Investigation into Norwegian Teachers' Perspectives on the Use of Students' Mother Tongue in the EFL Classroom

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Abstract (English)

This paper reports the results of a questionnaire-based study that examined Norwegian EFL teachers' views on the use of students' mother tongue (MT) in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). It focuses on the teachers' attitudes towards the use of MT and their aspirations to create an English-only or a bilingual environment in the EFL classroom. Twenty-four in-service EFL teachers enrolled in an EFL endorsement course at a university in Mid-Norway completed the questionnaire. The responses suggest that while the majority of the participating teachers used Norwegian when teaching English, they also would like to minimize their reliance on students' MT and increase the use of the target language. Future research directions and baseline implications for language teacher education are discussed.

Key words: mother tongue, second language, EFL teachers, Norway

Abstract (Norwegian)

Denne artikkelen rapporterer resultatene av en spørreundersøkelse som var en del av en studie som undersøkte norske EFL læreres syn på bruk av elevens morsmål (MT) i undervisning av engelsk som fremmedspråk (EFL). Studien fokuserer på lærernes holdninger til bruk av MT og egne

Navigation

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ambisjoner om å skape et ett- eller tospråklig miljø i EFL klasserommet. Tjuefire EFL lærere som deltok på et EFL kurs ved et universitet i Midt-Norge besvarte spørreskjemaet. Svarene tyder på at mens flertallet av de deltakende lærerne bruker norsk i engelskundervisningen, ønsker de også å redusere egen avhengighet av elevens MT og øke bruken av engelsk. Retninger for fremtidig forskning og grunnleggende implikasjoner for språklærerutdanningen blir diskutert.

Stikkord: morsmål, andre språk, engelsk lærere, Norge

1 Introduction

The standard practice in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms in which teachers have the same mother tongue (MT) as their students is to switch between the use of the MT and the target language (TL) (Macaro 2005). For the majority of EFL teachers in these settings, however, the alternation between the two languages often engenders an exceedingly difficult decision as to when they should use the MT. The choice is often difficult because of the negative connotations associated with the integration of the MT in the EFL classroom. Despite a considerable number of studies underlining that language teaching practices that integrate MT deepen students' understanding of the target language, the general consensus in EFL environments is that MT use has a negative impact on the lesson and the development of students' fluency in the TL (Butzkamm 2003, Hall & Cook 2012, Macaro 2001, Rodriguez-Juarez & Oxbrow 2008). The idea that an English-only approach enhances students' learning still permeates the EFL teaching milieu, as evinced by the curriculum guidelines of many countries (Hall & Cook 2012, McMillan & Rivers 2011, Sampson 2012). Consequently, teachers are often instructed to adhere to an English-only approach prescribed by official policies (Kumaravadivelu 2003, Macaro 2001, Phillipson 2009), as it is still frequently perceived to be the "best practice" (McMillan & Rivers 2011: 252).

The Norwegian curriculum for English (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2013) does not include any explicit statements prompting teachers to use the TL as the exclusive or principal medium of instruction in their lessons. In fact, there is no guidance regarding the quantity of TL that should be used. An implicit reference can be found in the introductory section of the curriculum, where it is highlighted that the goal of the course is to "build up general language proficiency through listening, speaking, reading and writing, and provide the opportunity to acquire information and specialized knowledge through the English language" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2013: 2). Yet, the English subject curriculum also emphasizes that students should be able to draw on their MT in the process of mastering the TL. For example, the curriculum specifies that by the time learners finish the fourth grade, they are expected to be able to "find similarities between words and expressions in English and his/her own native language" (ibid.: 3). By the end of the tenth grade, they should be able to "identify important linguistic similarities and differences between English and the native language and use this knowledge in his or her own language learning" (ibid.: 5).

The belief that an English-only approach is best in classroom settings in which English is the TL still permeates studies exploring teachers' perceptions of the use of MT in the EFL (Al-Shidhani 2009, Crawford 2004, Ford 2009, McMillan & Rivers 2011, Wang & Kirkpatrick 2012). However, few studies to date have documented the perceptions of teachers in environments where the curriculum for English does not directly prescribe English as the sole language of instruction. Considering the lack of clear teaching guidelines and expectations regarding MT use, the rationale behind the present study is to investigate the perceptions of Norwegian EFL teachers regarding their MT use when teaching English.

