Student Uses of the First Language for L2 Classroom Interactions

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1. Introduction

In foreign language education today, the use of the first language (L1) is a highly debated topic. Entire pedagogies are designed to limit the amount of L1 use in the classroom and reach the goal of total immersion in the second language (L2) classroom. From much of the discussion, the perception is that the closer a teacher or class reaches 100% target language use, the better. In fact, the 2010 ACTFL position statement on the matter indicated that teachers should attempt to communicate in the L2 between 90 and 100 percent of the class. A 2013 survey study found that foreign language teachers had the goal to abide by these ACTFL standards or come close, but many failed to actually do so in their classrooms (Ceo-DiFransesco, 2013). At first glance, more L2 might seem better, however, this may not be the case. Recent work into L1 use in the L2 language learning classroom shows that the L1 supports and enhances specific functions, as well as the language learning process in general (see Dailey-O'Cain & Liebscher, 2015).

While much of the discussion on L1 use is focused on that of the teacher, students' behaviors with the L1 in the L2 classroom may provide important information about the learning process. Teachers and administrators may implement certain curricular changes that attempt to limit the use of the L1 in the classroom by both the teacher and the student, but what impact do these attempts to control the flow of in-class interactions have on students?

This debate between L1 and L2 usage is often vague due to the fact that the L1 and L2 are often presented in broad strokes, specifically how much time on task was in the L2 versus the L1. This measure of L1 versus L2 percentage does not allow for an interpretation of the functions and uses of each language. For example, is the L2 use by students in the classroom simply a choral response to a question or is it students speaking freely? The grammatical complexity, accuracy, and learning outcomes of these two uses of the L2 would be very different. Similarly, if the L1 is being used to discuss something irrelevant to the class versus being used to clarify the task at hand, or to negotiate the meaning of a teacher's utterance, the functions and outcomes from these two uses of the L1 would also be very different. And which should be preferred: students talking about something irrelevant to the current pedagogical focus in the L2, or something highly relevant to what the class is doing in the L1?

In order to answer this question, it is first necessary to establish the L1 as a psychological tool for learners to mediate their experiences in the L2 classroom (Dailey-O'Cain & Liebscher, 2015; Swain & Lapkin, 1998; 2000). As such, the role of the L1 for learners, especially beginning learners (Oguro, 2011), may play a significant role in their ability to navigate and understand the new semiotic environment in which they find themselves.

This article aims to contribute to the field's understanding of students' functional uses of the L1 in the foreign language classroom. Through an analysis of a learner-learner interactions, there are clear differences in the role that the L1 plays. Understanding students' uses of the L1 is the first step towards building a comprehensive pedagogy. Once identified, this paper will also discuss which uses of the L1 teachers could help students develop in their L2 and which we should foster as integral parts of the language learning process.

2. Literature Review

A number of studies have detailed outlines of the debate between educators and researchers on the role of the L1 in the L2 classroom (Cook, 2001; Dailey-O'Cain & Liebscher, 2015; de la Campa & Nassaji, 2009; Rell, 2005). While understanding the pedagogical purposes of the L1 is insightful, students make their own independent decisions about when and how to use their L1 in the L2 classroom.

Because student use of the L1 is the focus of this study, this review will be limited to those studies that report evidence of students' L1 use, rather than studies focused on pedagogy or teachers' perspectives.

To start, the impact that Firth and Wagner's 1997 article was fundamental to a changing perspective of L2 classroom interactions. As a forerunner in understanding language learning as social process, it indexed a turn towards a new way of understanding language interaction. Many studies had previously focused on errors in L2 interactions and viewed the learner as deficient. However, Firth and Wagner focused on understanding acquisition through interaction in a way that made the actual structure and flow of a conversation, even parts that occurred in the L1 or where code-switching occurred, as part of the learning process. In other words, learners are skilled communicators, who are simply learning a new symbolic system. Through a reanalysis of previous L2 classroom speech samples, they showed how the social dimensions of an interaction and learners' affordances in both first and second languages enable communication between language learners (pp. 293-296). This is significant to the current study because successful L2 communication between students is reliant on their ability to blend symbolic systems, be they linguistic or paralinguistic, as well as understand and manipulate the organization of conversations.

Building on the theoretical shift towards a theory of acquisition that is steeped in the interaction and usage itself as part and parcel of the learning process, Swain and Lapkin have conducted a number of studies which focused on interaction and L1 use in second language learning. For example, Swain and Lapkin (1998) studied interactional data from two eighth grade French immersion students during a task-based assignment. The authors found evidence from the interaction to support their claim that language use not only provided opportunities to learn the L2, but was also a mediating factor of the conversation as a whole (pp. 268-269). Put another way, language was not just the focus of learning, but also a cognitive tool for completing the task. Swain and Lapkin (2000) found this in follow up studies as well during task-based studies. When the L2 did not suffice for completion of the task, learners were forced to strategize and manipulate other tools at their disposal, which included their L1s.

