviews, the researchers discovered that the use of translation in the EFL classes was a powerful tool that enabled the learners to develop literacy skills in the target language. Similar to the findings in Tang (2002), Kharma and Hajjaj (1989), Bouangeune (2009), Uzawa (1996) and Jingxia (2010), the students in Calis and Dikilitas' study supported the practice of translation, with the use of bilingual dictionaries, for example, because it aided them in their acquisition of several skills, such as reading, writing and speaking in the target language, as well as acquiring lexical and structural knowledge. Translation exercises which accompanied the learning of new vocabulary led to better comprehension and retention of the lexical items. Additionally, comparing and contrasting grammatical structures in Turkish and English with the help of translation helped students gain a much more vigorous understanding of the two linguistic systems, which in turn contributed to their progress in L2 writing (Calis and Dikilitas, 2012). Furthermore, students were able to develop independent study skills with the aid of translation exercises and guidance from teachers, who were available to facilitate the learning process.

Choi (2016) conducted a revealing study that tested the use of L1 and L2 glosses in incidental lexical acquisition. One hundred and eighty male tenth graders with L1 Korean were divided equally into control, L1 and L2 groups, with the control group receiving no form of gloss (L1 or L2) for the 14 English pseudowords that were presented to them in a reading exercise. The L1 group received glosses for the words in Korean and the L2 words in English. Besides the provision of glosses, another variable that was used was the frequency of input of the target words and glosses. The target words were equally divided into two frequency types: F2 and F4. F4 target words had twice the frequency of input as the F2 words. The results from Choi's (2016) experiment showed significant positive effects of using L1 glosses for introducing new vocabulary, and this was especially true for the F4 target words. The subjects in the L1 group outperformed the other two groups in the delayed post test of the F4 target words. According to Choi (2016), L1 glosses were more effective in building form-meaning association than L2 glosses. A similar experiment was carried out by Vela (2015) with 120 students enrolled in Basic English courses at the SEEU (South East European University). Following Choi's (2016) experiment design, the participants were also arranged into control, L1 and L2 gloss groups. Additionally, they were also separated into low and high proficiency achievers of L2 English. From the immediate and delayed reading comprehension and vocabulary post tests, Vela (2015) discovered a similar pattern in L1 gloss effects as Choi (2016). Participants with low English proficiency benefitted more from L1 glosses than the other groups, while the high proficiency group with L2 glosses outperformed the rest. This is in line with the results reported in Tang (2002) and Kharma and Hajjaj (1989) which suggest that dependence on L1 is reduced considerably as learners' L2 proficiency increases. For low proficiency learners of L2 English, L1 can play the role of a mediator to create links between L2 words and conceptual meanings (Vela, 2015).

Another interesting experiment involving the acquisition of vocabulary was conducted by Gablasova (2015) with 72 high school students enrolled in a Slovak and English bilingual programme. Just like the unfamiliarity of the English pseudowords tested in Choi's (2016) study, Gablasova's (2015) 12 target words were technical jargon with low frequency count, which participants had hardly seen or heard before. The specialised technical vocabulary was introduced to students in two texts about history and geography. Similar to Choi's experiment design, Gablasova's participants were arranged into L1 and L2 groups. The L1 group read the texts and received word definitions in their L1 Slovak, while the L2 group read the English texts and definitions. Gablasova's primary focus was to measure the completeness of understanding that the participants had of the technical words they were introduced to. A supplementary aim was to compare the L1 and L2 understandings and trace the types of errors and misconceptions each group had of the new vocabulary. The results from the post test revealed that despite being given explicit contextual meanings of the target words, a larger percentage of participants in the L2 group did not provide adequate meanings for the target words as compared to the L1 group. One of the reasons provided by Gablasova (2015) for this deficiency in complete understanding of new vocabulary encountered by learners is their lack of expertise in the L2. In such cases, compounding the introduction of new, specialised vocabulary with the learners' L1, increasing the frequency of input and organising discussions among peers in order to deepen the knowledge of the words were some of the suggestions offered by Gablasova (2015).

Farukh and Vulchanova's (2016) paper contributed to corroborating the powerful cognitive relationship between a learner's L1 and L2. They looked at Pakistani children who were in the third grade, going to Urdu-medium and English-medium schools. The aim of their study was to trace the connection between reading deficiency in L1, such as dyslexia, and the acquisition of L2 literacy skills. English literacy tests in comprehension, speech, morphology,

syntax and semantics were administered to control and reading deficit groups, and the results showed that learners with reading disability underperformed in L2 comprehension and production skills (Farukh and Vulchanova, 2016). In addition to that, the researchers also attributed the Pakistani children's excellent grasp of the English morphological system (as seen in their test scores) to an early exposure to an equally morphologically complex system in their L1 Urdu. The Urdu speaking children's heightened awareness of inflections had contributed significantly towards their success in the acquisition of English inflections. On the flipside though, a lack of representation in the native language could also negatively impact the rate of L2 acquisition, as was evidenced by the participants' failure in following the correct English word order, especially in complex clause structures. As Farukh and Vulchanova (2016) observe, the various subsystems present in the mother tongue, such as the sound, vocabulary and grammatical structures, provide the architecture to build an L2 system. A series of experiments done by Havas, Waris, Vaquero, Rodríguez-Fornells and Laine (2015) involving Finnish and Spanish L1 participants further proves this premise. Their goal was to observe the success rate of acquisition the participants had of a novel language that was characterised by nouns having gender markings. Again, the results showed that Finnish speakers were more sensitive to the morphological representation of the new language because of their lifelong experience with their morphologically rich, agglutinative mother tongue. The Spanish speakers, on the other hand, despite showing some success in the new language learning, were not able to extract the correct gender rule during the rule generalisation task (Havas, et al., 2015).

Granena, Muñoz and Tangent (2015) provide evidence that suggests a positive correlation between learners' robust reading habits and home background in L1 and rapid L2 reading fluency. Their study was conducted in Barcelona with 41 fifth grade students learning EFL three times a week. The control group had regular teacher-led classes with an EFL

textbook that they used for end-of-unit writing assignments. The experimental group was allowed reading-while-listening lessons twice a week with audio books. The written assignment after each reading was a book review to demonstrate the depth of their comprehension skills. The L1 reading background of the participants were measured through written questionnaires for both the participants and their parents. The experiment was carried out for nine months and from pre and post test results, Granena et al. (2015) found that children who had a positive attitude towards reading and had parents who also modelled good reading habits at home and read to them frequently in their L1 (such as bed time reading routines) performed better at L2 writing and benefitted the most from the L2 reading-while-listening lessons.

Ghorbani (2011) studied secondary research data of EFL classroom discourse in Iran with 16 adult learners with L1 Arabic background. The research involved tracking the use of L1 Arabic by the classroom teacher and students while engaged in paired and group activities. The findings revealed that the use of L1 followed a strict protocol in terms of its communicative features in classroom discourse. For example, teachers used L1 as a scaffolding tool, much like the findings contributed by Anton and Dicamilla (1999) and Storch and Wigglesworth (2003). To help individual students who struggle with carrying out certain L2 assignments, teachers might use L1 to fashion pseudo questions to elicit the desired response from students to help them along with their task understanding and management. L1 use by students has a threefold function. Firstly, students who have genuine requests use L1 in their referential questions to teachers to fill any gaps in their understanding. Following that, students might again use L1 in their private speech to process and paraphrase the answers given to them by the teacher before deciding on a response or embarking further on their task. The L1 in this case is exploited to translate ideas and organise and plan an activity (Ghorbani, 2011). Lastly, L1 also has the function of lowering the affective filter in the classroom, by being incorporated

into funny exchanges between teacher and students to diffuse tension or lower stress levels. Classroom discourse revealed that L1 has an integral role in teacher's individualised instructions and maximising student learning. Furthermore, there was no evidence of L1 taking over L2 in paired or group discussions between students, thus eliminating the fear that L1 use in the classroom poses a threat to target language acquisition (Ghorbani, 2011).

