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Language Practices and Attitudes in EFL and English-Medium Classes at a University in Eastern Ukraine

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The purpose of this paper is to show how English and the predominant native language (L1), Russian, are used in classes of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and classes in which English is a medium of instruction (EMI) in a single Ukrainian university. Classes were taught by 13 teachers including the authors. Uses of English and Russian/Ukrainian were documented over 9 months in the form of ethnographic field notes, audio recording, and video recording. Semi-structured interviews and informal conversations captured student and teacher attitudes towards English and Russian/Ukrainian use. The authors found multiple purposes for using the L1. Teachers and students consider the use of the L1 in the classroom to be a natural function of the need for comprehension.

Introduction

The use of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) has become a truly global phenomenon. In addition to being a language of instruction in countries where English is an official language or language of wider communication, English is being promoted as a medium of instruction by governments or individual educational institutions at all levels of education in contexts as diverse as Armenia (Pavlenko, 2008), Bolivia (Hornberger, 2009), Japan (Butler, 2007), Korea (Lee, 2009) and Saudi Arabia (Al-Jarf, 2008), to name a few. The rise of English is especially noticeable in European universities, which are both competing for students worldwide and working to increase student and teacher mobility through international and inter-university agreements including the Bologna Process (cf. European Union, 2007; Kerlkaan, Moreira, & Boersma, 2008; Phillipson, 2006). Currently, there are over 2,000 university programs Europe-wide identified as being taught in English (Labi, 2011).

Multiple linguists and language rights activists express concern that the use of EMI poses a threat to linguistic diversity in European countries (Coleman, 2006; Pérez de Pablos, 2009; Phillipson, 2006; Tosi, 2006). However, research from

the field of bilingual education and immersion programs has demonstrated that even in classrooms labeled “immersion” in the target language, the use of and appreciation for the target language and the mother tongue is possible (cf. Duff, 1995). Moreover, students’ and teachers’ views of the relative strength and value of their native language(s) in relation to English can serve as protective factors against language shift from a mother tongue or national language to English.

The purpose of this paper is to show how practices and attitudes towards English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and EMI at one university in Ukraine support the maintenance of the native language or languages (L1), while still increasing abilities in the target language. The three research issues discussed in this paper are: 1) the dependence of students’ success in their university EFL and EMI courses on their previous experience in EFL learning outside the state educational system; 2) the relative evidence and reasons of L1 use across EFL and EMI classes; and 3) the attitudes of students and teachers to the use of students’ L1 in their EFL and EMI classes and the impact of those attitudes on the actual L1 use.

Previous Research on Practices and Attitudes of L1 Usage in the EFL and EMI Classes

Recent research at multiple levels of education has revealed through surveys and qualitative methods that the majority of teachers and students see both the importance of developing English and supporting that development with the use of native languages in EFL classes (Al-Nofaie, 2010; Kang, 2008; Kim & Petraki, 2009; Nazary, 2008; Schweers, 1999; Tang, 2002). The main reasons respondents support or implement the use of L1 in the EFL classroom are: 1) to explain difficult concepts or other concepts that students do not understand; 2) to explain grammar or for other metalinguistic uses; and 3) classroom management or discipline.

When English is the medium of instruction rather than studied as a foreign language, on the other hand, the research focus tends to shift from demonstrating the effectiveness of the L1 in such a setting to presenting more nuanced desires or efforts to balance the use of English and native languages in educational settings. Al-Jarf (2008) conducted a survey of 470 female students at a university in Saudi Arabia, where English has been competing with Arabic as a medium of instruction. She found that 82% of students surveyed believe Arabic is more appropriate for teaching Islamic studies, history, Arabic literature and education, whereas English is more appropriate for medicine, pharmacy, engineering, science, nursing, and computer science. Giliomee & Schlemmer (2006) conducted a survey of parents’ attitudes towards EMI at public schools and universities in South Africa. The majority of parents reported an acceptance of the practical value of English, but Afrikaans-speaking parents wanted their children’s right to study in Afrikaans preserved. Indian-speaking parents also worried about the maintenance of cultural heritage and ethnic identity in this context. Kerlkaan et al. (2008) conducted interviews with administrators, professors, and staff at a university in Portugal. They found that the rector emphasized the importance of internationalization while keeping local connections, and implemented language policy as a set of guidelines for teachers rather than with an iron fist. Members of the foreign language department viewed the issue of language at their university in a more complex way, recognizing the need for English while being sensitive

to the cultural value of Portuguese and foreign languages other than English. In ethnographic research at the classroom level, Hult (2007) reported that Swedish teachers found ways to navigate around official policy and to treat multilingualism as a resource.