In a similar vein but a different overall focus, Swain, Lapkin, Knouzi, Suzuki, and Brooks (2009) investigated what they call "languaging" or "a form of verbalization used to mediate the solution(s) to complex problems and tasks" in L2 interactions (p. 5). In this task, students were required to describe their understanding of voice in French and were supported with a familiar text and metalinguistic terms. While students' abilities for "languaging" in the L2 were limited, the use of the L1 allowed for a much deeper expression of students' understanding. Because of this, students were able to not only express, but gain more knowledge of the concept of voice in French, which would have been nearly impossible for the learners at their current level of language ability.

Another example of L1 usage in the L2 classroom that supports the idea of L1 usage as a mediating and supportive tool comes from Lehti-Eklund (2013). In this study, the author investigated the use of code-switching in the foreign language classroom as a tool reserved for interaction. The author analyzed the recording of a classroom interaction in a Finnish high school where Swedish was the target language. The analysis revealed a division of labor between the L1 and the L2, where the L1 was reserved for conversational upkeep and organization, while the L2 was reserved for "institutional" work, which I read as topic/content focused work. The author points to a significant role for the L1 as a device for language repair, which occurs when there is a breakdown in understanding between participants. The author also notes that the L2 was used for some instances of repair, but the majority was delegated to the L1 (p. 148).

Scott and de la Fuente (2008) also studied the use of the L1 for L2 learners during "consciousness-raising, form-focused tasks in the L2" (p. 103). The authors were investigating how students might use their first language during these interactions and what would happen if the students were restricted to the first language. They found that students often switched back to their L1, even when they were asked to conduct the entire exercise in the L2. This happened during translation of a text, remembering grammar rules, and planning communication with their partners (p. 109). From their findings, the authors concluded that exclusive use of the L2 may actually impede learning (p. 110).

This division of labor for the L1 and L2 raises the question about what the L1 should be used for. In these studies, the L1 had multiple functions, and in some cases, we would expect the L1 to be the appropriate mode of communication. For example, in the "languaging" study by Swain et al. (2009), the students are talking about a very detailed, difficult, and nuanced aspect of French grammar and they need the L1 to be able to develop their understand and express their ideas. However, in the Lehti-Eklund (2013) study, students are using the L1 to presumably clarify misunderstandings. Here the question is,

should this type of organizational activity be something we develop and expect our students to be able to do in the L2, or is it appropriate to let them continue in the L1?

One last aspect that is relevant for understanding the data collected in this study is humor in the second language classroom and the role it can play in students' understanding of that language. In a 2005 study, Čekaitė and Aronsson investigated the use of what they call the "ludic turn" in L2 studies (p. 170). In their study, they collected data from a Swedish school with an immersion classroom for immigrant and refugee children from Iraq, Lebanon, Thailand and Turkey (p. 175). They found that students used jokes to align and realign with each other during regular classroom interactions (p. 184). Besides performing a communicative function, the act of joking helps to align students with one another and reinforce a communal sense.

In sum, many of these studies touch on L1 use in the language classroom but do not compare each instance of L1 use in terms of its particular function within the same conversation. Therefore, these uses need to be understood as a network of possible L1 uses, rather than lumped together into a general category of L1 usage. This description can lead to a perception in which L1 usage is treated as a percent of classroom interactions, which we then see reflected in pedagogical policies. Without a finer-grain analysis of the L1's functions, we cannot understand what is supporting and detracting from learning in the L2 classroom.

3. The Study

This study focuses on L1 English learners of German and uses the CHAT and CLAN tools available through the CHILDES / TalkBank database (MacWhinney, 2007).
The specific research questions are as follows:

1. What different speech functions are present in student-student L2 interactions?
2. Which of these speech functions would one want learners to gradually transfer to the domain of the L2?
3. Which of these speech functions, if any, should be left to the domain of the L1?
4. What do these findings mean for educational guidelines and recommendations?

4. The Data

The data for this study was collected in an Elementary German 2 class at a private, mid-sized university. The four students recorded for this data set were learning German as a second language and in a second semester German course. Recordings and transcriptions of these interactions were created by Walter and Miller (2012) and are available through the TalkBank database (MacWhinney, 2007). The data used is the discussion between two student dyads who have been assigned a task to complete. In the task, the students are asked to compare the regions of Germany to the different regions they believe exist in the US. The interactions occur during a normal class period with their regular instructor and fellow students. In the task, the class is asked to answer a number of questions, including how they define each region, what famous cities or places exist in each region, what each place is known for, and what there is to do. The majority of the interactions occur between partners, but there is also some interaction with the teacher, as he checks in on student pairs.