Another study involving Arabic L1 adult participants learning EFL in the Gulf region was carried out in Yemen by Bhooth, Azman and Ismail (2014). It also contributed to the argument that L1 has valuable social and cognitive functions in the classroom that facilitates learning (Bhooth et al., 2014). The learner attitudes that emerged from Bhooth et al.'s questionnaires and interviews revealed that the use of L1 was received fairly positively in the EFL classroom. Participants supported the inclusion of Arabic in situations where they needed explicit grammar rules or conceptual explanations by the instructor. The use of English to Arabic (or vice versa) translation was also a popular tool for learners to use, especially in their beginning, low proficiency stages. When being introduced to new and unfamiliar topics or concepts in English, participants welcomed Arabic in the classroom instructional strategies to activate their prior knowledge, so that they could be more receptive to new input in the target language. Lastly, according to participants, L1 could facilitate behaviour management, especially when they are involved in collaborative work (Bhooth et al., 2014). Machaal's (2012) detailed investigation into the use of L1 Arabic in EFL classes in the Saudi region demonstrated the prominent role played by the native language in homogenous L2 learning situations. Machaal's approach was to regard the EFL learning process as a human activity as described by Vygotsky in his social constructivism theory. According to Vygotsky's construct then, as explained by Machaal (2012), the classroom is representative of the community and Arabic is the intermediary for both teaching and learning. The extensive research involving surveys administered to 197 student participants, interviews with 13 EFL teachers and three

policy makers, together with eight classroom observations yielded the following results concerning the role of Arabic in EFL teaching.

Table 2. The suggested functions of L1 Arabic in EFL classes

	Role	
1.	Teachers use Arabic as a pedagogical tool to:	• explain vocabulary, grammar and idioms • build rapport and attend to the psychological well-being of the students (motivation and relaxation) • make their teaching efficient and save time • promote collaborative learning • explain instructions • create interaction in their classes • use the students prior knowledge
2.	Students use Arabic as a learning strategy to:	• mediate their learning • translate difficult, abstract words and instructions into Arabic • collaborate and seek each other's help during pair and group work • explain instructions and interact with each other
3.	Policy makers support a limited use of Arabic with beginners to:	• facilitate and maximise EFL learning

Note. From "The Use of Arabic in English Classes: A teaching Support or a Learning Hindrance?" by B. Machaal, 2012, Arab World English Journal, 3(2), p. 214.

An interesting survey of L2 and L3 learners in a Polish university was conducted by Wach (2016). Eighty-five L1 Polish participants were recruited for the study to find out about their learning strategies in acquiring L2 English and L3 Russian. The results from the questionnaire and interviews revealed that the participants' native language provided them with the necessary metalinguistic knowledge in order for them to devise strategies to learn English and Russian, especially when studying their different structural representations. An interesting observation made by Wach was that the participants found Polish to be more effective when learning L2 Russian grammar, since these two languages belong to the Slavonic language group, therefore sharing many similar structural traits (Wach, 2016). This is reminiscent of Woodall's (2002) premise that cooperation between cognate languages is greater, and therefore more beneficial when one language is consulted in the beginning stages of acquisition of the

other. Another reason referred to the participants' relative proficiencies in L2 English and L3 Russian. Learning a third language was a more demanding task, as the participants were still in the beginning learner stage of Russian acquisition, while their L2 English proficiency was that of an independent user. Wach's (2016) study shows the sophisticated metacognitive awareness that multilingual learners have in the approach to language learning. The participants' benefitted from crosslinguistic comparisons of Polish, English and Russian, even if they did not all belong to the same language group. In fact, the participants' high level of metalinguistic knowledge gives credence to Cummins' (2007) idea of the dynamic cognitive systems of bi- and multilinguals. According to Cummins (2007), the home languages of bilinguals and multilinguals collaborate in complex ways and contribute immensely to their language and literacy growth.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with, in most part, the evolution of SLA theories and how experts in the field have supported their language acquisition theories and frameworks with extant primary research and related findings. What is evident from this literature review is the movement away from an 'English only' monolingual ESL/EFL classroom domain to an SLA approach that is more inclusive of native languages and identities. There is now undoubtedly an increasing support for L1 in the classroom for various functional uses in L2 and L3 acquisition. The following chapter will describe the approach, research design and methodology used in the current study to explore the attitudes and classroom practices of English language acquisition (ELA) teachers with regards to the inclusion of students' native languages in the classroom. The aim of this chapter is to showcase in practice the changing mind set of second language acquisition in ELA classroom settings.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The present study was in part inspired by Manara's (2007) quantitative and qualitative research into the opinions and attitudes of EFL teachers in using L1 as a teaching tool in their lessons. Manara's (2007) study was based in Central Java, Indonesia, and she carried out both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods in her study. She used classroom observations, interviews with selected participants and also designed surveys for EFL teachers and students to fill out. The data that was collected using these three different methods revealed teachers' and students' perceptions and personal opinions about the use of English and mother tongue in the EFL classes. The participants came from three different Indonesian universities, with nine teacher and 216 student participants in the classroom observations, 33 teacher and 270 student respondents in the survey, and 26 teachers and 26 students who were interviewed. The findings from Manara's study support the indispensable role played by L1 in second or foreign language acquisition. Manara (2007) came to the conclusion that several factors play a crucial role in determining the amount of L1 that should be exploited in the EFL classroom by teachers. Some of these considerations are the students' L2 proficiency, the objective(s) of the course and task at hand, and the efficient use of classroom teaching time.

3.2 Research questions

The study aims to find out the attitudes and perceptions of teachers in an English language acquisition department in an international school in Amsterdam. The research questions that guide this study are:

- What are the beliefs and opinions of English language acquisition (ELA) specialists teaching at the primary level in an international school about incorporating students' L1 in their teaching methodology?

- What are the functions of the L1 in the ELA classroom?

- What are some of the possible restrictions in using L1 in ELA lessons in the primary school?

- What is the attitude of the school administration towards L1 inclusion in ELA classes?

It needs to be mentioned that from the literature review in the previous chapter, it was clear that most of the research done in establishing the benefits of using L1 in SLA situations were based on teenage and adult learners of L2. There were only a few studies that involved young learners of ESL/EFL at primary school level. For example, Calis and Dikilitas' (2012) subjects were elementary students of Turkish background learning EFL. Granena et al.'s (2015) research was based on participants who were 5th graders learning EFL in Barcelona, and Farukh and Vulchanova (2016) looked at 3rd graders learning EFL in Pakistan for their study. It is understandable why older learners (like high school and college candidates) of ESL are more favourable as participants in SLA research. They tend to have a higher metacognitive awareness and are able to reflect on their second language learning processes. As such, young adult and older learners of ESL are able to clearly articulate opinions about their learning strategies and answer questionnaires and interview questions about the role of their native language as a learning aid in acquiring a second or third language. Even then, it is undeniable that the existing gap in the research on using L1 to benefit early second language acquisition learners needs to be addressed and filled. This study therefore hopes to further extend the research on using L1 with young learners of ESL/EFL.

Another common thread that runs through the research literature that has been reviewed in chapter two is the monolingual background of the L2 learners. All the experiments carried out were based on participants who shared the same native language background. For example, in many homogenous EFL settings in Kachru's (1985) non-native English speaking countries in the outer and expanding circles, such as Pakistan, China and Turkey, learners share similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds, therefore making it perhaps easier and less complex to incorporate their shared L1 into L2 teaching strategies. The current study, on the other hand, wishes to look at the multilingual ELA classroom settings that are typical of international schools, where students have different nationalities and linguistic backgrounds. The pull-out ELA lessons take place when the ELA teacher pulls students out of their main classroom to work in small group settings in another room. ELA students miss instruction that takes place in their main classroom during this time. Instead, they receive specialised instruction that targets their language acquisition needs. Thus, given the multilingual profile of the ELA classroom, the focus here is to find out if and in what ways the different native languages of the learners can be utilised in L2 instruction. An additional task is to find out what the limitations are in trying to implement an L1 inclusive environment in heterogeneous ELA classrooms.

3.3 Method

The research method undertaken comprises of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative research takes the form of a survey to analyse teacher attitudes and beliefs about L1 use in ELA lessons. Survey questionnaires are commonly used by SLA researchers for extracting data from potentially large groups of participants, and they are particularly effective when gathering information about attitudes and motivations in language learning (Mackey and Gass, 2005). The questionnaire used in the current study was a closed-

ended one, making it more reliable, since results are measurable and easily analysed (Mackey and Gass, 2005). Next, to collect qualitative data, interviews were conducted with the teacher respondents and they were asked more open-ended questions about L1 use in ELA lessons.

