1. Introduction

The ability to navigate the increasingly complex linguistic spaces of the modern world is an important skill for the twenty-first century. In recent years, this has led to a significant paradigm shift away from the predominantly monolingual orientation in language teaching among researchers in the field of second language acquisition (Shin, 2018; Lee & Lo, 2017; May, 2014; García, 2009). The bilingual ability to use linguistic and non-linguistic modes of communication and knowledge to communicate effectively in multicultural and multilingual contexts has become an increasingly important goal of language teaching and learning (Freeman 2020; Cook 2016; Scott 2016). However, this multilingual turn is not always reflected in teacher education, resources and classroom practices in many mainstream EFL contexts (Anderson, 2018; Turnbull, 2018; Cook 2016; Leung, 2014).

This paper takes a bilingual lens to focus on the views of twenty-four EFL teachers working in language schools in various parts of the world. It explores the importance of the particular teaching context in relation to their beliefs, attitudes and approaches around the use of the L1 in the classroom and the extent to which they adapt their practices in this area depending on whether they teach in shared-L1 or multilingual contexts. Teachers' beliefs and cognitions have been identified as a key factor in classroom behaviours and approaches (Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Borg, 2011; McMillan & Turnbull, 2009) and critical reflection on these as an important element of any teacher development programme or training (Song, 2015; Ellis & Shintani; 2014). It is hoped that this study will make a contribution to our understanding of these beliefs in relation to the mono- and bilingual practices of language teachers in

the EFL classroom and perhaps inform future professional development programmes and initiatives in this area.

2. Background

2.1 Codeswitching

Long considered a lazy, inferior form of communication, bilingual codeswitching is now understood as a very sophisticated use of language, demonstrating an extremely high level of sensitivity to and awareness of syntactical and lexical forms in both languages (Grosjean, 2010; Reyes & Ervin-Tripp, 2010; Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009). Codeswitching is "the alternate use of two languages, that is, the speaker makes a complete shift to another language for a word, phrase, or sentence and then reverts back to the base language" (Grosjean, 2010, pp. 51-52); it is used here as an umbrella term to describe switching between languages in the same stretch of discourse. Codeswitching across languages when communicating with others who share their languages is normal bilingual practice (Hornberger & Link, 2012; Lin & Li, 2012; García, 2009; Levine, 2009). Many studies have demonstrated that contrary to what was once believed, bilinguals do not compartmentalise languages separately in the brain (Kharkhurin & Li, 2015; Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012; Hoshino & Thierry, 2011). They do not switch their various languages on and off at any one time; instead, both languages are active in the bilingual brain regardless of which language is being used at a particular time (Shin, 2018; García, 2009; Schmitt, 2008). Many scholars stress the fluid and intertwined nature of bilingual language use and see the languages of bi/multilinguals as one entity, a linguistic resource that can be drawn on and

employed at will for a range of purposes (García, Johnson & Selzer, 2017; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Lin & Li, 2012). Thus, bilinguals have access to an additional linguistic resource which is not available to monolinguals, who can only employ monolingual linguistic switches, such as switches in register, style or tone, in their communication (Blackledge, Creese & Takhi, 2014; Block, 2014; García & Li, 2014). The ability to switch between and across languages in order to navigate meaning in the increasingly complex linguistic spaces of the modern world is a highly skilled and valuable competence (Shin, 2018; Kramsch, 2014; Makoni & Pennycook, 2012). Pejorative terms such as 'Spanglish' 'Tex-Mex' or 'Franglais' have been replaced by terms such as 'translingual practices' (Canagarajah, 2014), 'flexible bilingualism' (Creese & Blackledge, 2010) and 'translanguaging' (García, 2009) to describe some of the many sophisticated discursive practices and competences of fluent bi/multilinguals. These terms differ somewhat in terms of context and linguistic focus but all have in common the emphasis on fluidity between languages and the multiple modes and discourses used by bilinguals to make meaning. García describes the '*multiple discourse practices* in which bilinguals engage' (García 2009: 45 [italics in original]). Her description of translanguaging refers to the entire language repertoire of bilinguals, which is seen as an integrated communication system in the brain, and includes practices such as codeswitching and translation but is not limited to these (García & Sylvan 2011).

2.2 The monolingual bias in language teaching

However, despite this change in our understanding of how bilinguals use and store their languages, second language teaching has remained largely monolingual in orientation (Dailey-O'Cain and Liebscher, 2015; García and Li, 2014; May 2014; Canagarajah and Liyanage, 2012; McMillan & Turnbull, 2009). Even in two-way bilingual programmes, the two languages are usually taught and used at separate times and in separate lessons (Fuller, 2018; Lee & Lo, 2017; Baker, 2011). Cummins (2007, p.223) describes this approach as "the two solitudes"; Creese and Blackledge ((2010, p.105) refer to this compartmentalisation of languages in immersion contexts as "separate bilingualism". In the field of TESOL, the "monolingual principle" (Howatt, 1984, p.135), the belief that the target language should be used exclusively in the language classroom and all references to and use of the L1 should be proscribed during L2[1] lessons, became almost axiomatic over the course of the twentieth century, to the extent that until very recently the use of the L1 was largely ignored in most ELT learning materials and teaching manuals, except in terms of how to avoid it (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Leung, 2014; Cummins, 2009; Cook, 2001).