2 Literature Review

2.1 The Origins of the English-only Approach

Germany

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The use of the MT is at the core of a heated debate on the development of students' TL accuracy and fluency in the foreign language (FL) classroom. The portrayal of MT use in the EFL classroom as a bad teaching practice finds its origin in the Grammar-Translation Method and the establishment of Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis (Hall & Cook 2012). The Grammar-Translation Method prescribed the instruction of grammar rules and their application through students' translating sentences from their MT into the TL. Its active and systematic use of students' MT sharply contrasts with Krashen's (1985) assumption that second language acquisition (SLA) parallels first language acquisition, and his belief that greater exposure to the TL ensures more successful acquisition. This assumption presupposes the creation of an environment that makes extensive use of the TL. Therefore, it is often believed that an over-reliance on the MT negatively affects TL proficiency due to the resultant limitation of TL input. The primary purpose of new teaching practices, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the Direct Method, which have been proposed as alternatives to the Grammar-Translation Method, is to enable teachers to express and transfer messages in the TL. As a result, the use of MT is often prohibited or reduced to practical aspects of the classroom. Subsequently, the penchant towards the exclusive use of the TL entered the National Curriculum for FL lessons in a substantial number of countries, including England (ACCAC 2000, DfE/WO 1995, DfEE/QCA 1999, The Curriculum Development Council 2004), Wales (ACCAC 2000), and Hong Kong (The Curriculum Development Council 2004).

Throughout the 21st century, the supporters of MT use have underlined its beneficial effects, while its adversaries have stressed the negative impact it could inflict on TL acquisition (Antón & DiCamilla 1999, Brooks-Lewis 2009, Butzkamm 2003, Cook 2001, Hall & Cook 2012, Paradowski 2007, Rodriguez-Juarez & Oxbrow 2008, Schweers 1999). Irrefutably, Schultz et al. (2002) stated this conflict between the two approaches clearly illustrates the complexity of the MT issue, while Cook claimed that the conflict and the complexity are "part and parcel of…[the] tradition[s]" that "are taken for granted as the foundation of the language teaching" (Cook 2001: 404).

2.2 Advantages of MT Use

The rise in popularity of the all-English approach has culminated in EFL teachers' negatively evaluating MT integration in their lessons. Arva & Medgyes (2000: 362), however, underlined that teachers often neglect how this "defect" can be turned to an asset. Recent research studies emphasise the advantages that may derive from the integration of the MT in the EFL classroom, as it can not only improve the learning process but also make advances on current teaching approaches. It has been argued that in monolingual settings, students' MT is permanently present in their minds, and teachers can take advantage of this presence by turning it into a classroom benefit (Mattioli 2004, Meiring & Norman 2002).

Teachers who have the same MT as their students share similar language codes with them, which could assist them in raising awareness of similarities between MT and TL and in preventing potential negative transfer issues. Using their knowledge of the MT and the TL, teachers can help students to pinpoint areas that could incrementally prove to be problematic in facilitating new learning, such as false friends and grammatical points in the TL which may appear similar, yet are distinctively different from the ones in their MT. Schultz et al. (2002) also stressed that a presentation of language points using the TL without any references to the MT can raise ambiguities amongst students.

Similarly, Stern argued that a lesson in a monolingual setting cannot be conducted in its entirety in the TL. This is because "whether we like it or not, the new language is learned on the basis of a previous language" (Stern 1992: 282). Therefore, a great advantage of the integration of the MT in the classroom is the teacher's ability to establish links between the MT and the TL (Lin & Wu 2015, Macaro 2000, Meiring & Norman 2002, Tarnopolsky 2000) through approaches such as "consciousness-raising" (Tarnopolsky 2000: 33). Furthermore, MT use is justified when establishing connections between the MT and the TL, which is believed to convert TL input into better known terms, thus lowering the affective filter and

boosting students' confidence (Macaro 2000). This practice enables students to deal with the TL at a higher level, which is not possible in an all-TL classroom (Storch & Wigglesworth 2003). De-compartmentalizing the two languages, as Cook argued, leads to failure as "the compartments are connected in many ways" (Cook 2001: 407).