3.3.1 Participants and setting

The survey targeted a non-random group for its sample. Five ELA teachers from an international school in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, participated as volunteers in the survey. The medium of instruction in this international school is English, and besides English, students receive Dutch lessons two to three times a week for an hour each lesson. The teacher participants were fluent native or bilingual speakers of English of European, British or American background. Three out of the five participants were bilingual in English and another language, namely Danish, Italian and Turkish. One teacher was a monolingual speaker of English who had started learning Dutch two years prior to this research, and one teacher was a monolingual speaker of English. Out of the five teachers, two were very experienced, having taught in schools for over 15 years. Only one participant was new to teaching, with three years of experience. At the time of the research, I was also a member of the ELA department featured in the study, and the respondents in the survey and interviews were my professional colleagues.

3.3.2 Procedure

The quantitative research part of the study was conducted using a survey method. A questionnaire (see Appendix A) adapted from already available resources was used to elicit information about the participants' perceptions and opinions regarding the use of L1 and L2 in the ELA classroom and the functions of L1 in their lessons. A section of the questionnaire was adapted from the one used by Manara (2007) in her survey of EFL teachers. The questionnaire required participants to read statements about how English was learned by their students and how L1 was used in the classroom. For each statement, participants had to then select one of

four options (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree or Strongly Disagree) that best described their viewpoint or reflected their classroom practice. Besides giving their opinions about these statements, participants also had to provide information about the group levels they taught (groups 1 through 7) and the number of different L1 speakers they had in their classes. Furthermore, participants reported on the proficiency level of their learners. It is important to note at this point that all the students who attended ELA classes had been identified as low-proficiency beginning learners of English (so called 'ELA starters'), either as a second or third language. The teacher participants worked most closely with these ELA starters in their pull out lessons, as well as when they provided in-class support during literacy lessons in the students' main classroom. Additionally, participants were required to provide an account of the uses of L1 in their teaching and the type of L1 resources they made use of in their lessons. Finally, participants had to report on the type of L1 resources they used in their classroom by selecting one of four options (Always, Often, Rarely or Never) for each statement about an L1 resource type. The questionnaire was given to the participants in print form and they returned the completed forms to the researcher within a week.

Besides the survey, I conducted informal interviews spread out over a period of two weeks with the five participants to find out about possible hindrances or restrictions that they might have encountered while trying to use L1 in their teaching methodology. All participants were posed the same questions. The open-ended questions the participants were asked were:

- For which group levels do you think is effective to use L1 as a tool in your class? Is it feasible to use L1 with very young learners, e.g. students in groups 1 and 2?
- What are some of the more popular uses of L1 in your class?
- What are some restrictions you encounter in the classroom with regards to using the students' L1?

- How does the attitude of the school administration influence their teaching approach in ELA?

These interviews took place within the school premises, either in classroom settings while the participants were free from teaching or in the school cafeteria during lunch breaks. The teachers were interviewed face-to-face in group settings. There were three interviews that were conducted in total. One interview involved all the respondents and it took place just after a professional meeting in school. Another interview was conducted with three respondents during school lunch break, and the last interview took place with the remaining two respondents in my classroom. The interviews were planned in such a way that I could interview each respondent twice, once in a whole group setting and the other in a smaller group, involving one or two other participants. To maintain the informal nature of the interviews, the participants' responses were not audio or video recorded. Instead, the researcher chose to take down written notes of participants' replies with regards to the questions that they were posed, as well their free responses on the subject.

3.4 Ethical considerations

As part of meeting the code of conduct for ethics that is required for any project or research study involving human subjects, the participants in the current study were assured of anonymity and that any of their identifying information in the questionnaire and interview would be kept completely confidential. The participants were informed of the exact nature of the study, including the purpose of the research, expected duration and exact procedures. The participants were also briefed about their rights to decline to take part in the research and that their involvement was completely voluntary. They were also informed of their freedom to withdraw from the research well after its commencement. The individuals in the research project were not given any form of monetary or otherwise incentive for taking part in the survey

and interview sessions.

3.5 Questionnaire results

3.5.1 Teachers' opinion of English use in ELA lessons

The data in figure 1 shows that four out of the five respondents disagreed that teachers should use English all the time in the ELA classroom. Thus, the majority of the teachers believed that languages other than English could be used in their classroom instruction. Only one teacher, leaned towards monolingual teaching in the classroom. This participant believed teachers should use English all the time in the classroom, regardless of what language students choose to use. However, from the rest of the data in figure 1, it is evident that this teacher was also of the opinion that learners have the freedom to use their native languages with their peers in classroom interactions, tasks and activities. In fact, all the respondents disagreed that the communication between different interlocutors (student to student and student to teacher interactions) should always be in English. Two teachers strongly disagreed that English must be the medium of interaction between students and the teacher all the time, and three teachers strongly disagreed that English must be the medium of interaction between students all the time. Further to that, all the respondents thought implementing an English only policy among students in ELA lessons raises the anxiety level of students. The data in figure 1 confirm that all the survey respondents agreed (with three out of five even strongly agreeing) that the inclusion of native languages in the ELA classroom lowers the students' anxiety level and makes them more comfortable in their learning environment.

Figure 1. Teachers' opinion of English use in ELA
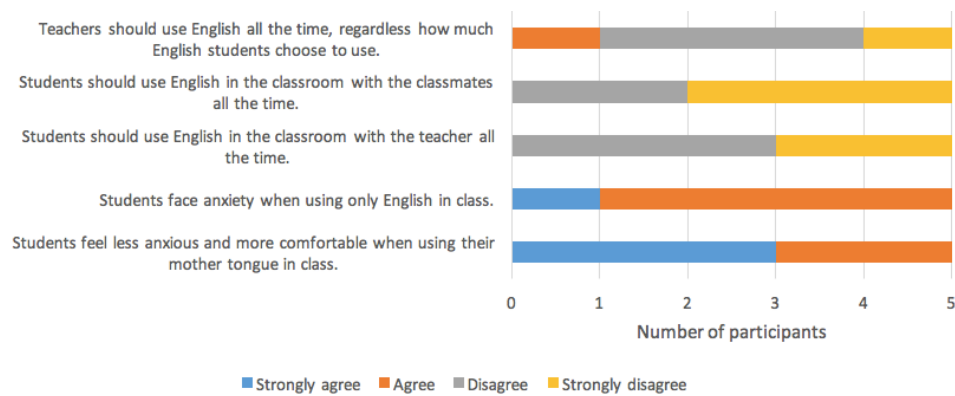
3.5.2 Teachers' opinion of native language use in ELA lessons

The compelling survey data in figure 2 confirms the changing mind set of second language acquisition specialists. All five participants strongly disagreed that the use of L1 by learners slows down the process of target language acquisition. All the teachers strongly believed that students' use of their native languages does not interfere with their English language learning. On same note, all the respondents agreed that L1 and L2 comparisons help students acquire English. In fact, as figure 2 shows, three out of five of them strongly believed that comparing learners' native languages to English promotes students' understanding of the structural similarities or differences between them and acquisition of vocabulary through tracing (the presence or lack of) cognates across languages. There is further confirmation from the data in figure 2 of the participants' awareness of the benefits of using learners' native languages in the ELA classroom. For example, all the teachers supported using L1 to explain new vocabulary to students.