None of these research approaches have been applied yet to EFL or EMI in higher education in Ukraine, and information on EMI in higher education institutions in other post-Soviet republics is extremely limited. In Lithuania, Bulajeva and Hogan-Brun (2008) reported national data showing a slight decrease in Lithuanian-language higher education and a corresponding increase in English-medium education. However, they still showed that 98% of institutions surveyed use Lithuanian, and only 3% use English. Given that the total is over 100%, some institutions must be using both the national language and English. Pavlenko (2008) reported concerns about the rise of English and its impact on national languages in multiple post-Soviet republics. She cited research showing that English is a medium of instruction at higher education institutions in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan. Pavlenko listed multiple languages of instruction for institutions in these countries, so it is not clear whether any of these schools use English as a sole medium of instruction.

Generally speaking, the existing research on the subject under discussion does not provide any conclusive evidence concerning the attitudes to EFL and EMI in relation to the use of L1 in the post-Soviet space and Ukraine in particular. That makes conducting additional studies in this part of the world desirable, which served as an incentive to organizing the research reported in this paper.

The Research Site

For writing this article all data were collected at only one Ukrainian tertiary educational institution: Alfred Nobel University in Dnipropetrovsk. Of course, this university cannot be considered as representing all the tertiary schools in Ukraine or even as quite typical of them. But it is one of the recognized leaders of higher education in Ukraine, that leadership being confirmed by the *"Leader of the Branch"* National Certificate and medal conferred on the university by the state statistical authorities in 2009 after their calculating the ratings and activity results of over 300,000 different organizations and enterprises in Ukraine for that year. Alfred Nobel University's efforts to distinguish itself as a leader among universities are especially pronounced in the area of teaching English as a foreign language. Whereas many universities in Dnipropetrovsk (and possibly the rest of Ukraine) are offering EFL for only 2 or 4 semesters as required by the Ukrainian Ministry of Education, this university encourages students of all specialties (majors) to learn EFL for all 5 years of study.

Alfred Nobel University is also introducing English immersion programs in teaching professional subjects, including those directly related to students' majors. Its principal achievement in that area was the establishment of a partnership with the University of Wales to provide a 4-year English-medium joint degree program in International Management. This is why this particular university was especially interesting for research as the one typically representing the most advanced *trends* towards EMI in Ukrainian higher education.

Methods

The current study seeks to synthesize findings on usage and attitudes towards the use of Russian or Ukrainian in EFL and EMI courses from two sources: an insider-expert's knowledge of education in Ukraine, and systemic participant-observation ethnographic research. The first author is a native Ukrainian with a doctor in educational science and has been a full professor at the university since 2000. Based on his personal experience of teaching EFL and EMI courses, as well as the outcomes of his previous research on immersion education (cf. Tarnopolsky, 2008), he formulated a framework of reasons why Ukrainian teachers and students at the university are prone to use their L1 in EFL and EMI courses.

The second author is an American Ph.D. student in Educational Linguistics with 2 years of prior experience teaching at universities in Ukraine. She spent 9 months conducting ethnographic research at Alfred Nobel University with three main groups of students: 1) 24 third-year students taking international economics in English; 2) nine second-year philology students in their English practice (EFL) classes; and 3) 25 "Wales program" students, so called because they were in the preparatory phase of the joint bachelor's degree program in International Management with the University of Wales. In this last group, eight of the students were from Nigeria and Algeria. The Algerian students were not available for interviews, so the remainder of the article will focus on the practices and attitudes of students from Ukraine and Nigeria.

Over the nine month period, 52 80-minute class meetings of EMI courses by 9 nine teachers were observed by the second author, including three class meetings led by the first author. During the same time period, 50 80-minute EFL class meetings taught by seven teachers were observed by the second author, including 33 class meetings led by the first author, two class meetings led by substitute teachers for focal subgroups, and two EFL classes taught to nonfocal groups that were occasionally observed by the second author. One-third of all lessons were audio recorded or video recorded. Finally, the second author was a guest English teacher for two groups of university professors who were being prepared to teach in English. Eleven of these lessons were audiorecorded or written up in field notes and were also analyzed.

Among the three groups of participants, 26 students and four teachers were selected for semi-structured interviews about their personal background, attitudes towards English, Russian, and Ukrainian, and language practices in the classroom. The first author was also one of the interviewees for this project. Most of the interviewees were also shown audio or video clips of various teaching and language activities and given a chance to comment on them. Finally, informal interviews were conducted with three teachers in different departments, and there were regular consultancy meetings between the two authors at the university over the course of the year.