Furthermore, the application of the MT in the classroom seems to have a positive impact on struggling learners. Orland-Barak & Yinon's (2005) study highlighted the pivotal role that the MT can play when working with weak students. What seems to transpire from studies in settings that make use of the MT is the enhancement of students' motivation. Students who display traces of motivation "are usually those who participate actively in class, express interest in the subject matter, and study a great deal" (Lightbown & Spada, 2006: 64). The MT has been identified as an agent that positively affects EFL students' motivation.

Finally, the use of the MT in the classroom is also considered to assist in establishing a good teacher-student relationship. The teacher-participants in Orland-Barak & Yinon's (2005) study saw the MT as a means of building links with their students but also of maintaining classroom discipline. This can be attributed to the fact that its use reduces anxiety and enables the creation of a student-centered classroom. These findings are in line with the results of a study conducted by Lindholm-Leary (2001), which revealed that MT integration strengthened the children's self-assurance and enthusiasm for learning the TL.

2.3 Disadvantages of MT Use

Despite the advantages of MT use underlined in the literature, such practices were, and in some cases still are, in stark contrast with what is believed to portray the ideal learning environment. As even recent research seems to suggest, teachers' depiction of the ideal classroom corresponds to a setting that makes little to no use of the MT (Copland & Neokleous 2011, Imran & Wyatt 2015, Levine 2003).

Consequently, as Prodromou (2002) succinctly summarized, despite the fact that these beliefs are based on unwarranted and non-empirical conclusions, teachers associate MT use in the classrooms with concepts such as a "skeleton in the cupboard" (Prodromou 2002: 6), but also "a taboo subject, a source of embarrassment" (ibid.).

The main argument that teacher-participants put forward in studies exploring their attitudes towards reliance on the students' MT in the classroom is potential overdependence on the MT (Copland & Neokleous 2011, Orland-Barak & Yinon 2005, Turnbull 2001). Over-reliance on MT use is believed to greatly impede TL learning development as it limits opportunities for students to practice and interact with each other in the TL. Hitotuzi (2006) favours the use of the TL from the early learning stages to prevent cases of MT overdependence, which are assumed to be detrimental to the mastering of the TL. Maximizing TL usage in the classroom and treating the two languages as two distinct systems has also been postulated as a method to eradicate cases of MT interference, which is often believed to negatively affect TL acquisition (Hitotuzi 2006). Interference occurs when

> an item or structure in the second language manifests some degree of difference from, or some degree of similarity with the equivalent item or structure in the learner's first language. (Jackson 1981: 101)

Halasa & Al-Manaseer's (2012) study revealed that most errors committed by EFL learners in the TL were induced by MT interference. As Ross' (2000) study suggested, the nature of these errors can vary, ranging from grammar to lexis and from spelling to syntax.

In addition, in monolingual settings, the EFL classroom is often believed to embody the students' sole exposure to the TL. Therefore, teachers underline the importance of increasing TL input in the classroom to enhance students' opportunities to receive TL input (Copland & Neokleous 2011, Orland-Barak & Yinon 2005). To mitigate students' limited TL exposure outside the classroom, curricula across the world have implemented policies encouraging teachers to interact with their students in the TL and prohibiting MT use. Abiding by these principles, the teacher

participants in Sharma's (2006: 86) study confessed that they resorted to the TL even if it would be more practical to make recourse to the students' MT.

2.4 Teachers' Use of MT

The underlying assumption that an increased teacher TL use should lead to an increased student TL use has been one of the causes of the shift towards all-English teaching approaches (Bateman 2008, Copland & Neokleous 2011, Meiring & Norman 2002). Turnbull (2001) postulated that simply encouraging teachers to integrate more TL usage in their classrooms was not sufficient, and research studies venturing into EFL classrooms should be conducted to tackle the issue as to what degree and for what purposes the MT should be used.

