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<td>Leung, Chung-yin, Patrick; 梁仲賢</td>
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English language teachers’ beliefs and attitudes in the pedagogic use of Cantonese
in English classes in Hong Kong secondary schools

by

Leung Chung Yin, Patrick

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Degree of Bachelor of Education in Language Education (English Language)
at The University of Hong Kong

May, 2010
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest thanks to the principals who have allowed me to conduct the research at their schools, and teachers who have participated and given me insightful information in this study. Without their help and cooperation, the data collection process would not have been so successful.

I would also like to give special thanks to Mr. Jason Wightman and Mr. Cliff Yeung, who have peer-reviewed my work and given me many useful critical comments for improvement. Apart from reviewing my manuscript, Mr. Wightman has offered me valuable inspiration and recommendation at the initial stage of my research design too.

My immense gratitude is dedicated to Dr. Diane Hui, my dissertation supervisor, for her professional and continuing advice, guidance and encouragement throughout the whole research process and the writing of this dissertation. With her invaluable support, I have developed perseverance in the face of difficulty, and have grown intellectually that I am increasingly aware of the importance of careful planning and how I can structure and strengthen my arguments through objective, logical thinking.
Abstract

This study examines English language teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards the pedagogic use of Cantonese in English language classes in Hong Kong secondary schools. It also explores their reasons for doing or not doing so and their perceived effects of the use of Cantonese on the students’ English language learning. The data comprised English teachers’ responses to (i) questionnaires gathering their views regarding the use of Cantonese in English lessons, (ii) in-depth interviews concerning their general opinion about employing Cantonese in English classrooms, and (iii) classroom observations and stimulated recall about what happened in their actual teaching.

The findings and data analysis indicate that (i) there are three distinct types of English language teachers in Hong Kong as far as the beliefs and attitudes towards Cantonese use in English classes is concerned; (ii) whereas using English solely in English classes can provide students with maximal exposure for language enhancement, Cantonese has a pedagogic role to play in such aspects as building rapport, catering for learners’ diversity and facilitating students’ understanding of grammar and abstract concepts; and (iii) although using Cantonese may reduce students’ exposure to English, it can create an affective learning environment and encourage greater participation.

To conclude, principled use of Cantonese in English classes can facilitate students’ English learning, especially when the teaching context is taken into consideration. It is, therefore, recommended that a school-based medium-of-instruction policy in language classrooms may be more helpful than a clear-cut one. Future research can examine the impact of teachers’ use of Cantonese on students’ English learning.
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Chapter 1  Introduction

Issues related to language instruction have stirred much controversy in the education field. Within the many widely-discussed topics, the role of first language (hereafter L1) in second language (hereafter L2) learning and teaching has gained much attention, both locally in Hong Kong (e.g., Lin, 1988, 1991; Pennington, 1995) and internationally elsewhere (e.g., Eldridge, 1996; Gabrielatos, 2001; Kim & Elder, 2005; Moore, 2002; Song & Andrews, 2009). Because teachers are the key personnel who implement and reflect continuously on the improvement for language teaching approaches in the classrooms (e.g., Stern, 1983), it will be insightful to gather data regarding their views on the controversial issue of the use of L1 in L2 classes. This is especially so in Hong Kong where there is tension between the policy formulated by the official department of education, namely the Education Bureau (hereafter EDB), and what practicing teachers think and do in their classrooms (e.g., Li, 2008b; Lu, 2005). Understanding the past and present situations and the possible values of using L1 constructively can raise teachers’ awareness and deepen their understanding of the code-switching practice in language classroom. It may also help develop principles which can apprise practitioners of the decisions on the use of L1 in L2 pedagogy, and inform and fine-tune the current and future decisions concerning the medium of instruction (hereafter MOI) policy. Also, while formulating and implementing education policies, such important issues as diversity and equity may be addressed if the needs, challenges and concerns for learning and teaching L2 are taken into account.
Chapter 2  Contextual Background and Literature Review

Status of Cantonese and English in Hong Kong

Hong Kong was a British colony from 1842 to 1997. Under her rule, English language was originally the only official language; however, Chinese was later declared the co-official language as a result of the rapidly growing ethnic Chinese population. (“Chinese” here denotes two forms: written and spoken. The written form is sometimes referred to as the “standard written Chinese”, while the spoken form “Cantonese”). Although Chinese was largely used in mainstream communication, English was important in such major domains as government, business and laws, employment and education (Luke & Richards, 1982). After the sovereignty was transferred back to China in 1997, Chinese and English remained the two official languages and the Hong Kong government has recently adopted the “biliterate and trilingual” language policy: biliterate in Chinese and English, and trilingual in Cantonese, Putonghua and English (e.g., Kirkpatrick & Chau, 2008). Regardless, English continues to enjoy a prestigious status in the domains mentioned above (e.g., Lai, 2001; Li, 1999).

Code-switching in Society

Recent statistics show that the number of citizens in Hong Kong who are bilingual—speaking both Cantonese and English—is increasing (e.g., Bacon-Shone & Bolton, 2008; Census and Statistics Department, 2002, 2007; Li, 1999). As a result of this bilingualism, code-switching has become a ubiquitous sociolinguistics phenomenon, be it in business settings, fashion industry, the mass media, on the Internet or among university students (e.g., Chen & Carper, 2005; Li, 2008a, 2008b; Tse, 1992). It is also noted that (e.g., Chen & Carper, 2005; Li, 2008b) some people find it difficult, if not impossible, to get rid of interspersing Cantonese with English in their everyday conversations. Theoretically, “code-switching” refers to the process of
alternating between two or more languages across sentence boundaries while “code-mixing” refers to switches that take place within phrases, clauses or sentences (Bokamba, 1989). Yet, for the sake of simplicity and to avoid negative connotations carried by the term “code-mixing” as suggested by Li (2000, 2008b), “code-switching” is used in this report to refer to switching between Cantonese and English at both inter- and intra-sentential levels.

Although code-switching has become very common, attitudes towards this practice differ in the literature. While some scholars, for instance, view it positively as “well-established and widely-recognised” (Bacon-Shone & Bolton, 2008, p. 39) and “neither unusual nor abnormal” (Cook, 2008, p. 175); other research, however, shows that such a practice may lead to negative judgements like “ugly”, “ignorant” and “arrogant” (Gibbons, 1983, p. 143), and give people an impression of a lack of language proficiency (Hammink, 2000).

**Code-switching in Language Classrooms**

As in the field of education, considerable debates concerned with whether or not code-switching in the language classroom is an effective pedagogic practice are noted. A number of scholars (e.g., Chambers, 1991; Duff & Polio, 1990; Ellis, 1994; Franklin, 1990; Krashen, 1982; Turnbull, 2001, Willis, 1981) maintain the commonly-held belief that teachers should avoid using students’ L1 in L2 classrooms mainly for two reasons; first, code-switching denies learners valuable L2 input, thereby subverting L2 acquisition; and second, exposure to as much comprehensible L2 input as possible is conducive to meaningful language learning and crucial for successful L2 acquisition. Nevertheless, others (e.g., Atkinson, 1987, 1993; Cook, 2001, 2008; Lin, 1988, 1991; Luke, 1991; Macaro, 2001) suggest that appropriate teachers’ use of students’ L1 can play a supportive role in L2 learning and teaching; for instance, L1 can be used
to check comprehension, give instructions, organise tasks, maintain discipline, build rapport, and explain lexical items and grammatical concepts.