Figure 2. Teachers' opinion of L1 use in ELA lessons
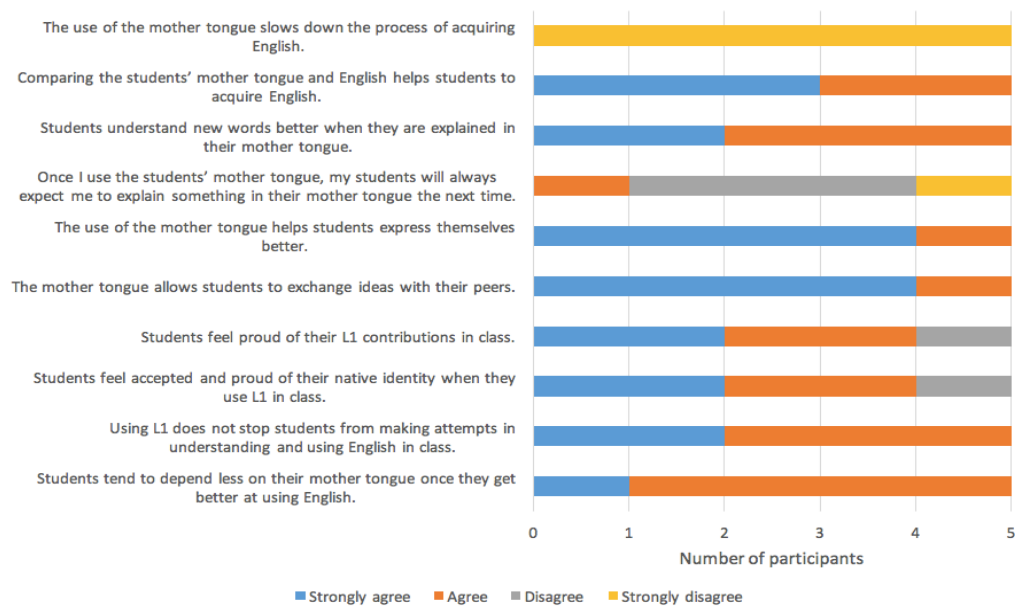
On the other hand, one out of the five survey respondents believed that students may develop an overdependence on their mother tongue, which might actually end up being counterintuitive to the whole target language acquisition process. This teacher thought that once they used the students' L1 in the classroom, the students would always expect the teacher to continue using it every other time.

Notwithstanding the doubts that may have surfaced in the survey results about the possible misuse of the L1 in L2 learning, all the respondents had given a very positive feedback about learners' dedication and perseverance in learning English. All the ELA specialists agreed, with one or two even strongly agreeing, that using L1 as a cognitive tool in their learning does not stop students from making attempts to understand and use English in their lessons, and that they also tend to depend less on their native language as they generally acquire more proficiency in English.

The results in figure 2 also explicitly show that all the respondents recognised that using the L1 allowed learners opportunities to express themselves better in the ELA classroom and share ideas with their L1 speaking peers. Four out of the five respondents, in fact, felt strongly about this view. On the subject of learner empowerment and inclusiveness, four out of the five

survey respondents recognised (with two strongly agreeing and two agreeing) that L1 use in the ELA classroom allowed students to take pride in their contributions and native identity. Only one respondent disagreed with these statements.

The participants' responses to the statements about the effectiveness of using bilingual dictionaries and materials in ELA lessons, as illustrated by figure 3, add further testament to their robust support of L1 in their teaching. All of them either agreed or strongly agreed that including bilingual materials containing dual language explanations in their instructional pedagogy actually serve to facilitate students' learning of English.

Figure 3. Teachers' opinion of use of bilingual materials in ELA lessons
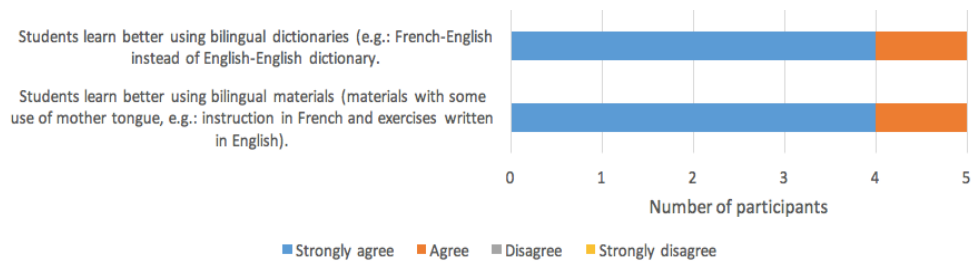
3.5.3 Different uses of L1 in the ELA classroom

From the data in figure 4, the most sought after function of using L1 in the classroom was to boost learner confidence and make students feel more comfortable in the language learning environment. The survey results indicate that all the respondents have chosen this function as being always or often the motivation behind L1 use in class.

Figure 4. Functions and frequency of L1 use in the ELA classroom
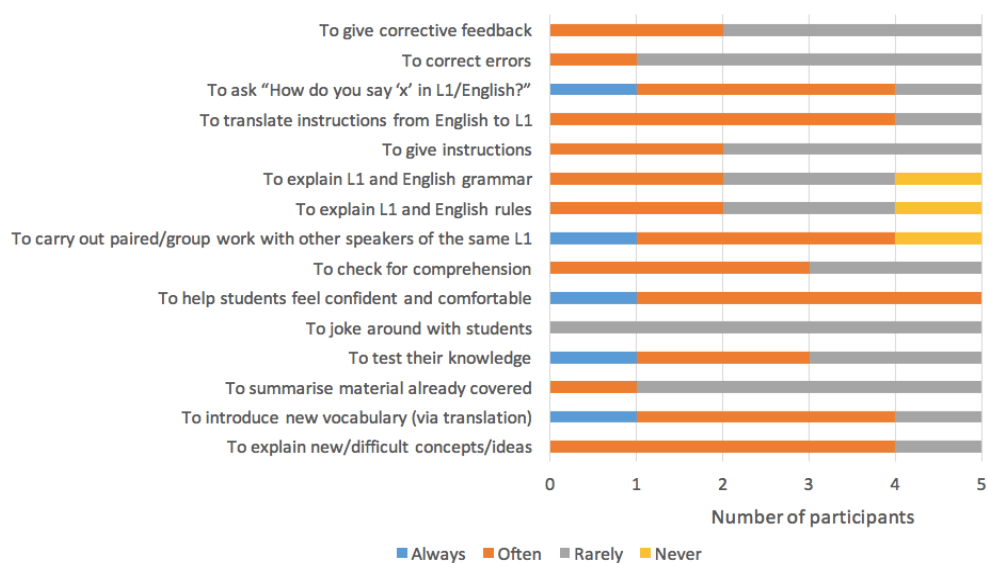
The other popular functions of L1 use in the ELA classroom according to the survey respondents were translating new L2 words, getting L1 glosses for further vocabulary learning and carrying out paired or group work with students speaking the same L1 (figure 4). At least one respondent indicated that these L1 functions were always taking place in the classroom, with 3 others opting for the less frequent 'often'. Other functions which four out of five respondents often used the learner L1s for were translating task instructions and explaining new and challenging concepts to beginner learners. The same number of respondents have also given credence to using L1 to translate abstract or culturally specific vocabulary to help low proficiency L2 learners who might have trouble understanding or relating to them.

Another important function of the L1 supported by the respondents was to bring its native speakers together in collaborative tasks in the second language classroom. Four out of the five ELA teachers make it a point to regularly organise paired or group work with homogenous L1 groups in their lessons (as supported by the data in figure 4).

Apart from the preferred L1 uses, the data in figure 4 also allows us a glimpse into the less favoured L1 functions in the ELA classroom. Of all the functions stated in this section of the questionnaire, the least popular was using L1 for humour in lessons. Other functions

of L1 which also did not figure high on the ELA teachers' list were summarising material already covered in previous lessons and correcting errors in L2. Only one out of the five respondents regularly drafted the students' L1 for these purposes. Following that, just two out of the five respondents used the L1 regularly for providing corrective feedback and giving task instructions in the ELA classroom. Interestingly enough, the same two respondents also regularly used the students' L1 for comparing its grammar and other rules with English in order to broaden learners' understanding of the similarities and differences between the two linguistic systems. Out of the remaining three respondents, two seldom and one never made use of the L1 for any kind of structural or rule comparisons with the target language. For the functions of testing knowledge and checking for comprehension, the respondents were somewhat divided in their L1 use, with three out of five opting for always or usually, and the rest, rarely. The most significant information in the data presented in figure 4 is the one respondent who had selected 'never' for using the students' L1 for collaborative classroom tasks and for carrying out structural analysis of the two languages. Based on other information provided in the questionnaire, as well as the interviews conducted with the respondents, an interesting correlation emerged between the age and group level of the ELA students, and the use of the L1 in their learning. The details of this finding will be discussed in the section covering teacher interviews.