The monolingual principle has been challenged in recent years (Cook, 2016; May, 2014; Cenoz & Gorter, 2013; Cummins, 2007). It has become clear that the strongly-held belief that references to the learners' L1 were a hindrance to effective language learning and to be avoided at all costs has little foundation in research (Shin, 2018; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; McMillan & Turnbull, 2009; Cummins, 2007; Cook, 2001) and does not tally with the realities of how bilinguals learn (Conboy, 2010; Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009; Butzkamm, 2003). On the contrary, there has been compelling evidence

to support the view that cross-linguistic transfer of underlying linguistic knowledge and skills from the L1 plays a key role in the development of the L2 among learners, particularly in relation to the academic language used in school (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2017; Gearon, Miller & Kostogriz, 2009; Cummins, 2007), even in cases where languages do not share many lexical or structural similarities (Shatz & Wilkinson, 2010; García, 2009; Riches & Genesee, 2006). In addition, there has been a growing awareness that instructional assumptions that rely on the strict separation of languages are based on how monolinguals acquire their L1 and are not necessarily the most appropriate model for how people acquire second language(s), particularly in situations where they acquire their additional language(s) later in life (Ortega, 2018; Cook, 2016; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011; Conboy, 2010).

This paradigm shift has profound implications for the language classroom. Increasingly, researchers in the field of second-language acquisition (SLA) argue for the systematic use of the L1 to support and enhance L2 learning and to highlight linguistic features of the target language (Baker, 2011; Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009; Butzkamm, 2003) as well as for opportunities to practise bilingual skills such as translation and interpreting (Anderson, 2018; Pintado Gutierrez, 2018; Cenoz & Gorter, 2013; Hornberger & Link, 2012). Cook (2001, p.410) argues that it is important to give teachers "absolution for using the L1", encouraging methods which make positive use of the L1 in the language classroom. The judicious and systematic use of the L1 as part of a teaching approach which maximises exposure to the target language and opportunities for practice is now recognised as a valid teaching tool and a potential resource in the classroom (Cook, 2016; Swain & Lapkin,

2013; Levine, 2009). Others advocate for the embracing of the multilingual turn in language teaching in order to encourage bi- and multilingual practices as the norm in the classroom and promote the development of multilingual competences and communities of practice (Anderson, 2018; Block, 2014; Li, 2014; Canagarajah & Liyanage, 2012). Such a multilingual space which celebrates and gives voice to all available languages in the classroom can be achieved even where the teacher herself does not know the language(s) of the learners (Wang, 2019; García et al. 2017). For example, García et al. (ibid) suggest grouping students who share the same L1 together on occasion and allowing them to use their L1 or any language combination to complete a task, after which the students work together to prepare an oral summary of what has been said in English for the teacher.

Until now, the multilingual turn in the field of applied linguistics does not appear to have led to significant changes in mainstream policy making, materials design and teaching practices in TESOL (Vallejo & Dooly, 2019; Cook, 2016; Leung, 2014; Ortega, 2014; Cooke and Simpson, 2012). This is particularly the case in foreign language teaching contexts (Turnbull, 2018; Kramsch, 2014; Cenoz & Gorter, 2013). May (2014, p.20) describes the ongoing monolingual bias in mainstream SLA and TESOL as a "research impasse" and has called for interdisciplinary approaches which would explore "the potential synergies among SLA, TESOL and research in bilingualism and bilingual education" (ibid.) more fully.

2.3 Teachers' views and practices on using the L1 in the language classroom

Research suggests that considerable variation exists among English language teachers regarding their views on the role of the L1 in the language classroom (Wach & Monroy, 2019; Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009; Duff and Polio, 1990). Macaro (2009) describes three distinct approaches to the use of the L1 in the language classroom which he labels 'virtual', 'maximal' and 'optimal' positions (p.36). He explains that teachers who hold *the virtual position* believe that the L1 has no value in the classroom and should be avoided at all costs. Target language exclusivity which aims to provide a language-immersion experience for learners is the goal. Teachers who hold *the maximal position* believe that although exclusive use of the target language is undoubtedly best practice, the use of the L1 cannot be excluded completely and is sometimes inevitable because of the nature of the L2 language classroom. According to Macaro (2014), *the optimal position* is a minority-held view which sees recognisable value in using the L1 to enhance learning at certain times. While alive to the dangers of an unprincipled, random approach, teachers who hold this position believe that a degree of codeswitching used in broadly communicative classrooms can enhance second language acquisition.

Macaro (2014) favours the optimal position and argues for a theoretical framework which would allow teachers to make informed choices regarding if, when and how the L1 might be used to facilitate and enhance learning. Garcia et al. (2017) go further and advocate for teachers to adopt a bilingual 'stance' in their teaching whereby language learners are viewed as emergent or developing bilinguals.