Notwithstanding massive discussion by both local and international researchers and scholars as to the merits of teachers’ and students’ use of L1 in L2 classes, EDB (e.g., 2007, 2009) takes a firm stance on this MOI issue. For example, according to an Education Commission Report published in 1990, it clearly states that “schools should be encouraged to adopt clear-cut policies of language use and the incidence of mixed-code should be minimized” (pp. 95-96). However, despite EDB’s official stance regarding mixed-code teaching, the use of Cantonese in English lessons in Hong Kong secondary schools has been noted. In studies set out to examine the issue of language choice of secondary English language teachers in Hong Kong, it was found that teachers switched to Cantonese with varying degrees, from no Cantonese at all to mainly Cantonese (e.g., Ho & Van Naerssen, 1986; Lin, 1988, 1991; Pennington, 1995).

Despite the pedagogic use of L1 in L2 teaching, EDB purports that the code-switching behaviour in language classroom has resulted in falling language proficiency, Chinese and English alike, of Hong Kong students (e.g., Lu, 2005; Luke, 1991, 1992). However, counter arguments have been raised in the literature. Luke (1991), for instance, feels that mixed-code teaching has been made a “scapegoat” (p. 91) for the declining language proficiency because there has not yet been any empirical evidence supporting and proving this claim (e.g., Li, as cited in Chow, 2009, p. 9; Lu, 2005; Luke, 1992). Regardless, because of this accusation, teachers were disoriented, as some of them were reported feeling “guilty” (e.g., Cook, 2001, p. 405; Li, 2008b, p. 27), and having a sense of “frustrations and uncertainty” (e.g., Ho & Van Naerssen, 1986, p. 30), “psychological unease” (e.g., Li, 2008b, p. 21; 2009), “weakness” (e.g., Edstrom, 2004, p. 28) and “failure” (e.g., Edstrom, 2004, p. 28).
A dilemma exists. On the one hand, EDB views mixed-code teaching as unacceptable, be it from teachers or students; on the other hand, researchers have argued that with appropriate and judicious use of L1, L2 learning can be enhanced (e.g., Atkinson, 1987, 1993; Cook, 2001, 2008). As a prospective teacher, therefore, I have constantly been wondering how I am going to position myself in the real-world classroom regarding the issue of using Cantonese in English classes. In my previous teaching practices, I have come across situations where I have struggled whether or not I should resort to using Cantonese. For example, my Secondary One students came across the word *cosmetics* in a reading passage. After explaining the meaning of this word in English and giving them the synonym *make-up*, most of them still could not understand it; therefore, I gave them the Chinese translation. This incidence of code-switching had allowed me to economise the use of my limited class time (see Edstrom, 2004; Song & Andrews, 2009; Warford, 2007). There was another occasion that a student used foul language and the whole class suddenly went out of control. I tried to calm them down in English but failed. I had no choice but to resort to using Cantonese to maintain the class discipline. It worked immediately probably because the language was more accessible to the students and the tone conveyed a more serious feeling and meaning (e.g., Meyer, 2008). I can anticipate that in my future teaching career, I am going to encounter similar situations regularly. Following from this dilemma, therefore, I would like to gain deeper understanding of what practicing teachers think and do to tackle the issue, and whether or not there is any value of using Cantonese in the actual English classrooms. It is because, according to Hui (2007), only by examining this issue pragmatically and professionally may teachers and students resolve the paradox constructively and productively.
Research Questions

To examine (i) teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards the use of L1 (i.e., Cantonese) in L2 (i.e., English) classes, (ii) the reasons, if any, for the switch to L1, and (iii) their opinion about its effects on students’ L2 learning, I will conduct a small-scale study. The following research questions are formulated to guide my inquiry:

1. What are the English language teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards the use of L1 in L2 classes in Hong Kong secondary schools?
2. Why do they use Cantonese, if any?
3. How might they think the use of L1 would facilitate and/or hinder students’ L2 learning?

It is hope that the results of this study will provide insight to readers about how practicing English language teachers view the controversial issue of using L1 in L2 settings in terms of their beliefs, attitudes and perceived effectiveness. This may then provide a conceptual model or guidance for teachers, especially novices, as to when L1 use may assist learners learning L2 and be effective in L2 pedagogy. Also, understanding the values of using L1 in L2 classes may help inform and fine-tune the current and future MOI policy.
Chapter 3  Methodology

Research Sites

This study was conducted in two secondary schools in Hong Kong where all students are ethnic Chinese who speak Cantonese as their L1. The first school, School A, is a Band 1 English medium (EMI) government school while the second school, School B, is a Band 2/3 Chinese medium (CMI) aided school.

Participants

There were 20 participants in the study, 10 from each school (School A: T1 – T10; School B: T11 – T20). They were all English language teachers whose L1 was Cantonese. Native English teachers’ (NETs) were not included for they might not speak or be able to speak Cantonese as fluently as their non-NETs counterparts in classroom English teaching.

Research Methods and Data Collection

The research adopted a mixed methodology—combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches in data collection and data analysis (Patton, 2002), depending on which inquiry strategy and approach can yield relevant and useful results. Data were collected from questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and stimulated recall. All the data collected were treated confidentially and anonymously.

Questionnaires.

To engage teachers’ beliefs and attitudes, altogether 22 questionnaires (see Appendix A) were distributed to the English panel teachers of the two participating schools. They in turn gave copies to the English teachers at their specific schools. Of the 22 questionnaires distributed, 20 were completed, collected by the panel teachers and returned to the researcher.
The questionnaire comprised three parts. The first part collected some basic background information of the participants (e.g., educational background). The second part elicited attitudinal information regarding their beliefs and attitudes towards the use of L1 in L2 teaching. The final part allowed them to express freely the reasons why they use or do not use L1 in their classes and the perceived effects on students’ L2 learning.

Semi-structured interviews.

Based on the information gathered from the questionnaires, three participants—T4 (Alfred, pseudonym) from School A, T18 (Besty, pseudonym) and T20 (Carolyn, pseudonym) from School B—were invited for an in-depth interview to engage in deeper reflection. During the interviews, which lasted for about 30 minutes each, the teachers were asked to confirm some of their responses in the questionnaires and, from their own learning and teaching experience, reflect on (i) their beliefs and attitudes towards the use of L1 in L2 classes, (ii) the reasons for resorting or not resorting to the use of L1, and (iii) their perceived effects of employing L1 on students’ L2 learning (see Appendix B). With their consent, all the interviews were audio-recorded and conducted in the teachers’ L1 so that they can express themselves more comfortably (McKay, 2006). The significant portions were translated and transcribed into English.

Classroom observations and stimulated recall.

Originally, the research plan was that the classroom observations and stimulated recall were to be done before the semi-structured interviews. However, because of time clash and busy schedules of the teachers, the order was reversed, and arrangements could only be made with Alfred from School A and Carolyn from School B. Observations are vital because articulated beliefs and attitudes may not fully reflect the actual pedagogical practices (e.g., Borg, 2006, 2009;
Edstrom, 2004); they must be inferred from, for instance, what people do in reality (Pajares, 1992). It is suggested that some teachers may lie about their use of L1 in their self-reports (Kalivoda, 1983); thus, to cross-check the extent to which what the participants believe (as responded in the questionnaires and interviews) are truly practised in their actual teaching (Zacharias, 2004), classroom observations were conducted.