3.5.4 Types of L1 resource used in the ELA classroom

The data in figure 5 displays the types of L1 resource used by the respondents in their teaching methodology, as well as the frequency of use for each type. From the outset, it is apparent that online L1 resources such as Google translate are the most popular and frequently used by the respondents. In fact, four respondents have acknowledged the constant use of online resources for translation purposes in their lessons. This result is understandable, since,

given the availability of teacher and student computers and tablets equipped with internet connection in the classroom, online resources provide instantaneous access to L1 to L2 (or vice versa) translation opportunities.

Another L1 resource that was a popular choice in the ELA classroom was the use of other L1 speakers. All the respondents regularly made use of homogeneous L1 groups as an L1 resource. Following that, four out of five survey participants responded as regularly using bilingual materials such as dictionaries and bilingual books in their lessons (figure 5).

Figure 5. L1 resource used in ELA lessons
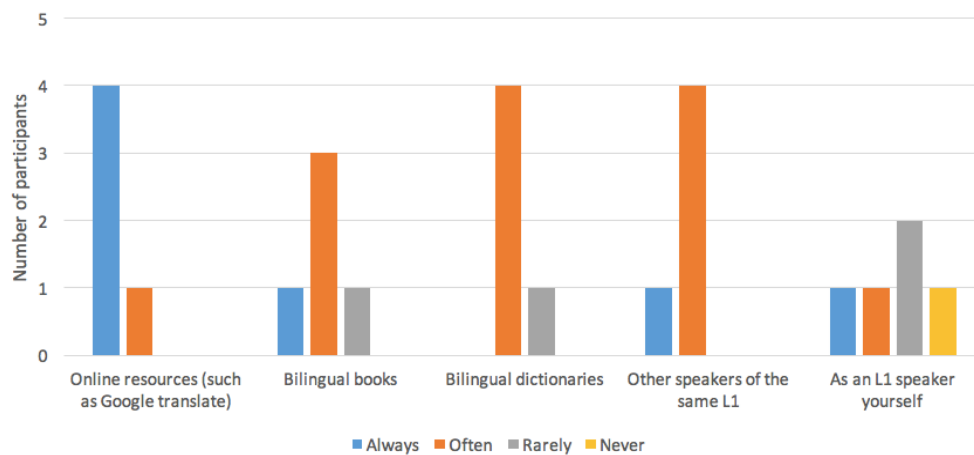
The last discussion in this sub-section is the use of L1 by the ELA teachers themselves as a facilitating resource in the classroom. From the data in figure 5, only two out of the five teachers have responded as always or usually making use of their own knowledge and expertise in an L1 to help their learners understand and follow L2 materials, classroom discussions and instructions. Two other participants have indicated as rarely using their L1 knowledge and not surprisingly, the remaining teacher never used her own L1 knowledge, since she was a monolingual English speaker.

3.5.5 Percentage of L1 use in the ELA classroom

Figure 6 below presents the percentage of L1 use in the four different literacy skills. At first glance, it is obvious that the use of L1 in any of the skills did not go beyond 40% of the teaching time. Only one teacher used the L1 41% to 60% of the time for reading lessons. Another notable distinction here is that teachers used more L1 during lessons developing listening and speaking skills as compared to reading and writing lessons.

Figure 6. Percentage of L1 use in ELA lessons
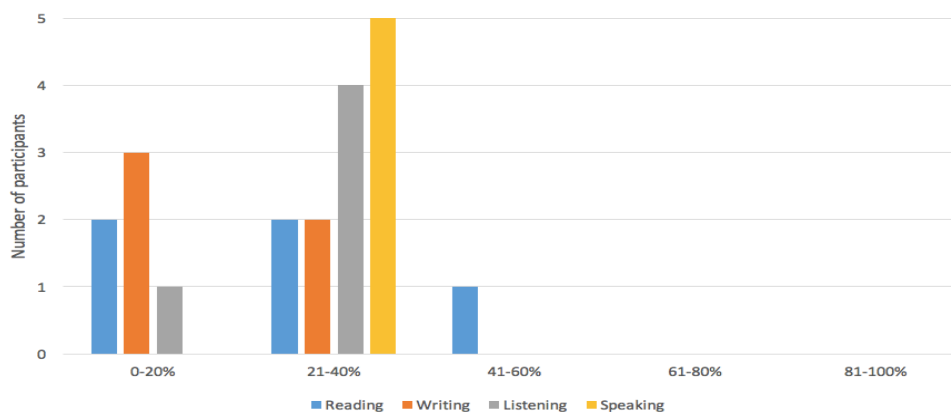
3.5.6 School administration

All five participants indicated in the questionnaire that the school administration was strongly in favour of a dual language approach in the ELA teaching methodology.

3.6 Discussion of questionnaire results

The purpose of this section is to interpret and describe the significance of the findings derived from the questionnaire. One important consideration is to establish the changing nature of teacher attitudes in the field of SLA. One of the expectations of the survey results is that the beliefs of ELA teachers with regards to the use of native languages in their teaching

methodologies reflect a more inclusive second language learning environment, respectful of the learners' linguistic and cultural diversity. This corresponds with the general shift in SLA perspective discussed in the literature review, a move away from a monolingual instructional approach to a more humanistic and integrated one suggested by the dynamic systems theory (Cummins, 2007). Apart from this expected outcome, the next significant consideration in this section will be to highlight the potential limitations and obstacles teachers might face in adopting a more multilingual pedagogical approach in their lessons. These will be discussed in the context of young learners in international education.

3.6.1 Teachers' opinion of English use in ELA lessons

The results from the survey revealed that all the ELA teachers were in favour of their students interacting in languages other than English with their interlocutors. Besides the target language, the use of L1 in the interaction between learners is central to establishing intersubjectivity (Antón & Dicamilla, 1999; Wells, 1999). Intersubjectivity takes place when learners collaborate to carry out classroom tasks and use their shared L1 as a medium to negotiate meanings, and clarify and validate their understanding of L2 task requirements (Wells, 1999). The ELA teachers' classroom practice of accepting native language interactions between learners creates a conducive environment for intersubjectivity and scaffolding to take place among them.

The respondents also presented an undivided front in their stand that an English only ELA environment runs the risk of raising students' anxiety level, which negatively impacts their learning. All of them were in favour of an L1 inclusive ELA classroom where students find comfort in using their home languages freely with their peers. This idea of lowering the anxiety of second language learners was first introduced by Krashen (1981, 1982), who proposed that "affective variables" contribute to successful second language acquisition in learners (1981, p. 61). A lower affective filter translates to less anxiety, which, in turn, leads

to high motivation levels among learners and promotes their self-esteem and confidence in L2 learning situations. Although Krashen's input hypothesis did not accommodate for the second language learners' L1, it is logical that an absolute beginner learner of a language is eased into the acquisition process with the assistance of their L1, which can act as an intermediary between their schemata and L2 concepts.

3.6.2 Teachers' opinion of native language use in ELA lessons

It is noteworthy that all the respondents strongly believed that L1 use by students and teachers in the ELA classroom does not slow down the second language acquisition process. Such a unanimous response reflects a significant turning point in the attitudes of second language instructors which, in recent times, have come to favour an inclusive and open-minded learning environment. Although theoretically this has been a controversial topic, for the teacher respondents in this study, the L1, rather than being a source of interference, provides a solid platform from which they can launch a gamut of target language practice lessons on phonology, lexicon building and sentence structure, like, for example, word order in simple sentences. This response from the participants signals the change in attitude towards the involvement of home languages in second language education. It is a result of the global paradigm shift away from an exclusive English only learning environment in ESL/EFL situations towards one that is more inclusive and celebratory of native identities and languages.

The L1 inclusiveness in the ELA classroom is also seen in the teachers' belief that bilingual dictionaries and materials facilitate students' learning of the target language. This opinion reflects the same conclusions drawn by Antón and Dicamilla (1999) and Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) that L1 is indeed a valuable resource that is readily available to be used in many forms as cognitive support for beginning learners of a second language.

The respondents were in full support of comparing and contrasting L1 and L2 languages

in order for students to learn from their syntactic, lexical and phonological similarities and differences. This approach involving L1 and L2 comparisons as a tool for acquiring an L2 was also seen extensively in Calis and Dikilitas' (2012) observation of Turkish L1 learners of L2 English, and was also supported by the views expressed by the native-speaking EFL teachers in Japan who took part in McMillan and Rivers' (2011) research survey. Similarly, the participants in this survey recognised L1 as a valuable asset in the ELA classroom and, supported its use in the classroom to facilitate the transfer of skills from L1 to L2.