2.4 Teachers' belief systems and values in language teaching

Research also suggests that teachers' beliefs and values have an enormous effect on their classroom practices and approaches (Song, 2015; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Borg, 2011; McMillan & Turnbull, 2009). These beliefs are often unconsciously held and are shaped by individual factors such as the personal experiences and prior learning encounters of teachers and are hugely influenced by contextual factors. Richards (1996) describes a range of conscious and unconscious maxims or belief systems which guide teachers' behaviours and decision-making in the classroom; these vary according to context and develop with experience. There are often mismatches and disparities between the stated beliefs of teachers and their actual teaching practices (Oranje and Smith, 2018; Horii, 2015; Song, 2015; Thornbury, 2011). Because of this, teachers often display apparently contradictory classroom behaviours which may be the result of tensions between their complex and sometimes competing sets of beliefs (Oranje & Smith, 2018; Birello, 2012). A particular teaching practice may be at odds with one set of beliefs but consistent with another (Phipps & Borg, 2009). Interestingly, many scholars have identified such a disconnect between language teachers' beliefs and practices in relation to the use of the L1 (Cook, 2016; Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Kirkpatrick, 2014; Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

2.5 The importance of context

Related to this is the role of context as an important factor in pedagogic decision-making for language teachers (Thornbury, 2011; Creese & Leung, 2010; Cooke & Simpson, 2008). Some teaching and learning contexts are multilingual where students do not share a common L1; other lessons take place in contexts where most students share an L1. Some teachers are

themselves effective users of the students' L1; other teachers are monolingual. The use of and role of the L1 in these different situations may be an important consideration in teachers' options and choices (Macaro, 2014; Walker, 2014; Edstrom, 2009). Many researchers encourage teachers to take an eclectic approach and to select tasks and make pedagogic decisions appropriate for their local situation (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011; Larsen-Freeman, 2011). Kumaravadivelu (2012, p.10) advocates "principled pragmatism", a post-method perspective underpinned by a set of basic principles, whereby teachers adjust their teaching practice to the local context. However, Cook (2016, p.292) and others have identified a "mainstream EFL teaching style" which underpins the most popular published ELT materials and the approach taken on teacher training programmes such as the CELTA (Kramsch, 2014; Leung, 2014; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). It is unclear to what extent this training prepares EFL teachers for the realities of teaching in different contexts (King, 2016).

Critical reflection on and examination of their own practices and beliefs has been identified as an important element of professional development for teachers (Song, 2015; Borg, 2011). McMillan and Turnbull (2009) suggest that teachers articulate and discuss their professional practices with others as a strategy for evaluating the use of the L1 in the language classroom. Ellis and Shintani (2014, p. 247) concur and suggest that "[p]erhaps the best way forward for now is to encourage teachers to reflect on their own practices […] and develop a critical perspective on their own use of the L1".

3. The Study

The study is based on the thematic analysis of twenty-four semi-structured interviews with EFL teachers in Dublin, Ireland. The twenty-four participants were EFL teachers who teach / have taught in (1) multilingual contexts in Ireland in which the learners do not share a common L1 **and** (2) contexts in non-English speaking countries, where the learners typically share a common language other than English. It is very common for teachers to have experience of teaching in both multilingual and shared-L1 contexts and this was the criterion for participation in the study. All of the teachers had completed the CELTA or equivalent. Eleven had completed the DELTA or were currently studying for it. English was a second language for four of the participants. Please see Appendix A for more detailed information on the participants. Ethical approval was gained from Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee. The project commenced in September 2014.

The overall aim of the study was to explore the practices and beliefs of teachers in relation to the use of the L1 in the EFL classroom. In particular, it sought to examine the attitudes of EFL teachers regarding the use of the learners' L1 in their classrooms, to compare and contrast practices of teachers in shared-L1 and multilingual contexts, and to investigate to what extent teachers who teach in both contexts adapt their pedagogic style to each context. The research questions are:

1. To what extent and in what ways do EFL teachers use or allow the learners to use their L1 in their classes?

2. What are the attitudes and beliefs of EFL teachers regarding the use of the L1 and the emerging bi-/multilingual skills of learners in the language classroom?
3. To what extent and in what ways do these practices and beliefs vary depending on whether the teaching takes place in shared-L1 or multilingual contexts?

The interviews consisted of five sets of open-ended questions which focused on the following constructs: their own teaching and language learning backgrounds; their practices and approaches in a particular multilingual context they had taught in; their practices and approaches in a particular shared-L1 context they had taught in; their overall views and beliefs in relation to the use of the L1 in language teaching; and their perceptions of the classroom as a bilingual space. See Appendix B for the interview template. Each interview lasted approximately one hour.