During the observations, I took a role as a non-participant observer and recorded the teachers’ code-switching behaviour relating to, for example, building rapport, maintaining discipline, and explaining grammatical concepts. The observees were informed about the purpose of the observation and the pedagogical goals of this study in advance; therefore, they were encouraged not to alter any of their regular practice because of my presence. With their consent, the lessons were audio-recorded, and the relevant portions were transcribed. Alfred’s lesson (Secondary Two) lasted for 40 minutes while Carolyn’s (Secondary Four) 70 minutes.

Immediately after the classroom observations so that the memory was still fresh, Alfred and Carolyn were played back the audio of certain parts of the lesson in which they switched or did not switch to L1. They were asked to make interpretations and comments on what was happening at that particular moment, the learning and teaching taking place and what motivated or did not motivate their resort to the use of L1 at that instance. This elicited their intuitions and comments, based on actual contextualised information and clues (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989), about “the options considered, decisions made and actions taken in the classroom” (Woods, 1989, p. 110). Each stimulated recall was audio-recorded, conducted in Cantonese and lasted for about 15 minutes.

Data Analysis
Since all participants responded to the same set of questionnaire, the data collected can be compiled and compared fairly easily (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). Descriptive statistics was used for comparative analysis. Transcripts and field notes gathered during the data collection process were first read through by the researcher quickly; key words were highlighted and the main ideas were written on the margins. Similar and overlapping ideas were then merged together to form new themes. Data from the interviews, observations and stimulated recall were compared and checked against the broad categories formed (McKay, 2006; Nunan, 1992). By doing so, the reasons and effects of L1 use in L2 classes could be formed and thus the research questions could be addressed.

In this study, the data obtained were triangulated using multiple methods (i.e., questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations and stimulated recall). This could ensure the credibility and validity of the results. For example, teachers’ beliefs articulated in the questionnaires and interviews were triangulated with their actual behaviour observed in the classrooms (Song, 2005).
Chapter 4 Results and Analysis

The results obtained showed that there was a rather marked difference between how English teachers in School A and School B viewed the issue of the pedagogic use of L1 in L2 classes. It being a Band 1 EMI schools with students who are relatively well-brought up and proficient in L2, the teachers in School A generally disregarded the role L1 played in their classes. However, School B is a Band 2/3 CMI school with students who are relatively less well-behaved and competent in L2; this might be one of the reasons why most teachers there acknowledged its potential pedagogic value, and did not have a negative feeling about the incorporation of L1.

Integrating the data collected from the survey, interviews, class observations and stimulated recall, the following analysis is going to report my findings and address the three research questions outlined in Chapter 2. It is reminded that the analysis of teachers’ code-switching beliefs, attitudes and practices are not meant to be judgemental, but to raise our awareness of and help us understand the current situation so as to improve students’ learning and teachers’ teaching.

Teacher’s Beliefs and Attitudes

The first research question aims to gain an understanding of the English teachers’ beliefs and attitudes concerning the use of L1 and L2 in their classes. The beliefs and attitudes expressed by the participants can be broadly categorised into three types:

- Type I – Maximal L2 advocates: teachers who advocate exclusive use of L2 and endeavour to find alternative ways to avoid using L1 during teaching;
• Type II – Pedagogic L1 advocates: teachers who are being sympathetic towards the pedagogic use of L1 in L2 classes and are highly likely to supplement their L2 teaching with L1 as a last resort, based on their unique teaching context; and

• Type III – Optimal L1/L2 advocates: teachers who are in-between the two.

The following section will provide a more detailed account of each type of teachers.

Type I – Maximal L2 advocates.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Selected teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards L1 and L2 use in L2 classes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>To me, it is best to only use English in English classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I use some Cantonese and some English in my English classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>My students should be exposed to as much English as possible in English classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>It is more effective to use Cantonese to raise my students’ awareness of the similarities and differences between Chinese and English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I use Cantonese to explain a language point when all the other teaching strategies in English fail to work for my students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Using Cantonese saves my time in explaining an abstract concept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>My use of Cantonese reduces my students’ exposure to English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>My students become more dependent on Cantonese when I use it to explain difficult concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Supplementing a little bit of Cantonese when teaching vocabulary and grammar can facilitate my students’ English learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, this group of teachers (T1 to T4) is ardent advocates of the exclusive use of L2 and believes that learners should be exposed to as much L2 as possible. They do not quite value the potential benefits brought about by using L1. For example, although all the teaching strategies in L2 fail to work, they tend not to resort to the use of L1. According to Alfred (T4) in the interview, there can be two reasons. Firstly, he can foresee that if he starts to use L1, his students will become dependent on it (see Wong-Fillmore, 1985). And secondly, he strongly believes that the use of L1 will reduce students’ exposure to L2. To this group of teachers, the sole use of L2 in L2 teaching is both ideal and realistic. The factors that may influence their beliefs and attitudes are discussed in the following paragraphs.
**Teaching context.**

In the questionnaires, this group of teachers rated their students’ L2 proficiency as “fair” to “excellent”. This may explain why they can maintain the use of L2 throughout the lessons, and have developed such a belief that L2 teaching is best conducted in L2. During my observation of Alfred’s class, he did not use any L1; yet his students could follow him very well.

**Previous L2 learning experience.**

In his interview, Alfred cited his learning experience of French as being crucial in the formation of his belief (see Brousseau, Book, & Byers, 1988; Macaro, 2001). He recounted:

When I studied French in Alliance Française, the teachers used complete French to conduct the lessons. At the beginning, I understood nothing. However, after years of learning, I discover that I can handle French pretty well, even now. … So I would say, when learning an additional language, it is more effective for teachers to treat students as learning another mother tongue and force them to think in that target language, without undergoing a translation process.

**Type II – Pedagogic L1 advocates.**

**Table 2**

*Selected teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards L1 and L2 use in L2 classes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>T10</th>
<th>T17</th>
<th>T18</th>
<th>T19</th>
<th>T20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To me, it is best to only use English in English classes.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I use some Cantonese and some English in my English classes.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My students should be exposed to as much English as possible in English classes.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. It is more effective to use Cantonese to raise my students’ awareness of the similarities and differences between Chinese and English.</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>16. Using Cantonese saves my time in explaining an abstract concept.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. My use of Cantonese reduces my students’ exposure to English.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. My students become more dependent on Cantonese when I use it to explain difficult concepts.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Supplementing a little bit of Cantonese when teaching vocabulary and grammar can facilitate my students’ English learning.

Note: The dotted line indicates that the teacher on the left hand side and teachers on the right hand side are not from the same school.

This group of teachers (T10, T17 to T20) possesses different beliefs and attitudes towards L1 use in L2 classes. In general, the sole use of L2 is not valued as highly as the maximal L2 advocates. Nevertheless, they believe that learners should have as much exposure to L2 as possible. They show a more appreciative attitude towards the potential benefits of using L1 in L2 teaching; however, they too are sensible of the potential drawbacks of using L1 (e.g., reducing students’ exposure to L2). This awareness shows that they do not support the use of L1 blindly; rather, there could be other factors shaping their beliefs and attitudes such as teaching context and previous L2 learning experience. These will be discussed in greater depth below.

Teaching context.

As reported in the questionnaires, the L2 proficiency of students that T17 to T20 teach is either “bad” or “very poor”. According to Besty (T18) and Carolyn (T20) in the interviews, this was one of the reasons why they needed to use L1 in their L2 lessons. For example, Besty mentioned:

My students did not lay a strong foundation in primary schools … so they find English very difficult. … They have experienced series of setbacks in their English learning journey; consequently, they are discouraged and demotivated.