The participants also gave a resounding support to using L1 to explain new vocabulary to L2 learners. This function of transferring word meanings from L1 to L2 and vice versa was also seen in Cook's (2001) list of L1 uses in the ESL/EFL classroom. Similar studies have been carried out by Bouangeuna (2009), Vela (2015), Gablasova (2015) and Choi (2016) to explore the use of L1 in teaching L2 vocabulary via translations. The resulting research has supported using L1 to L2 (and vice-versa) translations and glosses to teach new words to low proficiency L2 learners. Since the majority of students who attended pull out ELA classes in this study were ELA starters with low proficiency, it would appear to be an ideal approach for vocabulary and reading for meaning lessons, when students have a higher chance of encountering unfamiliar language.

Furthermore, all the respondents recognised that the use of L1 in the ELA classroom does provide learners with the opportunity to participate in lessons, exchange ideas with their peers and generally express themselves better. This brings us back to the topic of intersubjectivity discussed in Antón and Dicamilla (1999), where second language learners with low proficiency fall back on their L1 to mediate their way and verbalise their thoughts, while engaged in collaborative classroom activities. At the same time, respondents in this study who were interviewed mentioned that learners who had a wealth of ideas but were not

confident enough to speak in class during circle time[1] had the chance to participate in classroom dialogue through their L1.

A majority of the respondents also agreed that the use of home languages empowers learners to embrace their native identities and be proud of their contributions in the classroom. In traditional ESL/EFL classrooms, language minority students often experience powerlessness that is a result of the exclusion they face in strictly monolingual teaching environments (Auerbach, 1993). This situation is further exacerbated by educators who, ironically because of their native monolingual background, are monoglots with little to no pedagogical knowledge of strategies on how to recruit L1 as a teaching tool, which gives rise to frustration in both camps (Atkinson, 1987; Auerbach, 1993; Cook, 2001; Carless, 2008). This study, on the other hand, shows the evolving profile and mind set of language instructors in the ESL/EFL department. Four out of six members of the ELA team in the international school in this study are bilingual speakers of English, and they share personal insights on the nature of second language learning. As ELA teachers, they have extensive pedagogical know-how of strategies to incorporate L1 in order to empower learners in their linguistically dynamic classrooms.

However, despite the general positivity surrounding L1 use to help with second language acquisition, there may still be some reservations among teachers about the intended outcome of such an approach. One participant's response that use of L1 by the teacher might develop students' overdependence on their mother tongue reflects the kind of scepticism that can continue to exist when it comes to the role of L1 in L2 learning. In a similar vein, Atkinson (1987) mentions possible misuse of the mother tongue by the students in ESL/EFL situations,

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[1] Circle time has become an increasingly popular classroom protocol in primary schools, conducted either at the start of the school day or to conclude it, or both. It is when the teacher and students sit in a circle formation, and use the time to share their ideas and carry out discussions with each other about various topics (Housego and Burns, 1994).

and he attributes it to the students' lack of motivation in the classroom. This draws our attention to the fact that despite Atkinson's (1987) best efforts to promote an L1 inclusive ESL/EFL classroom, he still warns against possible pitfalls of such an approach. Correspondingly, the survey results in this study also go to show that there exists a real concern among ELA teachers (however small) that their use of L1 in lessons might cause students to use less English in communicative tasks in the classroom and as a result, not attain full target language proficiency.

3.6.3 Different uses of L1 in the ELA classroom

The survey results have indicated that the most vital function of the L1 in the ELA classroom was to build student morale and provide a familiar and comfortable learning environment for students. The prospect of learning a new language from scratch for a young student who may have recently moved to the Netherlands from their home country can be a rather daunting experience. This mental strain is made worse when these students find themselves in a totally unfamiliar formal learning environment with peers who may or may not share their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The ELA teachers were sensitive to the needs of such beginner learners of English, and their top priority was to dispel learner anxiety and bolster their morale. This feeling of comfort and self-assurance that learners can gain from L1 use in L2 learning environments was expressed by Schweers' (1999) research respondents as well, when they could access English through their L1 Spanish. This is again a follow-up from the discussion in the previous section about helping young SLA learners feel appreciated and empowered in the classroom.

Using L1 to translate lesson instructions and introduce new vocabulary to learners were also popular with the respondents. Several primary research studies discussed in chapter two have supported the translation function of L1 as an important aid to writing and lexical acquisition in ESL/EFL classrooms (Booth et al., 2014; Bouangeune, 2009; Calis & Dikilitas,

2012; Tang, 2002; Wang, 2003; Wang & Wen, 2002; Uzawa, 1996). Another sought after function of L1, as indicated by the survey results, was carrying out classroom collaborative tasks with L1 speaking peers. As seen in the research conducted by Antón and Dicamilla (1999) and Storch and Wigglesworth (2003), the L1 was a powerful semiotic tool used by its speakers as they were engaged in L2 tasks. The participants in both studies clearly demonstrated that they were operating within and expanding their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as they used the L1 in shared tasks when they constantly had to negotiate meanings of unknown L2 words, paraphrase and gloss L2 instructions and discuss and manage their individual roles in order to accomplish their common goals (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and ZPD predict that when L2 learners collaborate together on a task, they function at a higher cognitive level than if they were to work alone (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007, Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003). To be able to exploit a shared L1 with other co-participants in a collaborative setting when accessing L2 material provides an added advantage for learners, and allows them to take charge of their learning and be in control (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003). This other-regulation amongst peers postulated by Vygotsky takes place when ELA teachers make it a point to regularly organise paired or group work with homogenous L1 groups in their lessons (Ortega, 2013). Rather than deliberately alienating shared L1 speakers in the ESL/EFL classroom, as is the case in the more traditional SLA approaches, the survey respondents had adopted a pedagogical approach that used L1 to its full potential in maximising learners' L2 acquisition.

On the flipside, the least popular use of L1 amongst the survey respondents was to create humour in the classroom. The possibility of L1 use in L2 learning for the purpose of exchanging jokes with students was discussed by Ghorbani (2011). In Ghorbani's research, however, this function of L1 was initiated by the students, and not by the instructors, per se. In the present study, though, the ELA teachers did not see humour as a necessary motivation

for incorporating L1 in their lessons, and therefore, rarely used it for that purpose. From the interviews with the teachers, it was understood that funny exchanges between them and the students were normally created by spontaneous classroom situations, which were not necessarily language dependent. Besides, teachers needed to be mindful of cultural sensitivities, and also understand that it was harder for native language humour to reach all the students, given the multilingual make up of the ELA classroom.

3.6.4 Types of L1 resource used in the ELA classroom

All five respondents indicated that they regularly or always used other L1 speakers as a resource in the ELA classroom for group tasks. As was discussed in the previous sub-section at length, learners, when engaged in collaborative classroom activities with other L1 co-participants, have the opportunity to use their shared native language to navigate through the process of understanding the lesson activity and its content, all the while building their L2 skills (Swain & Lapkin, 2013). The fact that all the respondents regularly made use of homogeneous L1 groups as an L1 resource is an indication of a more learner-centred and inclusive ELA programme.