Despite teachers' predisposition towards an all-English classroom, participants in Bateman's (2008), Copland & Neokleous (2011), and Macaro's (2001) studies displayed a preference for MT integration to point out problem areas of grammar. This is because lessons focusing on grammar often generate confusion among students during instruction (Bateman 2008, Copland & Neokleous 2011) and the use of the MT could assist in clarifying complications, a conclusion that was also drawn in earlier studies (Duff & Polio 1990: 161). Choosing the MT over the TL in similar cases is also believed to provide help to struggling learners. Moreover, participants in Bateman's (2008) study argued that a potential lack of the MT could trigger discipline problems. The belief that the MT is crucial for managerial purposes was also evinced in a study conducted by Orland-Barak & Yinon among novice teachers (2005). In regards to affective factors, the teacher-participants in this study chose to make recourse to the MT, which they perceived as a confidence booster, strengthening the students' motivation while at the same time reducing the ensuing stress that incomprehensible TL input could cause.

Opinions on the use of the MT for translation purposes, however, seem to vacillate, as there has been a slight inconsistency regarding the advantages it fostered in the

classroom. For instance, in Copland & Neokleous's (2011) study, translation into MT was reported as suitable and vital by only 50% of the participants, with the remaining 50% negatively assessing its usage in their lessons. Macaro, on the other hand, claimed that

> banning translation from the [TL] ... classroom deprives learners of the possibility of developing a valuable language skill that they are very likely to need in the outside world, particularly the world of work (Macaro 2005: 75).

2.5 Current Approaches towards MT Use

Recently, however, there has been a gradual shift away from the belief that the English-only approach provides the ideal classroom setting and towards a belief that a bilingual approach to EFL teaching may be more beneficial (Creese & Blackledge 2010, Garcia et al. 2011, Halasa & Al-Manaseer 2012, Hornberger & Link 2012, Lin & Wu 2015, Littlewood & Yu 2011). According to these researchers, the bilingual approach encompasses a judicious use of the MT with the optimal balance between TL and MT in the EFL classroom. Teachers are encouraged to follow a bilingual EFL teaching methodology that makes use of the students' MT in an attempt to develop TL proficiency (Cheng 2013, Creese & Blackledge 2010, Halasa & Al-Manaseer 2012, Hall & Cook 2012, and Lin & Wu 2015).

This preference towards a judicious use of the MT is also mirrored in studies exploring the EFL student perspective (e.g. Neokleous 2016). In Neokleous' (2016) study, student participants positively evaluated MT use in the classroom. In fact, they perceived its integration not as an inescapable and normal classroom behavior but as a valuable asset, which could potentially offer a substantial number of benefits to their lessons.

Recent research performed in Norway suggests that the use of the MT in EFL instruction is not uncommon (Krulatz et al. 2016). However, no study to date has

explored the issue from the teacher perspective in a setting without explicit curriculum guidelines. Most studies venturing to explore the teacher perspective on MT integration were conducted in settings where teachers were instructed to make extensive TL usage either by the country's official curriculum or by their schools' individual policies. The research presented in this paper aims to address this gap.

3 The Study

3.1 Research Questions

In an attempt to examine Norwegian EFL teachers' perspectives on the use of students' MT(s) in the classroom, the present study explores the following research questions:

- What is EFL teachers' attitude towards the presence of the students' MTs in the classroom? To what extent do teachers think that the use of the students' MT in the classroom is necessary? Why or why not?

- Do teachers aspire towards creating an English-only environment in their lessons / teaching practice? Why or why not?

- How do teachers feel at the end of the lesson if they used languages other than English (Norwegian, students' MTs) in their teaching?

- Do teachers aspire towards creating an EFL environment that draws on Norwegian and students' other languages in their lessons / teaching practice? Why or why not?