Nevertheless, Carolyn commented in the interview that as long as students are competent L2 users, it will be beneficial if they are taught in L2 only (see Dickson, 1996).

Previous L2 experience.

Similar to Alfred, in the interviews Besty and Carolyn recounted that their previous L2 learning experience was critical in shaping their beliefs. For example, Carolyn described:
When I learned Japanese, my teacher used it throughout the lessons. I was very lost. I could learn nothing. That’s why I sympathise with my students very much, and understand … how they feel when learning a second language. … We teachers are often very successful English language learners; so, we tend to overlook or underestimate how challenging learning English can be for some students, and forget the obstacles we have gone through before we have a good command of English. Students are actually very helpless if they could not learn anything out of the lessons.

Objectives of learning English: Wide exposure vs. learning the basics of L2.

In the interview, Besty shared her deeper reflection with regard to the objectives of teaching English to less competent learners: whether or not they should be exposed widely to L2 or they should grasp the basics first. The text within the square brackets is inserted by the present writer for clarity. She said:

To me, for weaker students who are not very motivated, wide exposure is relatively not as important as knowing the essentials of the language … [because] without mastering the fundamentals, one cannot be benefited greatly from exposing widely to English.

After the interview, I had a causal chat with Carolyn. She pointed out that sometimes there is no choice for her and her colleagues of not using L1 to some extent. It is because if L1 were not to be used, little learning of L2 would take place, and some students might even develop hatred towards their study. Either one of these might be disastrous enough to hinder and limit their L2 development for future learning and success.
Type III – Optimal L1/L2 advocates.

Table 3

Selected teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards L1 and L2 use in L2 classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3</th>
<th>T5</th>
<th>T6</th>
<th>T7</th>
<th>T8</th>
<th>T9</th>
<th>T11</th>
<th>T12</th>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. My students should be exposed to as much English as possible in English classes.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. It is more effective to use Cantonese to raise my students’ awareness of the similarities and differences between Chinese and English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I use Cantonese to explain a language point when all the other teaching strategies in English fail to work for my students.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Using Cantonese saves my time in explaining an abstract concept.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. My use of Cantonese reduces my students’ exposure to English.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. My students become more dependent on Cantonese when I use it to explain difficult concepts.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Supplementing a little bit of Cantonese when teaching vocabulary and grammar can facilitate my students’ English learning.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows that this group of teachers (T5 to T9, and T11 to T16) is neither very positive nor negative about using L1 in L2 classes. In other words, the beliefs they hold and attitudes exhibit are in-between that of the maximal L2 advocates (Type I) and pedagogic L1 advocates (Type II). Generally speaking, teachers in School A tend to be supporters for exclusive use of L2 while those in School B are likely to be the opposite.

Similar to their colleagues, only teachers in School A believe that the sole use of L2 in their teaching is, to a certain extent, achievable; while most in School B believe that it may be difficult for them. T11, however, reported that maximising the use of L2 in her class would be attainable because, according to Carolyn in the interview, “she teaches the best classes”. Despite
possessing different beliefs and attitudes regarding the pedagogic role of L1, the ultimate goal of this group of teachers is the same: exposing their students to as much L2 as possible.

**Pedagogic Reasons for Using or Not Using L1**

The second research question aims to probe into the reasons why the participants use and/or do not use L1 in their L2 teaching. The findings are reported as follows.

**Reasons for not using L1.**

*Compliance with policies and parents’ expectation.*

It being an EMI school, English teachers in School A are expected to conduct lessons entirely in L2. If any school fails to comply, it may run the risk of being condemned publicly (see EDB, 2007, 2009). Hence, to protect the reputation of the school, some teachers wrote in the questionnaires that “I am told not to use Cantonese” and “[using Cantonese is] against the school policy” (e.g., T6 and T8).

Also, many parents tend to show a strong preference for sending their children to EMI schools over CMI ones (e.g., Li, 2002; Yu & Atkinson, 1988a) because they think that the latter would “jeopardize their children’s future” (Tsui, 2004, p. 99). Therefore, as mentioned by Alfred in the interview, most teachers in School A tend to support the exclusive use of L2 in L2 teaching.

*Provision of maximal L2 exposure for language enhancement.*

In Hong Kong, there is little chance for learners of English to communicate and interact with native speakers in authentic situations (e.g., Li, 2008b; Tsui, 1992). This may explain why Alfred mentioned in his questionnaire and interview that he wanted to “provide a good English speaking environment for [his] students” and “train [them] to think in English”. In the class observation, a student asked Alfred a question in L1, but he encouraged him to repeat his
question in L2. At the beginning, the students had some struggle formulating the sentence; yet
Alfred started the sentence for him so that he just needed to finish the rest of it. This may show
that Alfred was seizing every opportunity to create an L2-only classroom.

Alfred believes that the development of students’ L2 proficiency is proportional to the
amount of L2 input they receive (see Larsen-Freeman, 1985). Although the students may have
difficulty understanding at the beginning, as suggested by Alfred in the interview, undergoing a
period of ascertaining what the teacher says is a vital prerequisite for successful language
learning (see Wong-Fillmore, 1985).

Existence of alternative teaching methods.

In the interview, Alfred made a strong remark: “There are so many ways [of maximising
L2 usage when teaching], why bother resorting to the use of L1?” For example, he suggested that
when teaching vocabulary, teacher can use synonyms and/or antonyms (see McCarthy, 1990;
Thornbury, 2002), or create a context for students to imagine if the words involve some abstract
concepts. When teaching grammar, he usually provides a context for his students to notice the
meaning and use of a target grammar item (see Batstone, 1994; Thornbury, 1999). Valuing the
pedagogic orientation to error analysis through explicit contrastive instruction (e.g., Ghabanchi
& Vosoooghi, 2006; Kupferberg & Olshtain, 1996), Alfred prefers to use real examples for
illustration, and makes the comparison overt and direct.

Although teachers in School B are generally more open towards the use of L1, from their
questionnaires, they are quite critical about the use of L1 in vocabulary teaching when compared
to that of grammar. It is because, according to Besty and Carolyn in the interviews, the school
creates its own teaching materials in junior forms; so when designing the resources, teachers can
incorporate plenty of self-explanatory visuals such as pictures and video clips to maximise the use of L2 in their explanation (see Kalivoda, 1983).

After looking at the reasons why some teachers do not resort to the use of L1 in L2 classes, the following section discusses the opposite.

**Reasons for using L1.**

*Facilitating understanding: Teaching of grammar and abstract concepts*

Grammar concepts are usually abstract and theoretical, involve rules and exceptions, and cannot be visualized. Hence, according to Besty and Carolyn in the interviews and some other teachers in the questionnaires (e.g., T11, T16 and T17), their students, given their low motivation and L2 proficiency, would not understand if the explanation was given completely in English. Using L1 can help scaffold those who feel lost, and enhance and facilitate their understanding of new concepts (see Meyer, 2008; Tang, 2002).