The next set of resources used regularly in the ELA classroom were bilingual dictionaries and bilingual books. Bilingual books are also known as dual language books, and there are several varieties of these resources available that cover different genres and target a range of age groups (Semingson, Pole & Tammerdahl, 2015). The types of bilingual books used by the ELA teachers in the current study are those that have full text translations suitable for beginner ESL learners. The English and L1 texts in the bilingual books appear on the same page, or alternate between pages, with the original illustrations (Semingson, Pole & Tammerdahl, 2015). From the interview sessions, it was noted that the ELA teachers had been busy building up a bilingual library since the previous academic year, and currently have a collection of about 100 bilingual books of popular titles. The bilingual books were selected to

cater to the L1 profile of the ELA learners, and some of the native languages include Russian, Hindi, Japanese, Spanish, Italian and French, among others. These bilingual books serve to build biliteracy in ESL learners, and as learners hone their reading skills in their own native language, the same strategies for successful reading can be easily transferred from L1 to L2 (Ernst-Slavit & Mulhern, 2003). Some of the strategies that can be transferred include the use of prior knowledge and schema to make connections with the text, and identifying contextual clues to make inferences (Ernst-Slavit & Mulhern, 2003). Additionally, when presented with bilingual texts, students can easily compare and contrast the vocabulary and grammatical structures between their L1 and English, especially if their native language belongs to the Romance and Germanic group of languages. In such situations, learners can easily identify cognates in L1 and L2, which lead to instant word recognition and accelerated vocabulary building (Ernst-Slavit & Mulhern, 2003). In addition to that, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory postulates that the learners' manipulation of bilingual materials such as books and dictionaries represents object-regulation (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007; Ortega, 2013). Object-regulation is the first step in a second language learner's three-step journey towards internalising L2 knowledge and skills, and developing independence as a self-regulated target language user (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). The ELA department facilitates this process by making these bilingual resources accessible for teachers to use in their lessons with beginning learners.

While two respondents had indicated that they fairly regularly used their own L1 knowledge as a resource in the ELA classroom, the remaining three rarely or never used theirs. Although three out of the five participants in this study were bilingual speakers of English with a sound knowledge and understanding of the second language acquisition process, being second language learners themselves, they were constrained by the limited number of L1 languages they speak. From the interview with the teachers who spoke Italian, Danish and Turkish as their L1, it was understood that while there were almost always a good number of

L1 Italian speakers in the ELA student cohort, Danish and Turkish speaking students were few and far between, giving the teachers very little opportunity to fall back on their L1 knowledge and incorporate it in their teaching. In addition, although teachers may have had some working knowledge of the more frequently encountered native languages amongst the ELA starters (like French and Spanish), it was still not at an expert enough level to be exploited as a resource in the classroom to facilitate students' learning.

3.6.5 School administration

All the respondents indicated that the school administration had given them their full support in including home languages in their teaching approach. This encouragement from the school management had assured the teachers that building an inclusive learning environment was priority in the ELA classes. This is very much in contrast with the attitude of the private Japanese university the respondents in McMillan and Rivers' (2011) research belonged to. Because of the university's English-only policy, EFL teachers did not have any choice other than to teach in a restrictive, monolingual environment with a zero tolerance for the native Japanese language. Fortunately, as expressed by the teachers in the interview that followed, the educational institution in the current study has built a reputation of being an inclusive, community-spirited school where the ELA teachers have the freedom to experiment with creating L1-inclusive lesson plans.

3.7 Interview results

With reference to the interviews conducted, possible explanations of any new insights gained about the use of students' L1 in ELA lessons are discussed in this section. The qualitative side of the research study took the form of interviews with the teacher participants. These interviews were conducted to find out specific information about the respondents' opinions towards the practices of the use of the mother tongue in their lessons. A further aim

of the interviews was to collect and consolidate the perspectives of the research participants and integrate them with the results of the quantitative research done via the survey. For ease of reference, the 5 teachers were labelled A, B, C, D and E. Although the participants generally taught ELA students from groups 1 to 7, there were group specialisations amongst them. One or two teachers specialised in teaching the lower groups (like groups 1, 2 and 3), while others were upper primary ELA specialists. There were also teachers with mixed specialisations. The need for this distinction in the interview discussion will become obvious in the following sub-section.

3.7.1 Group levels, age of learners and efficacy of L1 use

In the informal interview sessions, the teachers were asked to comment on the effectiveness of L1 as a teaching tool in their lessons, with regards to young learners in groups 1 and 2. This question was especially directed towards the lower primary ELA specialists. Teacher B, who specialised in teaching ELA starters from groups 1, 2 and 3 commented that a number of L1 functions stated in the questionnaire were not particularly applicable to young ELA starters. According to the interviewee, analytic approaches to learning L2 using the L1 as a springboard with young learners who were 5 or 6 years of age was not a feasible enterprise. Thus, functions such as structural comparisons between L1 and L2 to foster a deeper understanding of how linguistic systems work and differ or overlap in nature may suit older learners, perhaps in groups 5 to 7. Other higher order and advanced L1 functions in the ELA classroom that may not yet benefit young learners included L1 use in testing, summarising and giving corrective feedback. Thus, it was for these very reasons that teacher B felt such functions were only rarely used in her ELA lessons, but she was also quick to add that perhaps given an opportunity to teach older ELA starters in the upper primary, she might consider using the L1 for these higher order functions that explore both form and content of L1 and L2.

Another teacher, teacher A, was in full agreement with the comments made by teacher B. In fact, teacher A, who taught groups 1, 3 and 4, had never used her ELA starters' native languages to compare and contrast L1 and L2 grammar and other rules in her lessons. Although she heavily relied on the learners' L1 to translate new vocabulary and classroom instructions, as well as to check for comprehension, she felt it might be too early in the stage to introduce structural comparisons of L1 and L2 to her group 4 starters. The crux of the matter was, although the use of L1 was a necessary and facilitating condition in ESL situations, the specific functions it took on in the classroom was substantially influenced by the age and group level of the learners.

Another observation was offered by teacher C about the correlation between the extent of L1 use and learners' proficiency level. The ELA starters, who were identified as having low English proficiency level, were the ones who required the most L1 integration in the lessons. Learners who were at the intermediate and near-fluent proficiency levels, whom teachers support in the main class during literacy lessons, had very little demand for L1 use and were comfortable using English for most of the time. This correlation between target language proficiency and L1 dependence was also supported by the studies completed by Kharma and Hajjaj (1989), Tang (2002), Woodall (2002), Wang and Wen (2002), Vela (2015) and Choi (2016).

3.7.2 Limitations of L1 use in the ELA classroom

Teachers D and E raised several pertinent points when asked about the problems they faced when attempting to use L1 in their lessons. Firstly, having a heterogeneous student profile in the ELA classes posed a challenge when trying to organise peer collaboration groups to carry out classroom learning tasks. Such a diversified, multilingual student body is typical of international schools with an English medium of instruction. The fact that the ELA

classroom comprised of learners from different linguistic backgrounds meant teachers could not get students with a shared L1 to engage in intersubjectivity while gainfully involved in accomplishing target language learning goals. Intersubjectivity takes place when learners collaborate to carry out classroom tasks and use their shared L1 as a medium to negotiate meanings, and clarify and validate their understanding of L2 task requirements (Wells, 1999). Several examples of such situations were brought up by the participants, and the example from teacher A struck a cord with everyone. Teacher A's ELA class was made up of only three starters from groups 3 and 4, each of them speaking a different L1 from the others. Thus, in such classroom situations, paired or group activities where learners of a shared linguistic background assisting each other using the L1 was definitely not a viable option. In international schools where small group ELA classes are common, this is a recurring challenge.

Another obstacle to a complete L1 utilisation that was mentioned by the participants was their own lack of L1 knowledge. Not being able to speak their students' native languages (or having an incomplete understanding of them) was a real drawback to the teachers, especially whenever they wished to showcase L1 and English structural features and help learners benefit from comparing the two. This was true not only for monolingual English teachers, like teacher B, but also bilingual ELA teachers who lacked the knowledge of mother tongues which were widely spoken by the ELA student community, such as Russian, Chinese, Japanese and Korean. In such situations, teachers had to rely solely on other resources, such as other L1 users in the classroom or bilingual books, to incorporate the L1 in their pedagogical practice. Even then, there was a limit to how much input the teachers could actually provide with the help of other L1 speakers in the class. Needless to say, the situation was made worse if there happened to be only one L1 speaker in the class. In such cases, it is advisable to follow Cummins' (2007) proposal of inviting other colleagues and members of the community (like the students' parents) who speak the students' L1 to assist teachers in this process.

Lastly, students who generally have trouble with literacy skills and language often struggle with overall language acquisition, including their L1 development (Paradis, et al., 2010). In the interview sessions, the teachers talked about individual cases of students who did not respond positively to L1 use in the ELA lessons. Upon the teachers' further investigation through informal discussions with the students' parents, it became known that these students may have had some developmental deficit in their home language. When students do not have age-appropriate language skills and abilities in their L1 (possibly due to attrition or learning disabilities) or have been diagnosed with language disorder, chances are the use of L1 to scaffold target language acquisition will have minimal effect (Paradis, et al., 2010).