Following transcription of the interviews, the data was qualitatively coded and analysed using Thematic Analysis procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in order to identify key issues and recurring themes. First, the interviews were read closely, manually tagging each item in order to generate initial descriptive codes for the data. These were then arranged together to identify broad patterns, issues and groupings across the data set. Using NVivo software, the entire data set was then systematically collated and categorised according to these codes. (Three of the twenty-four interviews were coded independently by hand by a colleague and then cross-checked with those of the researcher to ensure intercoder agreement). These codes were then subdivided and refined as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). The full

transcripts were then re-read to ensure the codes accurately reflected what the respondents had articulated in the interviews. The data within each code was then reviewed and analysed in order to identify overarching themes in the data in relation to the research questions. The 15-point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis posited by Braun & Clarke (2013: 287) was adhered to in order to ensure the trustworthiness and dependability of the research. In addition, there was regular debriefing with a colleague, outlining the stages and processes undertaken in the analysis of the data as recommended by Creswell & Creswell for qualitative research (2018).

Themes relating to the nature of the teaching and learning space in each context, the extent to which teachers viewed this space in monolingual or bi/multilingual terms, and the role of context in their overall approach to the use of the L1 are presented below. Due to constraints of space, other important themes which were identified in the data (including other factors which influenced their choices and decision-making; planned and ad hoc classroom practices and procedures; issues relating to the inclusion and exclusion of others in both contexts; and their own experiences of and beliefs about language learning) are not addressed here.

To protect the anonymity of the respondents, their names have been changed and any information in the data which might identify the participants or particular schools has been removed. It is important to note that the terms ‘multilingual context’ and ‘shared-L1 context’ are used below to designate the two contexts. For ease of reading, the term L1 is used here although it is

understood that the shared language may not be the L1 for all the students. During the interviews, participants often used ‘here’, ‘in Ireland’ and ‘multilingual’ to describe contexts where the students did not share a common language other than English; and often used ‘there’, ‘in [name of country other than Ireland]’ and ‘monolingual’ to describe contexts where the students shared a common language other than English.

4. Results

All the teachers believed that maximising the use of the target language was important and constituted best practice in language teaching and learning in both multilingual and shared-L1 teaching contexts. They felt that providing exposure to English and affording opportunities to use it were crucial parts of their role and that superior learning outcomes accrued when the students learned through the target language. However, despite these views the majority of teachers (20 participants) described a degree of flexibility in their attitudes and approaches to the use of the L1 in their teaching and used or allowed the L1 to be used sometimes, particularly in shared-L1 contexts. Only four participants were opposed to ever using or allowing the students to use the L1 in class. Whether they were teaching in a shared-L1 or a multilingual context emerged as an important factor for the participants in their approaches to the use of the L1.

4.1 The Nature of the Teaching and Learning Space in Each Context

The participants felt strongly that total immersion was the best way to learn a language. Nineteen of the teachers described trying to create this immersion experience in the classroom insofar as they could by creating an English-only monolingual space for the students: instructions and other classroom interactions through English; posters, notices and signs in English; English-only rules and 'penalties'. However, almost all described how much easier this was to achieve in multilingual contexts, where the only common language was the target language. Students were 'forced' to use English in a way they were not in shared-L1 contexts.

The group dynamic of the multilingual context featured strongly in the discourse of teachers around using the L1. Teachers described the different dynamic of the group when learners from different linguistic, cultural and social backgrounds were together. A recurring response was that they did not have to be as strict about using and insisting on English-only in multilingual contexts; English was the language of communication:

> **Paul:** I was teaching a Beginners class and they had very minimal English and there was a woman from Spain I remember in her 50s and there was a girl from Saudi Arabia who was 18 and they became the best of friends and I don't know how they communicated at all because they were you know laughing away and all that kind of thing so, it's something about the environment […] it happens kind of automatically.

It was often felt that this was not at all the same when students were learning in their home countries in a shared-L1 setting:

> **Frank**: a negative part of teaching in a monolingual class would be there wouldn't - it's more difficult to create an energy in the classroom you know, people are generally studying before work or school, after work or school, and they know each other, so there's not this excitement of meeting new people and it's different backgrounds and different cultures and stuff, so it can be more difficult to create energy in the classroom

They commented on how much more difficult it was to maintain an English-only policy outside English-speaking countries, in contexts where students shared the same L1:

> **Niall** (*comparing the English-only policy in the two contexts*):
> I mean when they're in the building they're supposed to speak English and [the Director] will say "no, no, English" you know if you hear them on the stairs. So it's a kind of a culture of it, whereas you know we couldn't have that context in Kurdistan. I mean in the beginning we had plans to, and we had a section of a building that was for us, and we thought 'right once they go through those doors they're in the British Isles' you know. But we couldn't do it. They just wouldn't do it, and so we gave up

However, teachers were very aware that for many students in this context, the classroom was the only place where they were in contact with English and they encouraged students to maximise their use of English in class. Several teachers expressed surprise to realise that they focussed more on English-only practices and procedures in the multilingual classroom even

though in theory they felt this policy should be more valuable in non-English speaking countries. Extensive exposure to English was a given outside the classroom in Ireland, but not in the other context. They struggled somewhat to articulate their own practices and beliefs in relation to this:

> **Interviewer**: How do you feel about using the L1 at these times? You mentioned that you feel it's totally appropriate in the Kurdish context but that here you'd feel a little bit differently about it, or did I misunderstand you?
>
> **Niall**: no no you didn't. But I'm just kind of curious as to why I'd feel that actually, because in a way [exclusive use of English] is more helpful for them over in Kurdistan because they're going out of the classroom into a Kurdish environment, so in a way I was polluting their only opportunity to [laughter] do you know what I mean. So it seems a bit reversed, but there were other motivations that I've mentioned
>
> **Interviewer**: and it felt instinctive from what you're saying?
>
> **Niall:** instinctive yes yes. It just felt much more natural. […] whereas they're here to learn English in an English environment and I'm here to facilitate that

They also accepted that in shared-L1 contexts, using English could seem contrived and strange for the students, that it was intuitive and indeed inevitable that speakers of the same language would speak to each other in their L1. They mentioned students being self-conscious about their accent and feeling embarrassed and uncomfortable doing some things through English in

front of their peers. Teachers commented on students helping each other out by translating words for each other and joking and bantering in the L1, switching back and forth between languages in the classroom. Most teachers expressed a degree of flexibility with this.

They all differentiated between off-task talk among students while doing an exercise and engaging in communicative activities where the focus was on speaking practice and fluency development such as problem solving tasks and roleplays in shared-L1 contexts. Several teachers described insisting on English for some things (e.g. fluency-focused activities) and having a more flexible attitude towards the L1 for other things (e.g. jokes and bantering). A number of teachers felt that making this differentiation clear to students was a very effective way of motivating the students to speak in English at certain times and for certain activity types. They felt students respected this; they saw the point.

Several teachers mentioned that they found themselves focussing on the English-only rule too much in shared-L1 contexts, that it was sometimes more effective to just get on with the focus of the class:

> **Alan**: Like with the Chinese group, it was a constant encouragement. But I think there comes a point where you realise that you are making too much of an issue out of it, at which point it becomes difficult. So as a teacher, it affects the teaching because as a teacher you're almost program- you're always focusing on that as opposed to just letting it go and trying to bring them back to doing something in English

Many expressed a dislike of being the 'L1 policeman'. Teachers felt this most strongly with teenagers. The image of being 'like a (broken) record' was used frequently, where teachers were constantly reminding their students to speak English:

> **Emma**: You'd say "you're here, just try" but you can't- I'm not a monster [laughter]
>
> **Jane**: I mean there was no point in saying "speak English, speak English, speak English". There was no point […] I would have sounded like a record

However, at the same time many teachers also described how the use of the L1 might spread excessively if students were allowed to use it in class:

> **Irene**: I think obviously in a monolingual class you have to be stricter about how much you can let them get away with because it could slip into a majority L1 lesson. So you have to be more - you've to be firmer about getting back into English
>
> **Rose:** and I would only do [a translation exercise] with a class that I could trust wouldn't speak in Spanish to each other, because we have a lot of classes where every chance they get, they just revert into Spanish. I would only do it with a class that I could trust that if I turned to this, they wouldn't just start chatting in Spanish

4.2 Looking at their Teaching Environment through a Bilingual Lens

When asked about the extent to which they saw their classroom and their students in terms of their bilingualism, a large number of teachers were

very struck by the question and commented that they had never thought about their teaching in this way before and had not really considered their students as bilinguals:

> **Irene**: I've never really thought about it in that sense before to be honest. I think because you're focused on your role as the teacher, you're focused on developing their English skills, so I've never really thought about it
>
> **Margaret**: you don't forget about their L1 […] I mean I don't erase their L1 from my mind
>
> **Interviewer:** but it's not really relevant beyond ….
>
> **Margaret**: I guess. I just never really thought about that before

> **Alan**: [pause] that's an interesting question. Do I see them as language learners or as bilinguals? [long pause] I'm not sure how to answer that

A large majority of teachers did not see the classroom as a bilingual space. They saw their role as providing a space which facilitated the learning of the target language and not in terms of bi/multilingualism:

> **Sally**: I see it as me definitely trying to facilitate their learning of English. Maybe what I said earlier on contradicts that if I'm saying I do allow them to use a bit of L1, but I certainly don't see it as a multilingual space. No I don't, nor did I in Malaysia or anywhere else. I still see it as English, an English classroom, facilitating learning English […] I have to say I never entered the classroom thinking "this is a bilingual room", but they <u>were</u>. They definitely were

Interviewer: but that wasn't how you saw it?

Sally: No, and it never occurred to me until you asked me.

Several teachers said they saw their students as bilingual only when they were highly proficient English-users. Others saw their students as emerging bilinguals or future bilinguals, who would be able to use English in addition to their L1 in the future. Teachers tended to distinguish between shared-L1 and multilingual contexts hugely here:

Interviewer: do you see the classroom as a sort of multilingual space?

Arthur: no I don't. No I see it like- because they're all living together. They're living with host families. No I just see it that we're all just here speaking English

Interviewer: and what about in Spain?

Arthur: yeah that's interesting you've put that to me because I hadn't considered that before [pause] I see it very much as a second language in Spain. I didn't when I first arrived […] I was surprised at everyone breaking into Spanish every few minutes [laughter] or Catalan, and at the breaks I was like "why are you not speaking English together?"