*Managing misbehaviour and engaging attention.*

Some participants mentioned in the questionnaires that their students behaved badly and their misbehaviour could not be controlled using English (e.g., T12, T14 and T15); as a result, they needed to use L1 to maintain discipline. For example, T14 wrote that “[I] use Cantonese to maintain classroom discipline … lest the students use the fact that they do not understand English to misbehave.” Some mentioned that “my students will shut their ears once I speak in English” (e.g., T19). Consequently, to seek the students’ attention, they have no choice but to resort to using L1 (e.g., T15 and T19). In the interview, Carolyn shared that using L1 in classroom management is more direct and hence more effective since L1 carries a more serious tone (see Cook, 2001; Meyer, 2008).

*Building rapport.*
A harmonious teacher-students relationship is very important in fostering a higher level of motivation and engagement at schools (e.g., Murray & Pianta, 2007; Reddy, Rhodes, & Mulhall, 2003). Thus, almost all teachers in School B surveyed recognised the importance of using L1 to build a good rapport with their students. According to Carolyn in the interview, students tend to identify better with teachers who can speak their L1 (see Schweers, 1991; Warford, 2007). During my observation of Carolyn’s class, although she teased her students in L1 when they gave a silly answer, the whole class reacted very positively and in a friendly manner. She suggested in the stimulated recall that using L1 can mediate the power relationship between the teacher and the students (see Low & Lu, 2006).

**Giving feedback.**

That teachers giving constructive feedback on students’ work or performance is an inevitable component in quality learning (e.g., Berry, 2008; Black et al., 2003). Besty and Carolyn mentioned in the interview that using L1 can achieve a more efficient and powerful effect. In addition, Carolyn shared that many students in her school have experienced numerous failures in their life, so they may need others’ encouragement, recognition and confirmation of their success to strive hard to improve and continue to do their best. As their L2 proficiency is not high, L1 serves to make the feedback explicit and comprehensible to them.

**Catering for learners’ diversity.**

Similar to other previous studies (e.g., Edstrom, 2004; Franklin, 1990), some participants in this study pointed out in their questionnaires that ability mix was one of the reasons leading to their use of L1 in L2 classes (e.g., Besty and T17). In other words, L1 is used to cater for diversity. Besty said she has two choices in her teaching: either adhering to the learning pace of the more competent students while ignoring those who cannot follow, or making adjustments in
the teaching (in this case, supplementing the teaching with some L1) so that she can wait for the less competent students to catch up. Besty chose the latter because she believes that no one can deprive students of the opportunity to learn.

*Saving time achieving learning objectives.*

A few teachers suggested in the questionnaires that, given “limited class time” (e.g., T13) and “tight teaching schedule” (e.g., T14 and T17), L1 is used to save time explaining new and difficult concepts and achieving the learning objectives (see Kharma & Hajjaj, 1989; Tang, 2002). Some scholars suggest that in successful teaching, teachers should always start teaching at the level where the students are at and gradually build up on it (e.g., Black & William, 1998; Davies & Pearse, 2000). However, according to Carolyn in the interview, some students at her school are too weak that it is impossible to get back to basics while simultaneously follow the teaching schedule. Thus, to resolve this dilemma, some teachers explained in the questionnaires that their use of L1 is “to make sure the students can understand and follow the lesson” (e.g., T15 and T16) and overcome the “language barrier” (e.g., Besty).

**Potential Effects of L1 Use**

After exploring the reasons why teachers choose to or not to use L1 in their L2 teaching, the final research question tries to understand their perceived potential benefits and drawbacks of pedagogically employing L1 on their students’ L2 learning. The results are reported as follows.

**L1 hinders L2 learning.**

*Dependence on L1.*

In his questionnaire, Alfred wrote that “once you accept the use of Cantonese, [the students] will start to use Cantonese very often”. When they get used to relying on L1, their L2 development will be hindered (e.g., T6 and T8 in the questionnaires; see Lu, 2005; Poon, 1998).
Edstrom (2004) warns practitioners about the adverse consequence of over-reliance on L1 in L2 teaching; she suggests that using L1 might slow down or limit the development of students’ understanding and interpretation of L2. Thus, Alfred said in all sincerity in the interview that “I really hope that students do not look for excuses to use Cantonese. They should seize every opportunity to use English. … This is the best way to improve.”

**Reduction of exposure.**

It is commonly believed that students can receive more input in L2 when L2 is used in class. With more input, they will get used to the target language more easily (e.g., Zacharias, 2004). Thus, over 80% of the respondents indicated on the questionnaires that using L1 reduces students’ exposure to L2 (e.g., see Tables 1 to 3). Therefore, a teacher wrote in her questionnaire that “students and teachers should use English during the lessons and even outside classroom in order to provide an English-rich environment” (e.g., T3). With prolonged exposure to L1 in L2 classes, students may find it difficult to acquire “pure” L2 (e.g., Edstrom, 2004; Luke, 1991).

**L1 facilitates L2 learning.**

**Creation of an affective learning environment.**

In the questionnaires, some teachers in School B mentioned that their students were very afraid of the learning of L2. For example, they wrote: the students “simply turn off their learning ‘engine’ if the whole lesson is conducted in English” (e.g., Carolyn), and “will shut their ears once I speak in English” (e.g., T19). This may indicate that the anxiety level of those students is extremely high in L2 lessons. According to the affective filter hypothesis in Krashen’s Monitor Model (1981, 1982), language anxiety has a powerful destructive effect on L2 acquisition.

Thus, one way to create an affective learning atmosphere, according to some of the teachers surveyed, is to supplement L2 teaching with the use of L1. For example, some teachers
wrote in the questionnaires that “[If Cantonese is used], learning will not be less threatening and students won’t be that helpless” (e.g., Carolyn) and “My students find it comfortable, quick and confident when using Cantonese” (e.g., T15). In other words, L1 could be less of a treat in students’ mind, and its use can clear some of their queries and facilitate their comprehension of what is happening in class (e.g., T10 and T11 in the questionnaires; Carolyn in the interview).

**Encouragement of greater participation.**

When students understand the lesson, they will have a clear idea about what is expected from them (e.g., T14 in the questionnaire; see also Kim & Petraki, 2009), and they can feel safe to express themselves, experiment and take risks with using L2 (e.g., Besty in the interview; see also Auerbach, 1993). Therefore, more than half of the teachers surveyed reported in the questionnaires that their students were more willing to participate actively and pay attention when L1 was used (e.g., Besty, T12 and T16).

When observing Carolyn’s lesson, it was noted that when L2 was used, only few students volunteered to answer questions. It was a complete difference when L1 was used, however. The students became energetic and constantly yelled out the answers, although some were not correct. This could be a good sign to show that the students feel more confident and comfortable with taking risks in their L2 learning.

It is suggested that greater participation in L2 learning may lead to higher achievement of the language (e.g., Tremblay, 2001; Yu, 2009). Thus, this study, especially in the context of School B, seems to reinforce that “Chinese is the more effective medium, especially for low ability groups” (Yu & Atkinson, 1988b, p. 308). It may also resonate with the claim that “instruction in a weaker language did not lead to an improvement in the weaker language” (Yu & Atkinson, 1988a, p. 268) because students may not understand what is being taught and hence
they cannot learn well and participate actively. In other words, implementing the sole use of L2 in L2 classes may not be suitable and conducive to the learning of every student.
Chapter 5  Discussion

The results of this study show that, as far as the beliefs and attitudes towards L1 use in L2 classes are concerned, there are three distinct types of English teachers in secondary schools in Hong Kong, namely maximal L2 advocates, pedagogic L1 advocates and optimal L1/L2 advocates. For the maximal L2 advocates, they share the traditional belief that L2 is best taught in L2, for maximal exposure is likely to contribute to the success of L2 acquisition. To these teachers, L2 as the MOI is both ideal and realistic. To the other two types of teachers who recognise the potential pedagogic roles L1 play in the classroom, L2 as the sole MOI in L2 classes may not be realistic. However, they do generally believe that the amount of L2 use should increase substantially as students progress. This identification of the three types of teachers can raise teachers’ awareness of the relationship between beliefs and attitudes and classroom language use. It can also engage their reflection regarding the role of L1 in L2 classroom, as well as provide a common pedagogic language for teachers and educators to share and discuss issues from different contexts and cultures. Their contrasting beliefs and attitudes highlight the complexity of the issues concerning the use of L1 in L2 learning and teaching. In other words, there is no one single way to generalise or predict how individual teachers view this issue as the decisions teachers make are bound to the influence of multiple factors such as teaching contexts and previous L2 learning experience.