5. Data Coding and Analysis

In this study, L1 utterances were, at first pass, identified, but functional categories were not predetermined. Only after a close reading of the transcripts were L1 uses assigned a functional category. One major distinction between this study and the de la Campa and Nassaji (2009) study is that their focus was on the use of L1 within specific turns. Instead of looking at individual turns and analyzing them independently, this study aims at a broader understanding of the interaction across and within time. For each of the functional categories, a tally of each instance was calculated by conversation and an overall count and percentage of L1 versus L2 turns was also conducted.

The following excerpts from the two student dyads show how the L1 is intertwined throughout the conversation but serves multiple functions. Numbering is marked by turn and the formatting is the same as the TalkBank transcription conventions. The conversations between Jack (*JCK) and Tom (*TOM), and Jill (*JIL) and Amy (*AMY) begin after the instructor has just given directions for the assignment.

The following sections delineate the functional categories discovered in the data set.

5.1. Total use of L1 to L2 by turn

Table 1
Total turns in the L1 and L2 by each partner dyad

	Dyad 1: Jack and Tom	Dyad 2: Jill and Amy
Turns in German only (L2)	165	239
Turns in English (L1) (or English and German)	40	71
Total turns	205	310
% turns with English	19.5%	22.9%

5.2. Placeholder while thinking

One of the first instances of English to appear during the conversation is the use of English while taking time to comprehend the instructions that were delivered in German.

Table 2
English placeholders by dyad

	Dyad 1: Jack and Tom	Dyad 2: Jill and Amy
English place-holders and exclamations (um, oh, so (English pronunciations) etc.)	28	15

In the excerpt below, Jack and Tom are beginning to grapple with the task at hand, which includes understanding larger chunks of German while trying to negotiate the task.

109 *JCK: so uh in Deutschland gibt es (.) vier Regionen
                    so uh in Germany there are four regions
110 *TOM: yeah
                    yeah
111 *JCK: uh in den USA uh gibt es let's see
                    uh in the US uh there are let's see

In line 109, Jack begins with *so uh*, which acts as a break before he turns to the questions about the regions in Germany. While *so* can be seen as German, the *so* is pronounced as an "s" rather than as a "z", as it would be in German, indicating that this is coming from his English repertoire, rather than an appropriation of a similar sounding and similarly functioning German word. *Uh* can also be viewed as an L1 expression, as Germans use *äh* to express the same meaning. Tom's reply in line 110 in English indicates his agreement with Jack's statement in line 109. Jack then continues to read through content of the assignment in German, but while trying to formulate an answer to the question about the region in the US needs time to think of his answer. For Jack, *let's see* in line 111 provides time for him to hold his place in the conversation while he tries to formulate an answer.

The use of the L1 as a placeholder while thinking is also visible in the interaction between Amy and Jill:

123 *JIL: uhh
uhh
124 *JIL: klar
clear
125 *JIL: uhh deu↗tschland uhh
uhh Ger↗many uhh

The fact that English is playing the role of conversational placeholder during times in which participants are trying to either understand or formulate thoughts in a second language reflects the cognitive load that second language processing and production places on speakers and listeners. The first-language use here allows students to manage the conversation and indicate that they require additional time to understand or respond to questions, and the initial response for these two speakers is an almost implicit response in the first language.

5.3. Culturally specific terms

The next use of the first language occurs in the students' discussion focusing on the content of the task at hand. While areas of Germany have been introduced in German, the students' conceptions of the United States are not simplified into north, south, east, and west, and therefore the first language terms used by the students have culturally defined boundaries that are neither neatly tied within the terminology the students know for Germany nor do they lend themselves to translation.

Table 3
English placeholders by dyad

	Dyad 1: Jack and Tom	Dyad 2: Jill and Amy
Culturally specific terms	6	8

112 *TOM: New England
New England
113 *JCK: uh Midwest
uh Midwest
114 *TOM: Midwest
Midwest
115 *JCK: uh So[uth]
uh South
116 *TOM: [South]
South
117 *JCK: Middle America
Middle America
118 *TOM: West
West
119 *JCK: yea
yea
120 *TOM: West Coast
West Coast
121 *JCK: yea sechs
yea
122 sechs Regionen
six regions
123 um welches welche Bundeslaender Staaten gibt es
um which states are there

In the previous excerpt, the students are first confronted with the term *New England*. While it would be possible for the students to translate this term into "Neu England" or some other hybrid

English/German term, the region is named in the students' first language by Tom without rebuttal or question from Jack. This tactic seems to lead to the following six regions defined by the students being named in English as well, although the students know the words for *South* and other regions which they might be able to name in German. For these students, it seems that English is the assigned language for regions in the US.