3.2 Data Collection and Participants

This research is part of a larger study that aimed to examine pre- and in-service EFL teachers' perspectives on the Norwegian EFL curriculum and the use of students' MT(s) in the EFL classroom. The results reported in this paper are based on responses to a questionnaire completed by 24 in-service elementary and middle-school teachers who were enrolled in an EFL endorsement course at a university in Mid-Norway. The questionnaire was paper-based and entirely anonymous. It consisted of five bio-data items and 21 open-ended questions that prompted the participants to reflect on their language-use practices when teaching EFL, their perspectives on the use of MT to teach EFL, the possible origins of those views, and the expectations in regards to use of MT and TL dictated by the national curriculum, other teachers, and administrators at their schools. The survey was administered in English. It was fully anonymous, and no personal information that could identify the participants was collected.

Thirty teachers were invited to submit responses, and 24 returned the filled-out questionnaire. Tjhe participants - 18 women and six men - were between 35 and 54 years old. The majority (20 participants) had completed college-level education, one had completed a post-graduate study without a degree, and three stated that they held a post-graduate degree. Most of the participants had been learning English for over 15 years, but the number of years they had taught EFL varied. The participants' overall experience of learning English and their EFL teaching experience are summarized in Table 1:

Number of Years	English Learning	EFL Teac
1 - 5	2 teachers	7
5 - 10	---	1(

10 - 15	---	3
15+	22 teachers	4

Tab 1: Summary of participants' English learning and teaching experience

3.2 Data Analysis

All responses were typed, organized using an Excel spreadsheet, and qualitatively analyzed. The organization process consisted of identifying main themes and developing codes:

- The responses to the first question in the questionnaire were coded as either (a) uses MT or (b) doesn't use MT.
- The responses to the second question were coded as (a) aspires, (b) partly aspires, (c) doesn't aspire, or (d) unclear.
- For the third question, the codes (a) feels okay, (b) neutral, and (c) negative feeling were used.
- Responses to the fourth question were coded as (a) aspires, (b) doesn't aspire, (c) unclear, or (d) no answer.

The process of codification allowed us to quantify the results, which we present below using descriptive statistics. We also include selected quotes from the responses to elaborate on the findings.

4 Findings

4.1 Teacher Attitudes towards MT Use

The first question in the questionnaire aimed to examine the participants' attitudes towards the use of MT in the classroom. The majority of the teachers (92%) reported that they used MT when teaching EFL. A summary of these findings is presented in Figure 1:
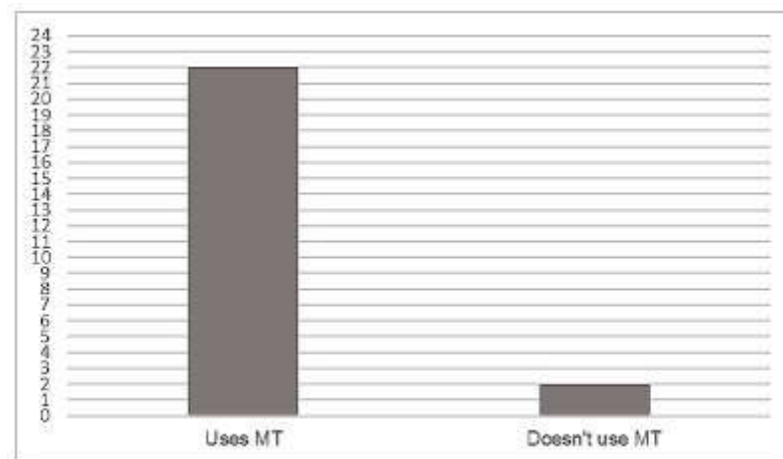
Fig.1: Participants' Use of MT

The responses also included specific explanations of the circumstances and reasons for employint the MT. The two participants who stated that they generally did not use the MT explained that they believed learners should be exposed to the maximum possible amount of English input, and one of the teachers explained that she used non-linguistic cues such as body language to help her students understand what she meant to say. The teachers who employ the students' MT provided a range of reasons and uses. The most important concern appears to ensure that students understand everything that is said in the classroom, which

prompts teachers to employ translation. The tendency to resort to the MT to enhance students' understanding of the TL is in line with findings of similar studies (Bateman 2008, Copland & Neokleous 2011, Macaro 2001, Orland-Barak & Yinon 2005). As the participants of this study elaborated, this practice is often implemented to clarify the meaning of new words, to teach grammar, to give instructions and to boost students' motivation. One of the teachers stated,

I use a bit [of MT] when explaining grammar

while another one commented,

Sometimes I repeat instructions in the MT.