Related to this is the extent to which the teacher was a fluent speaker of the L1. In shared-L1 contexts, teachers themselves sometimes codeswitched, using the L1 for jokes, explanations and for classroom management purposes. However, the majority of teachers interviewed did not have mastery of the students' L1 in shared-L1 contexts and indeed many of the participants did not speak any second language well. Several teachers spoke of the exclusion and discomfort they sometimes felt when they couldn't

understand what the students were saying in their L1. The four participants for whom English was an L2 tended to see the students as future bilinguals and see themselves as an example of a fluent L2 user:

> **Agatha:** So I did see them as language learners but I also saw them as basically in the future as people who are going to use both languages […] they quite enjoyed it as well, most of the students, especially the Greek students because they could see a teacher from Greece speaking in a different accent and they were quite interested in that so that's what I tried to do basically

In general, teachers approached their own bi/multilingual skills differently in multilingual contexts. Teachers who spoke the language(s) of some of the students in this context often did not reveal this to the students, pretending that they did not understand. This was partly because they did not want to exclude students whose language they did not know.

While most teachers valued the cultural exchange element of teaching in multilingual environments, in general they tended to see this more in terms of non-linguistic communication and intercultural skill development, and less in terms of multilingual competences or tapping into their bi/multilingual skills:

> **Margaret**: I find actually the main difference is more because of the culture than the actual language. It's tied together of course but when you have a multilingual group, obviously you have a multicultural group and that means a couple of things. It means they're very

> interested in each other and in learning about each other's culture and it also means a variety of learning styles and interaction styles

A very small number of teachers saw the multilingual classroom as a place where students could be encouraged to develop their bi/multilingual competences. They mentioned that some students spoke several languages and could understand a reference to another L1 or explain with reference to another L1. One teacher in particular noticed the multilingualism of the students and viewed their ability to communicate across languages as a personal skill, apparent even among beginner English students communicating in mixed languages:

> **Interviewer:** do you see them as bilinguals?
>
> **Ana:** Yeah, sure, of course. And most of the time multilingual, because they don't only speak English right, it's like a boiling pot of language. So I had really interesting experiences with the junior centre because I'd have students who could speak French in the class, like French speakers who would try to break the rules and instead of speaking English they would speak French to another girl who actually was an Italian and who could understand the French, and they could somehow communicate without speaking each other's language. So you know many times I would just be you know like flabbergasted, like shocked at their ability and I would many times forget that I should actually be interrupting the interaction […] even though they were here to study English I felt that it was a rich experience for them to be able to communicate with someone from another language like that, in an English school, in an English class, breaking the rules

4.3 The Role of Context in the Overall Approach of Teachers

Overall, teachers had mixed and fluid views on the use of the L1. Almost all the teachers felt their approach and beliefs were influenced by the teaching context and that managing L1 use was easier in multilingual than in shared-L1 contexts. Several teachers were very conscious that some of their views were contradictory and not fully thought-through:

> **Arthur**: the only thing I want to add is that I'll probably change my opinion in another few months [laughs]
>
> **Interviewer :** I take that on board, you're not rigid in your view
>
> **Arthur:** no no I'm not

Teachers often articulated feelings of guilt and discomfort when they themselves used the L1 in class or when their students used it, particularly in shared-L1 contexts. Several teachers felt that this constituted a failure on their part, that they had not been able to explain or check something effectively or that the learners were bored and that they had not engaged or motivated them sufficiently for them to want to use English:

> **Jane**: my challenge was and I saw it as a challenge that it was up to me to have enough activities that they were so engrossed in the materials that it wouldn't occur to them to speak in Spanish. So you know if I felt if I left the classroom and I felt towards the end they were speaking Spanish that it was my fault because they- because my classes weren't

> entertaining or demanding enough so that they weren't totally engrossed in it

Others felt that they were breaking an unwritten rule of some kind:

> **Martin**: if they didn't get it in English first of all then I'd probably give in I suppose and help them a little bit in German
>
> **Interviewer:** so a kind of efficiency. It's interesting you use the term 'give in', is that how you felt, that you were kind of giving in?
>
> **Martin**: well I don't know. I suppose it's drummed into us here that like you know 'try not to use their L1 if you can. Everything should be through English', so yeah I suppose it was. I did feel a little bit guilty I suppose that I was kind of breaking a rule or something, that I shouldn't do that

Others considered it a more explicit prohibition:

> **Paul**: I felt I shouldn't be doing it and I knew I would probably get into trouble with my boss

Although a small number had very strong views on the use of the L1 (generally against it), most teachers took a more flexible approach. Several teachers felt that there was a useful role for the L1 in language teaching, particularly in shared-L1 but also to some extent in multilingual contexts, especially for classroom management purposes and as a means of highlighting particular linguistic features of English, and indeed of 'language' in general. It is interesting to view the approaches of the teachers in terms of Macaro's (2009) *virtual, maximal* and *optimal* positions described earlier. As Table 1

demonstrates, very few held an inflexible virtual position. When described, it was more common in multilingual contexts. Much more common was the maximal view especially in shared-L1 contexts but also in monolingual contexts. Several articulated the optimal view, more typically for shared-L1 contexts. Most expressed fluid, changing and even 'contradictory' views, which they were often aware of. [***Table 1***]