Upon completion of field work and interviews, field notes, audio and video transcripts, and interview transcripts were open-coded by the second author using the Atlas.ti software. Data were flagged for both explicit references to attitudes and practices in interviews, and classroom practices which explicitly or implicitly reflect underlying attitudes. The data were reviewed a second time to identify tokens of L1 use. To understand the patterns in L1 use, these tokens were sorted according to the first author's framework into the following tables: reasons teachers used Russian in

EMI or EFL classes, reasons students used Russian in EMI or EFL classes, and reasons the teacher and students used Russian in English classes for university professors. The second author added or merged categories of reasons for L1 use as suggested by the data. In addition, video segments and audio transcripts of the first author's classes were occasionally shown to him to verify the language and purpose of the switch to L1, creating a further reflexive development of both authors' formulations about the use of Russian or Ukrainian in the EFL and EMI context.

Results and Discussion

The Relationship between Ukrainian Students' Success in University EFL and EMI courses and their Previous Experience in EFL Learning Outside the State Educational System

Very soon after Ukraine had gained its independence in 1991, the first author undertook the task of opening commercial EFL courses in the city of Dnipropetrovsk, the third largest city of Ukraine with a population of more than 1,200,000 inhabitants. When his courses were actually opened in September 1993, there was only one more commercial EFL school in the city. The Internet search at the end of 2010 demonstrated that in December that year there were 100 commercial EFL schools and courses in Dnipropetrovsk alone!

The causes of such popularity of commercial forms of EFL teaching were first discussed by Tarnopolsky (1996). But they should be summarized in this paper again for clarifying the issue for further discussion and comparison with the current data.

The first cause that makes EFL teaching/learning in state-owned educational institutions less popular than in commercial schools or with private tutors is the centralized development and obligatory nature of the EFL curricula, syllabuses, and other regulating documents for such teaching/learning at secondary schools and universities run by the state. That does not favor the *learner-centered approach* (Nunan, 1988), nor does it take into account the conditions and learners' needs that can be quite specific in every particular school. On the contrary, for commercial courses and private tutors, it is much easier to adapt effectively to every particular set of circumstances, conditions, and learners' needs, which leads to enhanced learning motivation and outcomes.

The second cause is due to the fact that state-owned educational institutions are bound to allocate insufficient class time for language learning, usually one, sometimes two, 45-minute classes per week in secondary schools and 80-minute classes in tertiary schools. There is no other choice because if time allocations for one compulsory subject are increased, there will be no time left for some other subjects, also compulsory. On the other hand, commercial EFL programs give teachers and students the opportunity to allocate as much time as necessary to EFL classes but not more than is really acceptable for both parties. That improves learning outcomes, learning motivation, and, consequently, the popularity of this form of EFL teaching/learning.

The third cause is that even nowadays the methods of teaching and teaching materials in many state-owned secondary (and some tertiary) schools are not much better than it was in the Soviet times. Though some schools, especially private ones, purchase British textbooks that slowly introduce more recent teaching methods

(e.g. communicative language teaching, project work, and using the Internet) into Ukrainian EFL classes, most such schools run by the state do not have sufficient funding for any textbooks of English except the cheapest ones published locally and not infrequently based on outdated English, full of mistakes, and containing exercises that use the grammar-translation method. On the contrary, in commercial EFL teaching using the most advanced teaching methods and materials is the matter of survival.

The three causes discussed above give rise to the fourth cause: in the former USSR, the population did not trust the state-owned educational institutions' ability to effectively teach English to their students. The same mistrust and the same belief is active in today's Ukraine too. Many parents are sure that if they want their child to gain a good command of English, the best (if not the only way) to achieve that is to hire a private tutor for him/her or to pay for his/her studies in commercial English courses. That *a priori* makes commercial EFL teaching/learning something where success is expected while free of charge EFL teaching/learning in state-owned schools is something *a priori* expected to fail.

The four causes just analyzed give some reasonable grounds to suppose that a Ukrainian student with a sufficient level of English for the purposes of studying academic subjects in English at Alfred Nobel University may have had not only EFL classes in public school but also a private tutor or private language school studies. This supposition was supported by the interview data. Of 24 students interviewed, three-quarters of them indicated receiving additional language training from a tutor or a commercial language school, and one student had both. Students' time in these extracurricular activities ranged widely, from 6 months to 7 years. Three of the students specifically gave criticisms of the public school system as part of the rationale for studying English elsewhere. Only one student felt their tutor was not ultimately the reason their language improved, attributing their success instead to Internet communication and watching movies. Four other students directly attributed their development in English to travel, work or study abroad.

Uses of Students' L1 in EFL and EMI courses

Teacher uses of the L1.