The point to highlight from this excerpt is that, while the students use English to name the US regions, they switch back to German as soon as they finish; even summarizing the number of regions in German, rather than continuing in English. After the culturally specific first language terms have been used, German is used again to summarize their list and move on to the next stage of the task.

5.4. Clarification of instructions

As a third function of English, the students use their first language to clarify the task instructions.

Table 4
Task clarification in the L1 by dyad

	Dyad 1: Jack and Tom	Dyad 2: Jill and Amy
Task clarification turns in L1	8	5

In excerpt 3 below, the students are beginning the section of the assignment in which they are asked to list which states are found within each region of Germany and the US. They are having issues understanding what exactly is being asked for and switch to English to clarify the situation before they move on, although ample code-switching is found as they transfer between the German questions and their negotiation of the instructions.

123 *JCK: um welches welche Bundeslaender Staaten gibt es
                      um which states are there
124 *TOM: gibt es
                      are there
125   in diesem
                      in this
126 *XXX: shh
                      shh
127 *JCK: ahm
                      ahm
128 *TOM: is that asking which region we are in↗
                      is that asking which region we are in?
129   I know
                      I know
130 *JCK: which Reg[ion   is in] this region↗
                      which region is in this region?
131 *TOM: [yeah Bundeslaender]
                      yea state
132 *JCK: so I think we have to choose a region
                      so I think we have to choose a region
133 *TOM: yeah our region is the south
                      yeah our region is the south
134 *JCK: alright so in diesen Region
                      alright so in this region
135 *TOM: Bu Bundesland is count sta[te st]ate
                      Bu Bundesland is count state state
136 *JCK: [state]
                               state

137 *TOM:	uh (..) in (..) Ostdeutschland
	uh in East Germany
138	uh gibt es Berlin, Brandenburg, Sachsen, Thüringen, Sachsen-Anhalt
	uh there is Berlin, Brandenburg, Sachsen, Thuringen, Sachsen-Anhalt

In line 128, Tom breaks from reading the German question to ask for a clarification of the instructions and to ask Jack whether his translation of the question is correct. Jack also translates his understanding of the questions but comes up with *which region is in this region*, because they are falsely understanding *Bundesland* ("state") as "region". In lines 132-133, Jack and Tom recognize that they both agree that they need to select a region and so plan that part of the assignment before they return to understanding exactly what the question is asking for. After this clarification, Jack switches back to German in line 134, and Tom continues until he realizes that they are supposed to be looking for states, which he clarifies with his partner in line 135. As soon as both partners are satisfied that they each understand the task at hand and are on the same page, they switch back to German in line 136 to answer the question and continue on in German through the completion of the question.

5.5. Definitions/translation of unfamiliar vocabulary

Another common use of the L1 is translation. Students use their first language to help one another with new or difficult vocabulary from the L2. This translation is especially common in early language learning because further explanation in German may be above their current linguistic abilities and thus translations between languages becomes necessary to complete the task effectively.

Table 5
Definitions or translations in the L1 by dyad

	Dyad 1: Jack and Tom	Dyad 2: Jill and Amy
L1 definitions or translations	4	5

In the following example, Jack and Tom are discussing the question of which cities are significant in particular areas of Germany, in their opinion, and in this situation, Jack and Tom encounter words that one of them does not know:

154		ich weiss nicht was ist wichtig
		I don't know what is wichtig?
155	*TOM:	important
		important
156	*JCK:	oh yeah
		oh yeah
157		wichtig yeah in diesen Region
		important yeah in this region
158		um
		um
159		wofuer sind diese Regionen beruehmt
		what are these regions famous for
160		Region ist beruehmt fuer
		region is famous for
161	*TOM:	was ist beruehmt↗
		what is beruehmt?
162	*JCK:	famous
		famous
163	*TOM:	famous
		famous

In lines 145-153, it appears that Jack and Tom are on the same page, both naming cities that are important, until line 154, in which Jack asks Tom, in German, what the word *wichtig* means. It is clear then that up until this point, Tom was listing cities he thought were important, while Jack was just listing cities in that region. Jack's quick response of *oh yeah* indicates he was familiar with the word, but could not recall it without support from his peer. In the following line, line 155, Jack repeats the word in the context of the assignment, which could be a sign that he is reassuring himself of the meaning in the word and checking that he understands exactly what the question is asking for.