Table 1 Teachers' Overall Beliefs in relation to the Use of the L1 in Shared-L1 and Multilingual EFL Contexts

Teacher name	Virtual position in shared-L1 contexts	Virtual position in multilingual contexts	Maximal position in shared-L1 contexts	Maximal position in multilingual contexts	Optimal position in shared-L1 contexts	Optimal position in multilingual contexts
Sarah	X	X				
Magda	X	X	X		X	
Denise		X	X		X	
Jane			X	X	X	X
Agatha	X	X	X			
Martyna			X	X		
Paul		X	X	X	X	
Irene			X	X	X	X
Martin			X	X	X	X
Ana					X	X
Linda			X	X	X	X
Mary			X	X	X	
Margaret	X	X				
Niall			X	X	X	X
Rose				X	X	X
Emma			X	X	X	X
Nora			X	X	X	X
Sally			X	X	X	X
Peter			X	X	X	X
Alan			X	X	X	X
Arthur		X	X	X	X	
Frank	X	X	X			
Tina	X	X				
Amy		X	X		X	X

Most teachers stated that they did not recall the use of the L1 being discussed in depth during their initial-service training, but they had taken away the impression that the L1 was to be discouraged and avoided across all TESOL contexts. Tensions sometimes existed between what teachers considered best practice and what seemed natural and instinctive to them or what their own language learning experiences had been. Personal values relating to inclusiveness and good manners tended to exert considerable influence over their views, particularly in multilingual contexts. Several teachers said they had welcomed the opportunity to speak about and reflect on this issue during the interview for this study:

> **Sally**: I mean nobody really asks you ever what you think about these things and you don't even know what you think, and you're kind of forming your thoughts as you speak which is probably not what you want. You probably want more fully formed thoughts [laughter] […] I wonder what I'd say if you asked me again in a week or a month or a year, and I wonder if you repeated it, if you could get your hands on the same people, what they would say, because I think even having this conversation is going to change things now. And I'm going to start thinking about what I'm doing and wondering more and remembering the conversation

6. Discussion

A number of important conclusions can be drawn from these findings. The discussion of these is framed within the limitations of this small-scale study involving twenty-four EFL teachers.

Firstly, the study confirms what many scholars (e.g. Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011; Larsen-Freeman, 2011) have found regarding the strong influence exerted by the teaching context on the decision-making and pedagogic choices of language teachers. In this study, whether the teaching takes place in a shared-L1 or in a multilingual context has been identified as an important consideration for EFL teachers. The particular learning environment, group dynamic, linguistic resources and teaching challenges are very different in each context and call for different approaches to the use of the L1 in the classroom. In general, teachers tend to have stronger views against using the L1 in multilingual contexts and to be more tolerant and flexible of this phenomenon in shared-L1 contexts. To a large extent, they rely on what feels instinctive and natural to them, particularly in shared-L1 contexts. Beyond a general belief that an English-only approach facilitates a superior form of language learning, most teachers do not appear to have a strong theoretical basis on which to draw, which would inform and guide their decision-making and practices in relation to this.

Similarly to the findings of other scholars (e.g. Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Macaro 2014, 2009; Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009), this study points to considerable variation among teachers in relation to their practices and beliefs about the role of the L1 in language teaching Indeed, this study finds that individual teachers seem to hold flexible, fluid and even contradictory views on this. Although it is in fact not uncommon for teachers to hold seemingly

contradictory views on certain pedagogic practices (Oranje & Smith, 2018; Phipps & Borg, 2009), it seems clear that many teachers have not given much thought to or reflected critically on the issue of using the L1 in the EFL classroom. As Kumaravadivelu (2012) has pointed out, researchers often find teachers are not conscious of their beliefs until directly asked about them by interviewers. This study suggests that an explicit focus on codeswitching and L1 use in the language classroom on the part of teachers and an opportunity for critical reflection of their assumptions, beliefs and practices in this regard would be beneficial for teachers. Such critical reflection could perhaps involve discussions with colleagues and with students on the topic as well as using reflection journals, peer observations, self-questioning techniques etc., which would allow teachers to become more confident about their teaching choices and feel less guilty in their approach to the use of the L1. As Song (2015) and Richards (1996) have suggested, such awareness raising and critical reflection are key factors in teacher education and development programmes.

Finally, many of the frustrations and challenges articulated by teachers about minimising L1 use, particularly in shared-L1 contexts, may relate to difficulties around implementing strictly monolingual practices with learners who are developing and using their bilingual skills. Teachers themselves do not seem to perceive this in terms of monolingual or bilingual practices or spaces, however, and appear unused to thinking about their teaching environment and their learners in these terms. Taking a bilingual stance as advocated by García et al. (2017) might be a useful perspective for teachers in this regard, perhaps allowing them to celebrate the emerging bilingual skills of the learners and to view codeswitching as a valuable linguistic resource to be

exploited and practised in a targeted and judicious way in the language classroom within a broadly communicative, meaning-based approach. Such a pedagogic stance could also facilitate a space in which to foster multilingual competence in both shared-L1 and multilingual contexts, even when teachers do not know the language(s) of the learners.