L2 acquisition theories and teaching pedagogy have long emphasised the use of L2 in the classroom (e.g., Chambers, 1991; Duff & Polio, 1990; Ellis, 1994; Franklin, 1990; Turnbull, 2001) because, according to Krashen (1982), for language acquisition to take place, learners must be exposed to enough comprehensible input. This echoes the views of some participants in this study that maximising students’ exposure to L2 is crucial to the development of their L2
proficiency (e.g., see also Alfred’s interview responses). To create such an environment and make language learning meaningful and effective, it is suggested that teachers should familiarise students with processing and manipulating L2 as early as possible, and seize every opportunity to engage them in the use of L2 to, for example, ask questions or organise thinking (e.g., see also Alfred’s interview and questionnaire responses). With adequate input provision, students can convert the input into intake, despite having difficulty understanding it at the beginning.

Whereas some participants in this study recognise the benefits brought about by the importance of exposure to L2, some suggest that teachers’ appropriate use of L1 can play a supportive and facilitative role in L2 learning and teaching in such aspects as facilitating students’ understanding of grammar and abstract concepts, managing misbehaviour and engaging attention, catering for learners’ diversity, and saving time achieving learning objectives. Some of these uses and functions of L1 are mentioned in Cook’s (2001, 2008) theoretical discussions and echo Lin’s (1988, 1991) previous research (e.g., Atkinson, 1987, 1993; Ho & Van Naerssen, 1986; Macaro, 2001; Pennington, 1995).

One of the common worries that supporters of maximal L2 use have is the unprincipled and unjustifiable use of L1 by the L2 teachers. Notwithstanding, the data collected in this study reflect that their use of L1 may be systematic and purposeful; their use of L1 does not seem to take place arbitrarily. Similar observations have also been identified by other researchers. For example, the teachers use L1 when they feel that the students can not understand the lesson (e.g., the meaning and use of a target grammar item); they therefore supplement their teaching with some L1 because they believe that L1 facilitates L2 learning and teaching (see Lin, 1991; Macaro, 2001; Tang, 2002). Moreover, when they find that the students are confused and anxious, they may use L1 to alleviate students’ anxiety and establish a good rapport (see
Atkinson, 1987; Lin, 1988; Rolin-Ianziti & Brownlie, 2002). What is different from the results yielded in previous studies is that the teacher participants surveyed in the present study (e.g., Besty and Carolyn) are generally critical about the use of L1 in the teaching of vocabulary, unless the words involve abstract concepts (cf., Liu et al., 2004; Tang, 2002).

Most of the research cited above was conducted outside Hong Kong. This raises two important issues. First, most non-native L2 teachers may face the same dilemma of whether or not they should employ L1 in the L2 classrooms. Second, code-switching in language classrooms is not a unique phenomenon that exists exclusively in Hong Kong, but universal. For example, Liu et al. (2004) conducted their research in South Korea, Rolin-Ianziti and Brownlie (2002) in Australia, and Tang (2002) in China. Thus, drawing on the results obtained in this study, in reality, the current EDB’s clear-cut policy of language use in L2 classrooms might seem to have underestimated the complexity of the MOI issues concerning teachers’ teaching and students’ learning.

This follows that a responsible and effective MOI policy may, therefore, need to take into consideration other contextual factors such as the specific teaching context, needs, motivation and language proficiency of the students, and teachers’ personal beliefs and past learning experience. Otherwise, discrepancies may continue to exist between professional ideals and actual teaching contexts in which code-switching is concerned. For example, in schools where students are highly motivated and proficient in L2, imposing a complete ban on the use of L1 may not be problematic (e.g., in the case of Alfred). However, in contexts where students are not motivated to learn and their L2 foundation is so weak that they may not even have the ability to understand teachers’ instructions, how can they learn an L2 through L2 without supplementing with some use of L1 (e.g., in the case of Besty and Carolyn)? Some scholars and teachers
participated in this study have suggested that the exclusion of L1 use in low-level classes is unrealistic and “practically impossible” (Nunan & Lamb, as cited in Tang, 2002, p. 37), and “judicious use of the mother tongue in the English classroom does not reduce students’ exposure to English, but rather can assist in the teaching and learning processes” (Tang, 2002, p. 41) (see also Besty’s and Carolyn’s responses in the interview).

It is suggested by the pedagogic L1 advocates in particular that if one is to completely disregard the merits of the use of L1 in the classrooms, the following tensions and paradoxes must to be solved beforehand. First, how can students who are very weak in L2 be exposed to as much L2 input as possible while simultaneously ensuring that they understand the input they are exposed to? Second, what are the teaching objectives towards less capable students: teaching them the knowledge of L2 or exposing them to as much L2 input as possible? Third, how can teachers motivate and teach L2 to students who would give up or turn off their “learning engine” totally when L2 is used? Fourth, should teachers adhere to the learning pace of those more competent students, or make adjustments in the teaching so that the less competent can follow too? Finally, how can teachers follow the prescribed tight scheme of work while at the same time making sure that everyone in the class can understand and follow the lesson?

I am not suggesting that L1 is a panacea or an efficacious trade-off tool to resolve the above challenges; nevertheless, according to the research participants, using L1 in the L2 classrooms does have positive effects on facilitating students’ comprehension, changing their attitudes towards the target language and building a comfortable and motivating environment. These could result in a greater participation in L2 learning, and hence rapid progress in L2, promoting and leading to successful L2 acquisition. However, allowing L1 use in class might spark off another vigorous discussion regarding equal opportunities. For example, is it equitable
for less competent students to receive “second-class” language education in which they are exposed to reduced amount of L2 input?
Chapter 6 Conclusions

This research investigates the beliefs and attitudes of some local secondary English teachers towards the use of Cantonese (L1) in English language (L2) classes in Hong Kong, and the results obtained have addressed the three research questions outlined. While it is found that some teachers (i.e., the maximal L2 advocates) completely disregard the role of L1 in L2 teaching on the ground that L2 classes should provide students with maximal exposure to L2 for language enhancement, the majority of teachers (i.e., the pedagogic L1 advocates and optimal L1/L2 advocates) do acknowledge, at least to some extent, its pedagogic value in terms of facilitating students’ understanding of the lesson, giving feedback, building rapport, catering for learners’ diversity and so on. Although the results may not be sufficient to claim that teachers’ use of L1 has direct benefits on students’ L2 learning and acquisition, it can be argued that their learning can be assisted and facilitated by the creation of an affective learning environment which could encourage greater participation, leading to the improvement of L2. While recognising the drawbacks brought about by the use of L1 (e.g., students’ greater dependence on L1 and reduction of L2 exposure), it is noted that the merits outweigh the demerits, especially in contexts such as School B where students’ L2 proficiency, learning attitude and motivation have much room for further improvement.