In the next few lines, we see a similar scenario, although this time the roles are switched. Jack reads from the prompt in line 159 and rephrases the question from the task into a sentence in 160 in preparation to discuss this question with his partner. From the lack of hesitation, it is likely that Jack understands the question this time, which is evident in the following lines, in which Tom then asks immediately, without moving forward in the discussion, for a translation of the word *beruehmt*. Jack replies in line 162 with a one word translation, *famous*, which is then repeated in English by Tom, before they continue on to answer the question in German.

The discussion between Amy and Jill reveals a similar function:

145	*AMY:	⌊was ist bundesländer
		what is bundesländer
146	*JIL:	bundesländer is like ⌊the⌋
		bundesländer is like the
147	*AMY:	⌊gehört⌋
		belong
148	*JIL:	the count- the in the straight like federal basically
149	*AMY:	oh ok
150	*JIL:	yeah
151	*AMY:	ok yeah
152	*JIL:	(6.0) so the states and the cities I guess
153	*JIL:	I think it's more like the states

In this interaction, we can also see the need for the interlocutors to take time to define terms that are causes of confusion and disruptors towards the task goals. While at some point, we might expect language learners to develop their skills of circumlocution, is this realistic for a second semester language course? In this instance, the L1 can add a layer of depth that seems important for communication but is not yet available linguistically to the learners. At what level would we try to change this behavior to the L2?

5.6. Code-switching for fluency in speech/ integration of L1 and L2 syntax

One of the major hurdles for discussions in a second language classroom is the immense prep time it can take students to be ready to say a complete utterance in their L2.

Table 6
Turns with in-utterance code-switching by dyad

	Dyad 1: Jack and Tom	Dyad 2: Jill and Amy
Code-switching turns	6	5

In a quick-moving task with multiple objectives and a dynamic partner, there is no time for extensive planning for what you would like to say, let alone time to plan for what your partner might say in response. For the students, it is more central to complete the task than to take more time to plan their statements and responses. Thus, when push comes to shove, students may select the L1 to increase fluency and help move the discussion along if they fail to find the right words quickly in the L2. The following section shows how German fragments and chunks are nestled in between English phrases that help move the students towards the goals of the task.

168   um wasn't East beruehmt fuer die Berlin Wall↗
um wasn't East famous for the Berlin wall?

In line 168, Jack has the chunk *beruehmt fuer die* stored and ready, likely because of its appearance in the task document. But he isn't sure how to get across his uncertainty in German, and therefore opts for a question with the term *wasn't*, which does not translate easily as a contraction in German. Because of the lack of a single word and the different syntactic structures between German and English, Jack simply embeds the phrase he knows in German into an English phrase he knows will get his uncertainty across to his partner. In addition, while he knows the word *die* for "the" in German and that *Berlin* is the same in both languages, he cannot immediately recall the word for "wall" so simply inserts the L1 vocabulary in its place.

Similarly, Jill makes a similar statement:

158   *JIL: so in USA then in northeast gibt es uhm
so in USA then in northeast there is uhm

In line 158 of the Jill and Amy discussion, there has been significant usage of the *gibt es* (there is) structure, so it is also likely readily available for Jill. However, the newer information of "in the northeast" is new to the structure, and is likely not as readily available.

This back and forth between languages may, at first, seem tedious, but in actuality it makes the conversation flow much faster than it could in German, while not being conducted fully in English. Therefore, it may be the optimal choice for these students as a compromise between speed in completing the task and practice using German.

5.7. To integrate humor

One often overlooked function that the first language can play is for humor and building rapport between group members. Because language classes are very interactive, they provide an opportunity for students to build bonds as classmates. These opportunities are not always afforded in a university, especially in large seminars or lecture-style classes. The foreign language classroom, on the other hand, frequently promotes student interactions, and while as educators we hope they are trying to stay in the foreign language, some messages are too difficult at different levels, and as humor requires a significant amount of interpretation and the right wording to make it work, the first language is readily available to serve this need.

Table 7
Turns incorporating humor in the L1 by dyad

	Dyad 1: Jack and Tom	Dyad 2: Jill and Amy
L1 turns incorporating humor	2	1

The following segment shows a humorous interaction that is almost fully completed in the L2, but for the sake of comic timing, the student codeswitches at the very end to make the joke smooth and fulfill the purpose of making his peer laugh.