In regards to motivation, one of the respondents commented,

to ensure that everyone understands what you are saying, you sometimes have to translate words or sentences that you use. You have to do that in order to motivate everybody.

A dominant belief appears to be that younger students rely more heavily on their MT and that it is important for teachers to use students' MT knowledge as a foundation for second language acquisition. The advantages that MT integration offers to young EFL learners are also highlighted in the literature (Bateman 2008, Macaro 2000). To quote one of the participants of the present study,

The mother tongue is the child's base. It is important to use it as a key to open the links to learning.

Nevertheless, the responses to this question also suggest that the respondents saw it as an important goal to increase the use of TL in their teaching, as several of them stated that they tried to "speak English as much as possible."

4.2 Aspirations to Create an English-only Environment

In the second question, the teachers were asked to explain whether they aspired to create an English-only environment in their EFL lessons. Most participants (71%) reported that creating an English-only environment was their goal. Figure 2 gives an overview of these responses:
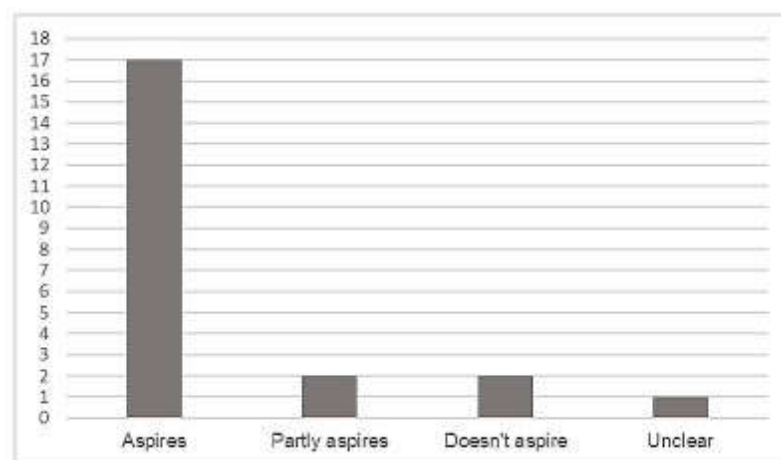

Fig. 2: Participants' aspirations to create an English-only environment

The teachers who stated that they aspired to implement an English-only approach to their EFL teaching said that, because of the limited number of English sessions per week in Norway, in particular in lower-elementary grades, it was crucial to maximize the amount of English input learners receive. As one teacher put it,

> students must hear as much as possible in restricted time.

The teachers also commented that using English is beneficial for learners because it positively affects the development of fluency, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Nevertheless, while teachers appeared to perceive an English-only environment as "ideal," they also had some restrictions regarding the feasibility of its implementation. One of the major concerns was that students would not be able to

follow instructions. To quote one of the teachers,

> in my current class there are many pupils that won't understand if I only talked English.

As an alternative, some of the teachers suggested using Norwegian to introduce key words and to translate difficult words, as well as encouraging learners to rely on their MT if they lack linguistic resources in English. For instance, one of the teachers explained,

> I ask the pupils to use English as much as possible, but I also tell them to fill in with Norwegian words if necessary.