Having said that, I am not suggesting that teachers should overuse L1 in their L2 teaching. What is being called for is the principled, justifiable and pedagogic use of L1, informed by the learning needs of the learners and limitations imposed by such contextual factors as limited class time and tight teaching schedule. There is fundamentally no dispute over whether or not L2 use should be maximised in classrooms, especially in EFL contexts like Hong Kong where L2 lessons are the only time students are exposed to L2. As long as a balance is struck between the
use of L1 and L2, they can be seen as complementary, rather than mutually exclusive. In other words, “teachers need to cultivate the most effective L1 use while ensuring that it simultaneously meets students’ needs and maximizes their learning” (Shimizu, 2006, p. 81). For example, teachers can expose students to as much L2 as possible while synchronously ensuring accurate understanding and interpretation.

Instead of being stipulated by a higher authority like the EDB, a more helpful and effective MOI policy might therefore be a school-based one, allowing the stakeholders of the schools, including the school administrators, principal, parents, and, most important of all, teachers and students, to decide on the most suitable and effective course of action for the school. After all, every school faces a different situation, and learning and teaching taking place in classrooms is a two-way process between teachers and students. Hence, it would be wise to offer students the opportunities to express their opinions about whether or not L1 should be used in classrooms and, if so, how it should be employed strategically so as to maximise and facilitate their learning (Shimizu, 2006), since this could be one of the prerequisites for successful L2 acquisition in the long run. No matter what the MOI policy is at the end, it must meet one basic principle: safeguarding the best interests of each individual student.

A possible implication drawn from this study is that teachers should be encouraged to reflect on their classroom language use so that their awareness and understanding of the MOI issues regarding the roles L1/L2 play in classrooms can be raised and deepened. Also, despite being likely to be systematic and purposeful, teachers should be aware of how much L1 would be appropriate based on their unique classroom context and in what way L1 may not work as efficiently as L2. In addition, teacher training programmes may want to focus on how L1 can be
used most strategically and pedagogically; for example, at which stage in the teaching of grammar would L1 aid learners’ comprehension the most.

In the research process, I have deepened my insights regarding the use of L1 in L2 classes. Before that, my view was quite shallow and simplistic. I would draw on its use whenever I felt necessary, regardless whether or not it has any value or it would really facilitate my students’ learning. However, after gaining deeper understanding concerned with its use in L2 teaching by reading the relevant literature, and engaging with the insider perspective of some in-service teachers, I have been illuminated by the complexity of the judgement and decisions undergoing in teachers’ mind as far as the code-switching practice in language classroom is concerned. As a prospective teacher, I will strive to make informed pedagogic decisions that will yield the most fruitful employment of L1 with my students, and share some of my perception with my future colleagues so that our students’ learning can be enhanced.

Reflecting throughout the whole process, I have learned to negotiate and respect the teachers so that the best arrangement possible can be made. For example, at the beginning, I planned to interview four teachers and observe their teaching, two from each school, in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the present situation. At the end, unfortunately, I cannot fulfil this plan. As a researcher, I understand that I must respect all the decisions my participants made as participation is entirely voluntary, and teachers are always so busy that they have many matters to attend to. Therefore, I am really grateful for the help from enthusiastic teachers like Alfred, Besty and Carolyn.
Chapter 7  Limitations and Future Research Directions

The nature of this study is exploratory and small-scale. Due to its small sample size, the findings of this study are not sufficient enough to make generalisations about the debate over whether or not L1 is effective or should be used in the L2 classroom. Instead, it intends to have a closer look at how two groups of teachers with different teaching contexts view the controversial issue of using L1 in L2 classes. In addition, the findings of this study are limited to the teachers’ self-reports; whether or not they can accurately identify their own beliefs and attitudes, articulate them and put them into actual teaching practices remain uncertain.

Thus, to gain a better and clearer picture, future research could include a larger sample of participants, preferably teachers of diverse background. Also, it is of crucial importance to get more data in their practice or actual teaching in the classroom, ensuring that their metacognition (i.e., their knowledge about their beliefs) corresponds to their actual behaviour.

It will also be worthwhile to conduct empirical studies regarding the impact of teachers’ L1 use on students’ L2 learning. This could then create a framework for teachers, both novice and experienced, as to how L1 can be employed most effectively. Furthermore, the specific way in which the use of L1 might raise students’ motivation, and facilitate and promote L2 acquisition merits further investigation. The new findings will provide useful information for educators and MOI policy-makers in their formulation of helpful guidelines concerned with the systematic and purposeful use of L1 to project language proficiency for all students.

To ensure the inter-rater reliability of this study, the coding of the themes of the data collected could have been examined and analysed by other people. Nevertheless, the data were triangulated from multiple perspectives (e.g., questionnaires and classroom observations) to increase the trustworthiness and value of this research.
References


Appendix A  Questionnaire

The questionnaire seeks to gather your beliefs, attitudes, and experience regarding the use of the students’ first language (L1 or Cantonese) in English language (second language or L2) classes. It consists of three parts. The questions in Part A aim to collect some general information about you and your background. Part B examines your beliefs and attitudes towards L1 use in L2 classes. Part C explores deeper at your reflection concerning such a practice. It will only take you approximately 20 minutes to complete this questionnaire.

Please be well assured that all the information collected will be used for research purposes only. All the responses you give will be treated confidentiality and anonymously; no personal identifying information will be disclosed and only aggregate responses will be published. An envelope has been provided so that you can seal the completed questionnaire in it. Your input is very important for researchers (including myself) and teachers, especially novices, to understand the practice and value of using Cantonese in English classes. Thank you.

Part A: General and Background Information

Please answer the questions as accurately and fully as you can and select ONE response for each choice-type question.

1. Name: _______________________________________
2. Gender:  □ Male  □ Female
3. Age group:  □ 21 – 30  □ 31 – 40  □ 41 – 50  □ 50 or above
4. Your position: (a)  □ full-time  □ part-time
   (b)  □ English panel head  □ English teacher  □ Teaching assistant
5. You are currently teaching:  □ junior form (F.1 – F.3)  □ senior form (F.4 – F.7)  [can ✔ both options]
6. How many years have you been teaching English?  □ 0 – 4 years  □ 5 – 10 years  □ 11 – 20 years  □ 21 years or above
7. Your highest academic qualification is:  □ bachelor’s degree  □ master’s degree  □ doctorate
   and you were major in:  □ linguistics  □ literature  □ language education  □ translation
   □ others, please specify __________________________
8. Have you received any teaching training?  □ pre-service  □ in-service  □ none  □ others, please specify ______________
9. Have you worked overseas before?  □ no  □ yes, please specify the country ________________________________
10. Have you received any education overseas (e.g. primary education, secondary education) before?  □ no  □ yes, please specify the country ________________________________ for how long? _______________________
11. When you were studying in secondary school in Hong Kong, what was the medium of instruction?  □ Chinese  □ English  □ some subjects in Chinese while some in English  □ Others, please specify __________________________  □ not applicable
12. When you were studying in Hong Kong, how often did your teachers use Cantonese in English classes?  
☐ always ☐ often ☐ sometimes ☐ seldom ☐ never ☐ not applicable  
13. How would you describe your students’ English language proficiency, on average?  
☐ excellent ☐ good ☐ fair ☐ bad ☐ very poor  
14. How would you describe your Chinese language proficiency?  
☐ excellent ☐ good ☐ fair ☐ bad ☐ very poor  
15. How would you describe your English language proficiency?  
☐ excellent ☐ good ☐ fair ☐ bad ☐ very poor  
16. How often do you use and/or have contact with English outside school (e.g. reading a novel, writing a memo, watching a movie, etc.)?  
☐ always ☐ often ☐ sometimes ☐ seldom ☐ never  
17. In general, what language(s) do you use in your daily communication outside school?  
☐ pure Cantonese ☐ pure English ☐ mixing Cantonese with English  
☐ sometimes Cantonese, sometimes English ☐ others, please specify _____________________________  
18. When you talk outside school (e.g. chatting with family members, talking to salespersons, etc.), how often do you mix Cantonese with English?  
☐ always ☐ often ☐ sometimes ☐ seldom ☐ never  