233   *TOM: ich habe viel Geld
I have a lot of money
234   *JCK: yeah
yeah
235   *TOM: bevor Las Vegas
before Las Vegas
236   *JCK: ja
ja
237   *TOM: und ich habe kein Geld after
and I have no money after

| 238 | *JCK: | haha |
| | | *Haha* |

Up to and including line 237, Tom is almost successful at telling the joke in the second language, but at the last second, he cannot remember the word for *after,* or at least is having trouble integrating the word into the L2 syntax. In this case, to say *after*, he would have to use the *da*-compound *danach*, but he may only know the word *nach* ("after"), which is a preposition, not a time adverbial. With the importance of the interaction on the joke itself, rather than getting the language correct, Tom switches seamlessly back to English to finish the joke with the correct comedic timing.

5.8. To express a contrary or emotional opinion

Table 8
Contrary or emotional opinions in the L1 by dyad

	Dyad 1: Jack and Tom	Dyad 2: Jill and Amy
L1 turns with contrary or emotional response	0	5

In the following excerpt, Jill and Amy are discussing whether Pittsburgh should be considered a major city:

334	*JIL:	Pittsburgh↗
335	*JIL:	nooo˙H
336	*AMY:	I consider it Midwest
337	*JIL:	no yeah but it's not like an important city
338	*AMY:	oh yeah that's true
339	*JIL:	like a
340	*AMY:	it's pretty im
341	*JIL:	I don't know
342	*JIL:	[ok]
343	*AMY:	[I] think it's important

While Jill attempts to downplay the role of the city in this geographic region, Amy is of a different opinion. In the previous lines, Amy and Jill's discussion of the different cities has been in German. However, upon this point of disagreement, Amy wants to assert her disagreement that Pittsburgh is not important enough to be considered for further discussion.

5.9. To indicate the start or end of an interaction in the L2

The final way these students use English is to signal the start and end of the interaction.

Table 9
Turns in the L1 indicating start or end of an interaction by dyad

	Dyad 1: Jack and Tom	Dyad 2: Jill and Amy
Turns indicating start or end of an interaction	4	2

Initially, Tom and Jack open their discussion as follows:

57	*JCK:	So we have to work together↗
58	*TOM:	we working back here↗
59	*JCK:	yea I'll come back there
60	*TOM:	okay

At the end, they use the L1 to indicate that they have, to their knowledge, finished the task at hand. In a similar way to the conversational maintenance discussed previously, the students view language use outside of the task parameters as something distinct from language being used to complete the task itself. The following section shows that when the task is finished, they naturally switch back to their first language, indicating that they believe they have completed the task and are now outside its bounds.

257	*TOM:	ja
		yes
258	*JCK:	heh
		heh
259	*TOM:	I don't know what else to say
		I don't know what else to say

The phrase in line 259 is a clear signal to Jack that Tom believes the task to be over. This is not only because of its meaning, but I believe it is also complemented by the use of the first language. In these instances, the L1 appears to bookend the task.

6. Discussion

The first research question asked which different functions are present within the same speech sample. First, it can serve as a placeholder or create conversational footing for a second language speaker. This positioning allows the speaker to maintain the floor while providing additional time for the speaker to properly construct their upcoming L2 utterance. This first language response requires less focused attention than the same act would in the second language, and since the students are currently focusing their attention on understanding the content and thinking of answers, it seems that the first language produces a more cohesive conversational move, as it is immediate and requires little conscious attention compared to the other tasks the students are undertaking. Making time to prepare for a second language utterance by utilizing his or her L1 frees up working memory. Because the L1 expression is produced implicitly, the speaker can use up working and declarative memory to construct the L2 utterance. If the speaker were to use a L2 utterance to perform the same function, he or she may not be capable of maintaining the required attention to construct the L2 utterance that is actually going to be used to convey relevant meaning to the task at hand. One additional point to think about is whether we even teach students how to sound German when they are trying to perform this type of activity. For example, are students ever explicitly instructed on how to use phrases such as *Auf jeden Fall* (in any case) or even *äh* or *öh*¸ the German equivalents of "um…" or "uh…"

Next, culturally specific terms are used to convey specific meanings that may not translate into a foreign language. If a speaker were to translate a culturally specific term, he or she would require a perfect translation from his or her interlocutor. If the interlocutor is able to distinguish a general meaning, but not the exact one from which it was translated, then the significance of the utterance is lost and the two speakers will not be successful in working towards their goal of making shared and relevant meaning. This may also be the case for asking for direct translations. These translations will carry the relevant cultural information that is needed by the listener to fully understand the speaker's intent. In both cases, the L1 can play a significant role in aligning interlocutors.