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has offered an analysis of the survey results carried out in this study. It has also established beyond a doubt how the field of SLA has evolved to become more inclusive of language minorities and diverse student populations, particularly in the ELA department in the international school in Amsterdam featured in the research study. In addition, it has discussed in detail some of the challenges faced by the ELA department in its pursuit of L1 inclusion in its teaching methods. The viewpoints raised by the teachers in the interview sessions have come to further elucidate some of the survey results regarding the specific roles of the L1 in the target language lessons. The final chapter will provide a summary of the findings of the current study, and discuss some of the research limitations that may have influenced the results in one way or another. Suggestions for further research will also be provided.

CHAPTER 4 – CONCLUSION

4.1 Summary

The prevailing goal of this study was to establish that ESL/EFL as a field has undergone a major paradigm shift in terms of its treatment of home languages in the learning environment. From the traditionalist language learning perspective of partially or completely banning mother tongues in SLA, the focus has now shifted to embracing the diversity of English language learners and integrating their native languages in ways to create effective pedagogical practices. The ELA teachers in the international school in Amsterdam who took part in the current study gave their resounding support to building an inclusive multilingual learning environment and are committed to incorporating learners' home languages in their teaching.

4.2 Findings

One of the significant findings from the current study is the changing profile of ESL/EFL teachers. The hiring policy that used to favour native English ESL/EFL teachers, as mentioned by Cook, (2001), has evolved to include non-native or bilingual candidates as well. Bilingual teachers of English are perhaps better suited to adopt the bilingual classroom approaches that Cummins (2007) promotes in his SLA discussion. Another important outcome of the research is that the ELA teachers do not regard learners' L1 as a source of interference in target language acquisition. The ELA students are free to use their L1 with their interlocutors whenever the situation calls for it. Thus, the native languages can co-exist with English as the medium of communication in the ELA environment. A further crucial discovery from the research is that the functions of the L1s are determined by the group level and age of the learners. Thus, the more cognitively demanding functions such as structural and rule comparisons between L1 and L2 are better suited for older learners in the upper primary groups,

between 10 to 12 years old. This is due to the fact that older learners, despite their low English proficiency, have developed a keen metacognitive awareness and are able to carry out cross-linguistic comparisons with teacher and peer support. Other L1 functions such as learning new vocabulary and concepts, translation of words and phrases, carrying out collaborative work and increasing learner comfort and confidence can be performed for all learners. The research also revealed that students' language learning disabilities can potentially minimise the effectiveness of L1 use for them in ELA lessons. Furthermore, due to the heterogeneous and multilingual make-up of ELA classes in international schools, it is more challenging to carry out collaborative tasks with other L1-speaking peers.

4.3 Research limitations and recommendations

The most obvious limitation of this research is the size of the sample. It is undeniable that results derived from a small sample size such as the one used in this study cannot be generalised for the entire community of ESL/EFL teachers. In order to determine more affirmative and significant relationships in the data, the recommendation is thus to expand the sample size to include a larger pool of ELA teachers working in international schools in the Netherlands. It would be interesting if data from a larger pool would further support the trend of more L1 inclusive ESL/EFL learner environments that was found in this study. An invitation could be extended to the ELA departments in the Dutch International Primary Schools (DIPS) to take part in the survey. This can ensure that the outcome is more representative of the larger ELA population in the international schools in the Netherlands, and can be easily generalised or transferred to new ESL/EFL situations.

Another limitation that needs to be mentioned is that I was also a part of the research environment in the study. The respondents in my survey and interviews were my professional colleagues and as such, because of my intimate involvement in the research, I may have been

subjective in the selection of the topic and respondents, as well as how I might have interpreted the research results. Because the sample size was a non-random selection of individuals I work with, there may not also have been complete objectivity in the participants' survey responses. To counter this problem, a random participant sample from the ELA teacher population in the international schools in the Netherlands can be targeted, perhaps through online survey tools, to allow for a fairer system of data collection. This could be a consideration for future research.

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APPENDIX A
SURVEY OF L1 USE IN THE ELA CLASSROOM

1. How long have you been working as a teacher? (Please tick (√))

☐ This is my first year

☐ 1-2 years

☐ 3-5 years

☐ 6-10 years

☐ 11-15 years

☐ 16-20 years

☐ More than 20 years

2. How long have you been working as an ELA/ESL teacher? (Please tick (√))

☐ This is my first year

☐ 1-2 years

☐ 3-5 years

☐ 6-10 years

☐ 11-15 years

☐ 16-20 years

☐ More than 20 years

3. How long have you been working as an ELA teacher in your current school? (Please tick (√))

☐ This is my first year

☐ 1-2 years

☐ 3-5 years

☐ 6-10 years

☐ 11-15 years

4.   Which groups do you currently teach?

Pull out groups	Tick (√)	Push in groups	Tick (√)
Group 1		Group 1	
Group 2		Group 2	
Group 3		Group 3	
Group 4		Group 4	
Group 5		Group 5	
Group 6		Group 6	
Group 7		Group 7	

5.   List of L1 languages and number of speakers in your classes (push in and pull out)

L1	Number of speakers
French	
Hindi/Indian languages	
Italian	
Portuguese	
Mandarin Chinese/Taiwanese	
Japanese	
Korean	
Russian	
Turkish	
Hebrew	
Arabic	
Catalan	
Spanish	
Other languages:	

6.   What is the proficiency level of your students?

Proficiency level	Number of students
Absolute beginner (starter)	
Beginner	
Intermediate	
Fluent	

7.

This section deals with your opinion about how English is learned. Please tick (√) one for each of the following statements.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Students should use English in the classroom with the teacher all the time.				
2. Students should use English in the classroom with the classmates all the time.				
3. Teachers should use English all the time, regardless how much English students choose to use.				

#		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4.	The use of the mother tongue slows down the process of acquiring English.				
5.	Once I use the students' mother tongue, my students will always expect me to explain something in their mother tongue the next time.				
6.	Comparing the students' mother tongue and English helps students to acquire English.				
7.	Students learn better using bilingual materials (materials with some use of mother tongue, e.g.: instruction in French and exercises written in English).				
8.	Students learn better using bilingual dictionaries (e.g.: French-English instead of English-English dictionary.				

8.   When do you use L1 in the classroom? Please tick (√) one for each of the following situations.

Situation	Always	Often	Rarely	Never
To explain new/difficult concepts/ideas				
To introduce new vocabulary (via translation)				
To summarise material already covered				
To test their knowledge				
To joke around with students				
To help students feel confident and comfortable				
To check for comprehension				
To carry out paired/group work with other speakers of the same L1				
To explain L1 and English rules				
To explain L1 and English grammar				
To give instructions				
To translate instructions from English to L1				
To ask "How do you say 'x' in L1/English?"				
To correct errors				
To give corrective feedback				

9.   What resources do you use to incorporate students' L1 in the classroom? Please tick (√) one for each of the following resource.

Resource	Always	Often	Rarely	Never
Online resources (such as *Google translate*)				
Bilingual books				
Bilingual dictionaries				
Other speakers of the same L1				
As an L1 speaker yourself				

10. What (estimated) percentage of your classroom interaction time is taken up by L1 use? Please tick (√) the appropriate boxes.

Skills/Percentage	0-20%	21-40%	41-60%	61-80%	81-100%
Reading					
Writing					
Listening					
Speaking					

11. Does the school administration/management support the use of students' L1 in ELA lessons?

☐ Yes

☐ No

12.

This section deals with your opinion about how students receive L1/L2 in your classroom. Please tick (√) one for each of the following statements.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Students face anxiety when using only English in class.				
2. Students feel less anxious and more comfortable when using their mother tongue in class.				
3. Students understand new words better when they are explained in their mother tongue.				
4. The use of the mother tongue helps students express themselves better.				
5. The mother tongue allows students to exchange ideas with their peers.				
6. Students feel proud of their L1 contributions in class.				
7. Students feel accepted and proud of their native identity when they use L1 in class.				
8. Using L1 does not stop students from making attempts in understanding and using English in class.				
9. Students tend to depend less on their mother tongue once they get better at using English.				