**Part B: Beliefs and Attitudes**  
Please read the following statements carefully and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with them. Put circle only ONE response to each statement to indicate your opinion: 1 = strongly disagree and 6 = strongly agree. There is no right or wrong answer, please respond according to what you believe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To me, it is best to only use English in English classes.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I use some Cantonese and some English in my English classes.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. It is best for my students to use English only during pair and group work.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My students use some Cantonese and some English during pair and group work.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My students should be exposed to as much English as possible in English classes.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. If I find that some of my students are lost, I will use Cantonese to repeat what I have taught in English before.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. It is more effective to use Cantonese to raise my students’ awareness of the similarities and differences between Chinese and English.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I use Cantonese to explain a language point when all the other teaching strategies in English fail to work for my students.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I will use Cantonese if I think my students may not fully understand the use of a new grammar point.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. It is useful for me to use Cantonese to draw my students’ attention to important English grammar points.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. I will use Cantonese if I think my students may not fully understand the meaning of a new word.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. My students learn a new word more effectively if they are given the English definition.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13. I use Cantonese to maintain discipline in my classes.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Using Cantonese in class helps me build up a good rapport with my students.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15. When I use Cantonese, my students speak more Cantonese accordingly.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Using Cantonese saves my time in explaining an abstract concept.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. My use of Cantonese reduces my students’ exposure to English.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. My students become more dependent on Cantonese when I use it to explain difficult concepts.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. My students will become more dependent on Cantonese if they are allowed to use it in pair and group work.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. My use of Cantonese can reduce my students’ anxiety about the content of the lesson.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21. When I use Cantonese, my students participate more actively.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. When I use a lot of Cantonese in English classes explaining vocabulary and grammar, my students’ English learning can be hindered.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Supplementing a little bit of Cantonese when teaching vocabulary and grammar can facilitate my students’ English learning.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. When my students use Cantonese to negotiate language-related issues (e.g. grammar and vocabulary) during pair and group work, their English learning can be hindered.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Feeling about using Cantonese

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25. When I use Cantonese in my English classes, I feel that I am weak and incompetent.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Using Cantonese in my English classes makes me feel guilty.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. When I use Cantonese, I feel content because I help my students achieve more learning targets than purely using English.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Using Cantonese fulfill my commitment to teaching and to my students.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Part C: Reflection on Experience**

Please read the questions carefully and respond to each question as fully and accurately as you can based on your own teaching experience with regard to using Cantonese in English language classrooms. The purpose of this section aims to look deeper at what happens in actual classrooms. **There is no right or wrong answer or positive or negative judgement** on the practice. If you feel more comfortable with answering questions 3, 4, 7 and 8 in Chinese, please feel free to do so. Please select ONE response for each choice-type question.

1. Have you ever used Cantonese in your English language classes? □ yes □ no

2. How often do you do so?
   - □ never (i.e. 0% of the class time)
   - □ 1% – 25% of the class time
   - □ 26% – 50% of the class time
   - □ 51% – 75% of the class time
   - □ 76% – 99% of the class time
   - □ 100% of the class time

3. Why do/don’t you use Cantonese in the English language classes?

   __________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

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4. How do you feel when you use Cantonese in your classes? *(if applicable)*

____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

5. Do your students use Cantonese in English classes?
☐ yes  ☐ no

6. How often do they do so?
☐ never (i.e. 0% of the class time)  ☐ 1% – 25% of the class time  ☐ 26% – 50% of the class time
☐ 51% – 75% of the class time  ☐ 76% – 99% of the class time  ☐ 100% of the class time

7. Do you think the use of Cantonese (from you and your students) would facilitate your students’ English language learning? If so, why so? If not, why not?
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

8. Do you know EDB has some guidelines and policies regarding the medium of instruction in English classes? If so, can you tell me what it is about?
☐ yes  ☐ no  ☐ not sure

____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

To engage deeper reflection, some teachers will be invited for follow-up classroom observations and interviews. Would you like to take part in the follow-up study?
☐ no, thank you  ☐ yes, my contact information is: ________________________________________________

Thank you very much for your participation.
Your comments and effort in completing this questionnaire are greatly appreciated.
Appendix B  Stimulated Recall and Semi-structured Interview

**Self introduction:**
Good morning/afternoon. I’m Patrick, a final-year undergraduate student studying English Language Education at the Faculty of Education, the University of Hong Kong. I am currently conducting a small-scale study on teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards the use of Cantonese in English language classes and their perceived effects of using Cantonese on students’ English learning. In my previous teaching practices, I’ve come across situations where I’ve struggled whether or not I should use Cantonese in my classes. So, in this study I want to understand what practicing teachers think and do and the value of using Cantonese in the actual classrooms.

Your input is very important and valuable for me to understand this issue. Please share as much and accurately as you can. There is no right or wrong answer, or positive or negative judgements associated with the use of Cantonese. Just like the questionnaire you’ve completed, all the information collected will be used for research purposes only. All the responses you give will be treated confidentially and anonymously; no personal identifying information will be disclosed. The interview will be audio-recorded and it will take you approximately 45 minutes to complete. Thank you.

| 1. | Verify some key findings from the survey |
| 2. | Why do / don’t you use Cantonese in the English lessons? Are there some factors influencing your language choice? How do you feel when you use Cantonese? |
| 3. | Does Cantonese play a role in your English classes? What role does it play in contexts like: |
|  | (i) vocabulary and grammar teaching? |
|  | (ii) classroom management (e.g. disciplining and giving instructions for tasks)? |
|  | (iii) rapport building? |
|  | (iv) giving feedback? |
|  | (v) others? |
| 4. | Do your personal beliefs about teaching English align with the guidelines set by the EDB? [EDB: both teachers and students should minimise and avoid the use of Cantonese in English classes]  
⇒ What about between your beliefs and your teaching context (e.g. students, policies at your school, school atmosphere and culture, class size)?  
⇒ What about between what you actually do in class and parents’ expectations?  
⇒ Then, why do you choose to use Cantonese in your classes? *(if applicable)* |
5. Do you feel you have some freedom to use Cantonese although
   (i) your beliefs contradict the EDB guidelines; and/or
   (ii) your beliefs do not align with the teaching context; and/or
   (iii) what you actually do in class goes against the parents’ expectations?

6. Do you think your use of Cantonese would facilitate or hinder your students’ English language learning? Why or why not?

7. Do you have any questions, comments and feedback?

   Thank you very much for your time and participation.
   Your comments and effort in completing this interview are greatly appreciated.