6. Conclusion

The above conclusions raise a number of important implications for TESOL educators and practitioners. The prevailing monolingual orientation in foreign language teacher education, which continues to see codeswitching and other bilingual practices as a hindrance and a distraction from effective language learning needs to be revisited. As Cummins (2007: 233) suggests: "learning efficiencies can be achieved if teachers explicitly draw students' attention to similarities and differences between their languages". The application of critical reflection strategies and tools in relation to the use of the L1 in their everyday teaching practice across various contexts could provide a useful starting point for teachers. An explicit focus on developing such skills and applying them to monolingual classroom practices could become a useful part of future teacher training and development programmes. Furthermore, building on approaches to the use of the L1 in class, such as those advocated by Turnbull (2018), Cook (2016) and Cenoz and Gorter (2013), which frame the EFL classroom as a bi/multilingual space would allow for the exploration of long-held assumptions about how learners acquire, store and use their additional languages. The design of pedagogic approaches and teaching

materials which encourage learners to build on their underlying knowledge about language(s) and to develop their bi/multilingual competences as described by Canagarajah (2014) would be useful supports for such a multilingual turn in the classroom.

It is also important that these resources and pedagogic frameworks would move beyond the one-size-fits-all approach which appears to be prevalent in many initial teacher education programmes (Cook, 2016; King, 2016) and cater more effectively for the varied teaching and learning contexts in which English language teachers find themselves. Teachers need to be supported more effectively in making informed choices so that they can adapt their practices regarding the use of the L1 in English language classrooms to suit their particular teaching context.

[1]The expression L2 is used throughout to denote any language that is not the first language of learners. It is acknowledged that for some learners this might be a third, fourth, etc. language.

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Appendix A: Participant profiles

Name	Has DELTA qualification	initial training before teaching	speaks other languages	L1	No of years' experience in multilingual context	No of years' experience in shared-L1 context	could speak L1 of students in shared L1 context
Sarah	Yes	No	No	English	12	7	No
Magda	Yes	Yes	Yes	Polish	10	5	Yes
Denise	Yes	Yes	No	English	23	2	No
Jane	---	No	Yes	English	6	4	Yes
Agatha	No	No	Yes	Greek	3	5	Yes
Martyna	Yes	Yes	Yes	Polish	3	3	No
Paul	Yes	Yes	Yes	English	7	10	Yes
Irene	No	Yes	No	English	1	1	No
Martin	Yes	Yes	Yes	English	3	1	No
Ana	No	No	Yes	Portuguese	1	9	Yes
Linda	No	Yes	Yes	English	7	7	Yes
Mary	Yes	Yes	Yes	English	8	16	Yes
Margaret	No	Yes	Yes	English	5	1	No
Niall	No	Yes	No	English	2	1	No
Rose	No	Yes	Yes	English	2	3	Yes
Emma	No	No	No	English	4	2	No
Nora	Yes	No	Yes	English	2	3	No
Sally	Yes	Yes	No	English	9	7	No
Peter	No	No	No	English	2	2	No
Alan	No	Yes	No	English	6	1	No
Arthur	Yes	---	Yes	English	8	7	Yes
Frank	No	Yes	Yes	English	2	3	Yes
Tina	Yes	Yes	No	English	21	2	No
Amy	---	Yes	No	English	11	1	No

Appendix B: Interview Template

A. Background

1. Tell me a little bit about your background as an ESOL/EFL teacher. (How long an ESOL teacher? Where? Which teacher training course taken? etc.)

2. Do you speak any languages other than English? What level?

B. Teaching contexts

3. Describe your teaching context in …. (Spain / China etc.).

4. Do you speak …. (Spanish / Chinese etc.)? What level?

5. Describe your teaching context in Ireland.

6. What are the main differences between the two contexts?

C. Use of L1 in the classroom

7. Think of a particular teaching context you taught/teach in in …. (Spain / China etc.). Are there times when you would use/allow students to use the L1 in the classroom in this context? Why/why not? When? How?

8. How do you feel about using the L1 at these times?

9. Think of your teaching context in Ireland. Are there times when you would use / allow students to use the L1 in the classroom? Why/why not? When? How?

10. How do you feel about using the L1 at these times?

D. Overall attitude to the use of the L1 in the two contexts.

11. What are your views on using the L1 of the students in the ESOL classroom?

12. Does your approach to this vary depending on whether you are teaching in … (Spain / China etc.) or Ireland?

13. Teacher training – what was the view on the use of L1 in the classroom? Did the teacher training affect / shape your views on this?

E. The classroom as a bilingual space?

14. How do you see your learners and your classroom? When you see your students and your classroom in front of you, do you see it as a language learning space and your students as language learners or are you more likely to

see it as a bilingual or a multilingual space and your students as bilinguals or potential bilinguals?