4.3 Teachers' Feelings about the Use of Other Languages

In the third question of the questionnaire, the teachers were asked to report on how they feel when they use languages other than English, for example Norwegian or other mother tongues spoken by their students, during an English lesson. A little over a half of the participants (58%) reported "feeling OK," with an equal number of teachers stating that such practice caused them to experience some negative or neutral feelings (21% each). The answers are summarized in Figure 3:
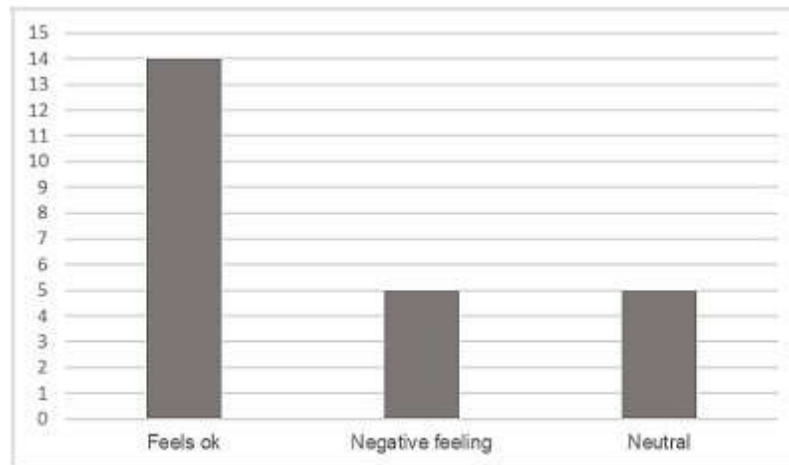
Fig. 3: Feelings associated with the use of MT to teach EFL

Some of the teachers who reported "feeling OK" explained that they typically attempt to use English and only switch to the MT when they feel it is necessary, for example, to clarify task instructions. Some justified their choice to rely on the MT with being concerned that the learners may become frustrated and unmotivated if they do not understand what the teacher is saying. One participant was very positive about the use of the MT, stating,

> I feel great [when I use the MT]. I don't see the problem at all. I can't do lessons where 5-8 pupils won't understand.

On the other hand, the teachers who reported negative feelings appeared to place blame on themselves, for example,

> I feel I have done an average effort, producing average results.

4.4 Teachers' Aspirations to Create Bilingual EFL Classrooms

Finally, in question four, the participants were asked to explain whether they aspire to draw on students' MTs when teaching English. Only three teachers appeared to think that drawing on students' bilingual resources was desirable, whereas eight teachers stated that they did not aspire to create such opportunities. The remaining participants provided no answer to this question or their answers were unclear. These responses are summarized in Figure 4:
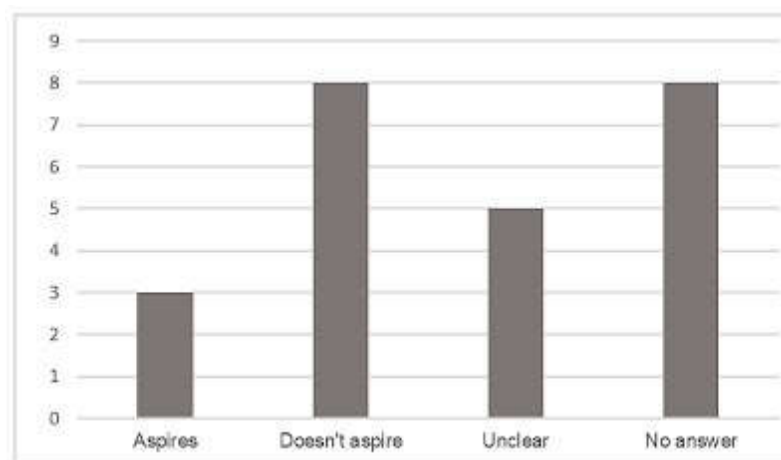
Fig. 4: Strategy use in social distance scenario.

The responses to this question align with what the participants said about creating an English-only classroom. Most of those who stated they had no aspirations to draw on learners' MTs explained that their goal was to maximize the use of English. One teacher said,

I try to use as much English as possible

whereas another one wrote

I try to encourage them to use English instead of Norwegian because they need a lot of practice in talking English.

The teachers who stated that they aspired to rely on students' MTs in English instructions stressed the positive impact of the MT on TL learning. For instance, one of the participants explained,

> I think it is important to let the children go via their mother tongue for support.

Another teacher stated that she tried to point out similarities between English and Norwegian.