The data shows a difference between talk about the task and talk within the task. There are two places in which this emerges. First, when students are talking about each of the speakers in this dyad, they wanted to make sure they were working towards the same goal. Because of the collaborative nature of this task, the students wanted to confirm the goal to which they were jointly working. The speakers switched back to their dominant language to be sure that they were on the same page. Once this is confirmed, the speakers switch back to the target language. This is one of the first signs that the speakers see the language speaking task as something distinct from the set-up of the task. This is the case for teacher interactions, clarification questions, and signaling the end of the L2 interaction as well. Within the task and working toward the goal, the target language is the means of communication, but when the students are talking about the task, rather than within or as part of the task, their first language intervenes. This appearance of the students' first language exemplifies their lack of confidence in their L2 skills and

may provide further evidence that the L1 is in this situation being used as a crutch to support a perceived lack of L2 ability.

In addition to setting up the task, the learners also signal the beginning and end of the task. This provides some evidence that the learners are associating the task with the use of the L2, but the frame around the task as something different. Completing the task itself is a job for the L2, but mediating its structure falls outside of the realm of the L2 and into a space where the L1 dominates.

Two more aspects to discuss are humor and code-switching for fluency. Both of these tasks require special skills to perform effectively. Humor requires timing, an understanding of the relevant linguistic knowledge, situational awareness and nuance that a learner might lack in an L2. Code-switching, on the other hand, requires extensive knowledge of both L1 and L2 syntax, morphology, and prosody. Both of these skills require extensive training to master, and as I will argue below, there may be no need to get rid of these behaviors at all.

Finally, engaging with contrary or emotional opinions was also seen as a point at which learners diverged from the L2 in favor of the L1. This might be caused by the need for an individual to fully express him or herself as clearly as possible, and because of the clarity and nuance of such a message is important for its interpretation, learners may not feel adequately equipped in the L2 for such a complex task.

From a second language pedagogy perspective, it may initially seem detrimental for students to be relying on their first language so much during a second language interaction. However, we can see from the various functions being displayed by the L1, that it is actually forming a support structure for the interaction and completion of the task. For early language learners, such as the two students in this study, there is a distinct need to continue the verbal operations that support normal communicative interaction, while putting forth as much content as possible in the L2. As Brooks and Donato (1994) point out, "L1 use is a normal psycholinguistic process that facilitates L2 production and allows the learners both to initiate and sustain verbal interaction with one another" (p. 268). Without this facilitative process of the L1, the production of more complex phrases would likely have been diminished. In addition, the students would likely have relied on smaller chunks of the L2 and often been left unsure whether the other person was fully aligned with them. This lack of alignment would make it much more difficult to succeed at the task at hand.

The next research question focused on which of these behaviors would one want to see transferred to the L2. While initial L1 functions in L2 interactions seem to be a necessary part of L2 communicative development, we must work toward the goal of gradually transferring these functions to the L2 if learners are expected to continue developing their L2 abilities and knowledge. So the question remaining is when and how to do this. A path forward would be to distinguish which speech acts would require more and less effort and L2 knowledge to complete. Simpler speech acts would be primary candidates for this first phase of shift towards the L2. From the list of functions above, these would be speech acts that are used to ask questions about or maintain the task, such as asking clarification questions and placeholders during pauses. Because these functions revolve around the maintenance of speech, they can be reused in future conversations. They can also be produced relatively easily if students learn them as chunks of language.

Next, translation of words from the L2 to the L1 would be a good candidate, although it is harder than expected. Asking another student what a word is can be simple, but having the necessary skills and linguistic knowledge to be able to circumlocute an appropriate and understandable answer poses a daunting challenge. With this in mind, learners would need to receive special training and practice for this type of strategy, which could take substantial time to develop. As the circumlocution itself encompasses all the diverse vocabulary of a new topic as well, this is a steep challenge for beginning language learners and simple 1-word translations or L1 definitions may be more effective until later in the developmental process.

The second research question asked which functions, if any, should be left to the domain of the L1. First, humor has been shown to decrease students' stress in the foreign language classroom (Askildson, 2005; Leslie, 2015). As Rassaei (2015) showed in a study of students' successful uptake of recasts, students who reported higher anxiety levels were less likely to attend to the changed linguistic input. And while there is a lot to be said about the development of humor in a second language, the foreign language classroom environment may not be the most authentic place to build up this skill.

In addition to humor, it is not clear whether we want students to stop code-switching. Yes, we would like students to develop the ability to say anything they would like or need to say in the second language,

but code-switching is a normal part of bilingual behavior; especially when the interlocutor is also bilingual in the same languages (Beebe, 1977). If this type of behavior is considered normal in other multilingual populations, it is plausible to argue for the development of this skill alongside the L2.