5 Discussion

This study set out to continue the line of research that investigates EFL teachers' perceptions of employing the learners' MT in foreign language teaching. To this end, the paper reported the initial findings from a questionnaire-based study that examined Norwegian EFL teachers' perspectives on the use of MT in the EFL classroom. We chose to focus on teachers' attitudes towards the use of MT and TL, and on their aspirations to create an English-only or a bilingual environment in their teaching practice. The findings suggest that while most participants used the MT when teaching English, they also saw it as an important goal to increase the use of the TL. Nevertheless, a few of the respondents suggested that the use of the MT was a desirable pedagogical practice as the MT provides a base for children's foreign language development. Previous research in Norway concluded that elementary school teachers used the TL for between 15% and 75% of the total EFL instruction time (Krulatz et al. 2016). Similarly, research in other contexts identified a range of TL use from 10% to 100% (Crawford 2004, Dickson 1996, Peng & Zhang 2009, Polio & Duff 1994). The findings from the present study indicate that as many as 92% of the participants employed the MT when teaching EFL. Yet, the majority of teachers aspired to create an English-only environment.

It is important to note some serious limitations of this project to date, most notably the relative small number of participants who submitted a filled-out questionnaire. To increase the sample size, we are presently continuing the data collection

process. Another limitation to consider is that the data consisted of self-reports, which can only be taken as evidence of teachers' beliefs about their teaching practice, and not as evidence of their actual behaviour in the classroom.

Despite these limitations, the present study constitutes an important step in investigating Norwegian EFL teachers' perceptions of the role of TL and MT in EFL teaching. The study has also aimed to transcend some of the limitations with which previous research studies were associated. Most prior studies, for instance, were conducted in settings where teachers were encouraged to make extensive use of the TL whereas there are no guidelines as to the quantity of the target language that should be used in the classroom in the Norwegian curriculum.

Future research should shed light on the development of teaching strategies that incorporate the students' MT in a monolingual environment. This aspiration presupposes the need to unearth what Norwegian EFL students think regarding MT integration in the classroom, a research area that has received limited attention to date (Neokleous 2016). A study investigating teacher and student perspectives using data from the same classroom would give a clearer picture of the issue.

As current research promotes the bilingual approach in monolingual EFL classrooms (Creese & Blackledge 2010, Garcia et al. 2011, Halasa & Al-Manaseer 2012, Hornberger & Link 2012, Lin & Wu 2015, Littlewood & Yu 2011), it is also important to explore the ratio that could be qualified as judicious and optimal usage. Whereas the new bilingual orientation encourages the use of the MT as a valuable resource in the acquisition of the TL, to date, no clear guidelines for teachers have been formulated. Several authors postulate a "judicious" or "balanced" use of the MT without, however, defining what "judicious" and "balanced" mean or how the MT should be delivered in the classroom (e.g. Creese & Blackledge 2010, Garcia et al 2011, Halasa & Al-Manaseer 2012, Hornberger & Link 2012, Krulatz et al. 2016, Lin & Wu 2015, Littlewood & Yu 2011, Neokleous, 2016). Each EFL setting constitutes a unique classroom environment. For this reason, the right balance between MT and TL use can only be found through individual action research projects in classrooms from around the globe. Therefore, the need to define "judicious" MT integration presupposes the need to increase the number of studies exploring both

teacher and student perspectives. An additional issue to be considered is the increasing linguistic diversity in EFL classrooms. For example, in some classrooms in Norway, as many as 95% of students have a MT other than Norwegian (Surkalovic 2014). Consequently, teachers can no longer assume that all students share the same MT, and they need to be able to foster learners' acquisition of English through pedagogical approaches that draw on students' bilingual resources.

Finally, it is crucial to integrate the topic of the MT in teacher-training programs. Language teachers need to be made aware of the purposes students' MT can and should serve along with strategies that make use of their MT to facilitate learning. As discussed earlier, helping teachers to realize the benefits of drawing on the students' existing linguistic resources can "contribute towards removing the stigma with which the MT is associated, as well as the guilt triggered by the difficulty of maintaining an all-TL environment" (Krulatz et al. 2016: 147). This should be the next step in promoting the bilingual approach, and the students' voice should be an important research variable in an attempt to shape EFL students' education in the best possible way.

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