And as a last function that might not need to be transferred to the L2 is the use of L1 terms for culturally specific vocabulary. In many ways, the exact meaning of what we say is distorted by its transfer into another language. While there may be a direct, accurate translation of a word, the cultural significance of it might get lost on the listener if it appears in an L2 form rather than its original L1 form. The adaptation of borrowed terms is a common practice and helps retain culturally specific meaning from the original form in a more transparent way than translation (Haugen, 1950).

Before concluding this section on which language activities might be left to the domain of the L1, I would like to clarify two things. First, I am not, in any way, suggesting that teachers should avoid discussions about humor, code-switching, or translation of culturally specific terminology. These are rich topics of discussion that can lead to a deeper understanding of a student's own usage. And second, the use of the L1 should be the result of a choice by the learner between the L1 and L2 options. If the L1 is being used as a way to avoid a difficult or unfamiliar L2 structure or vocabulary item, then it is not really a choice. In order for language learners to be able to make their own decisions about how they want to be perceived, they must be capable of choosing which language to use when, even if this decision is made subconsciously, as can be seen in the case of code-switching.

The final research question asked what these findings mean for educational guidelines and recommendations. In overview, the data and previous studies reviewed here suggest that there is a place for the L1 in the L2 classroom. Because of the varied functions that the L1 plays for L2 learners, it is unjust to remove this valuable tool of communication, especially in light of the supportive role it can play for L2 acquisition. Arguments in favor of a completely immersive L2 environment would lack the richness that comes along with an already mature linguistic system. This is in line with Scott and de la Fuenta's (2008) conclusion from their study of L1 use in the L2 classroom during consciousness-raising tasks:

> As stated at the outset, we do not endorse random use of the LI in the FL classroom. Quite the contrary, we are proponents of nearly exclusive use of the L2 for communicative interactions. Furthermore, we agree with a growing body of research that recommends the use of consciousness raising tasks in the L2 classroom. When we engage students in this type of reflective inquiry about grammar structures, however, banning the L1 may impede the learners' ultimate success. If students are discouraged from using the LI for quiet reflection and are not given the opportunity to verbalize intrapersonal L1 speech, they may not benefit from natural and spontaneous cognitive processes that support L2 learning. (p. 110)

This analysis also shows that a finer-grained understanding of L1 functions helps distinguish L1 speech acts. It also provides guidelines for which functions can be gradually ceded to the L2 and which can remain as a part of the learner's linguistic repertoire. For educational guidelines regarding student behaviors, then, it is necessary to keep two things in mind. One, that the use of the L1 is a normal behavior for multilingual speakers. And two, that learners will likely require scaffolded, intentional instruction to acquire L2 appropriate structures for organizing and managing interactions.

Transition to desired L2 forms requires thus both a reflective act on the part of the learner, as well as modelling of the desired speech acts by instructors. As a first step, students could be introduced to chunks that are relevant to the speech acts being investigated. Scaffolding should occur by length and complexity. Asking a student to complete a task that requires five minutes of time on task might be too much for an initial attempt, especially if the students are new to using the L2 to structure and manage the flow of the conversation. Finally, corpora could be used to investigate how target-language speakers manage conversations.

This policy raises an important question about task-based instruction. From the data presented here, students perceived a rift between the language of content and that of discourse management. Learners must view both the content and structure of discourse as learning objectives, and a strictly task-based curriculum might reinforce the divide between language for content and discourse.

7. Conclusion

Through an open analysis that looked at L1 usage over the course of a dialogue, there is clear evidence pointing towards L1 usage as dynamic, variable, and multi-functional. Put simply, the L1 plays a mediating and L2 development promoting role in the L2 classroom, to the extent it girders functions limited in the L2. The challenge moving forward is scaffolding and providing templates for learners to transition certain and eventually all L1 functions to the L2, or at least display the ability to do so.

In addition, a growing field of literature on a multilingual view of language competency and interaction (see Ortega, 2014) calls for a more authentic approach to education including the ways in which real multilingual speakers make choices about the languages they use. The monolingual native-speaker is not just an unrealistic goal from this viewpoint, but an impossibility, because the language and culture that L2 learners bring to the table from the L1 and their culture(s) make it a pointless argument. The results of this paper add to the debate that L1 use in interactions are complicated, but not necessarily wrong or something to be disregarded. To the contrary, the L1, when selected as a choice, allows for greater creativity and identity creation. This also leads to opportunities to investigate why students selected an L1 expression over an L2 in a given context and opportunities for learners to be reflective about their use of the L1 in the L2 classroom.

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214

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