Using students' L1 in EFL classes and in EMI classes is quite a typical phenomenon at the university. The purposes of teachers using students' L1 in EFL classes are mostly connected with:

1. Explaining to students the meanings and usage of some vocabulary or repeating the vocabulary in English and the L1 when using the target language can take too long or may lead students to incorrectly grasp some specificities of such meanings and usage;
2. Explaining to students some grammatical phenomena which may be difficult for them to clearly understand if the explanations are done in English or that may require the introduction of quite a number of otherwise unnecessary English grammar terms;
3. Doing inter-language and inter-cultural comparisons, especially when such comparisons involve more than two languages and cultures—like

- comparing the British and American varieties of the English language on the one hand and Ukrainian/Russian on the other hand, or comparing the American, British, Russian, and Ukrainian cultural phenomena;
4. Checking students' comprehension in doubtful cases;
 5. Translating course materials when without recourse to L1 it may be too difficult for students to understand (e.g., some passage in the text that they are reading);
 6. Providing the Russian equivalent of a word in response to a students' request (in English or English mixed with Russian) for clarification or repetition of a word;
 7. Switching to the L1 (most often without a specific pedagogical goal) in cases when students ask them questions in L1;
 8. Explaining organizational matters (e.g., class time and room changes, instructions for homework assignments, grades);
 9. Talking with students before or after the bell; and
 10. Disciplining students for tardiness or other inappropriate behavior in class.

The purposes of teachers using students' L1 during classes in EMI courses are quite similar. Two purposes that were not noticeable in EMI courses are grammatical explanations and translation of course materials. The former is connected with the fact that explicit language instruction is not offered in EMI courses at the university, even when the teacher has a background in EFL pedagogy. The latter is connected with the fact that unlike EFL courses, EMI courses do not always have a textbook in English; if they do, they are not used directly in class.

Two additional purposes of teachers using students' L1 as employed by the first author and/or observed by the second author in EMI courses were:

1. Explaining in the L1 or repeating in English and the L1 subject-specific English terminology encountered by students during lectures, practical classes/seminars, and in their course readings; and
2. Occasional (mostly infrequent) situations when the teacher does not know or forgets some required word or word combination in English and has no choice but to slip back to his/her own mother tongue to help himself/herself out.

Among these purposes, the most prevalent by far were connected with providing vocabulary in both the target language and the L1, whether it was content-specific or a general word needed to understand the content. Generally, such words or phrases were uttered by the teacher in both Russian and English in the course of the lecture, as Excerpt 1 from an economics class illustrates (original language from audio file, April 21, 2011; hereafter in all excerpts, the Russian language will appear in italics with the English translation in brackets).

In this example, a student from Nigeria had just asked the economics professor if profit and income are the same things. The teacher explained the difference between the economic-specific words "income" and "profit" in English, then provided the Russian equivalents. The teacher also used Russian to summarize the rule in calculating profit. In general, this professor stated her concern to the researcher about ensuring the integration and cooperation among the Nigerian and Ukrainian students. That could be interpreted as an underlying belief that the

switch to Russian was not a slip in talking to a student from Nigeria, but rather targeted at Ukrainian students who might have been similarly confused.

Excerpt 1

(TM1=EMI Teacher #1)

1	TM1:	So by applying his organizational and entrepreneurial skills, each
2		entrepreneur, wants to get income in a definite form. This form is called a
3		profit. (7.0) So, income is <i>dokhod</i> . Profit is <i>pribyl'</i> . Clear? So, as an economic
4		notion, profit is, money earned as well. But, profit in this case is the money
5		earning got after goods selling (sic) and costs deduction. (4.0) So, that's
6		the salary of entrepreneur. But if you are talking about the salary, there are
7		no direct costs from the side of the hired worker. But there are costs which
8		are spent by the entrepreneur to organize the business, to organize the
9		technical work, to organize the production of the certain goods or services.
10		So the profit is the um, earnings after costs deduction. If the income is the
11		general sum of money after the sale of products and services, profit is
12		the money earnings got after selling and costs deduction. <i>To est', dokhod</i>
13		<i>minus izderzhki. Na proisvodstvo.</i> [That is to say, income minus costs. Of
14		production.]

Switches connected with requests for explanation or clarification from students, conducting class business, or the beginning or end of the lesson were also common. Excerpt 2 offers an example of the use of language before, during, and after class (original language from video file, December 9, 2010):

Excerpt 2

(TM2=EMI Teacher #2)

1	TM2:	And you see here that there are some possible positive results if this area,
2		+G, environment income, is higher than these, you remember -B, minus D,
3		debt-rate process for economy, so here, everything depends on the tariff
4		rate itself. And, uh, there's some optimal tariff rate when government
5		make, when uh there's possible national economy to maximize national
6		welfare. We will study this next time, and for exporting country, the
7		results will be negative, and the whole results will (Music plays). That's
8		all. <i>Tak, v sleduiushchii raz potomu shto u nas idut zadachi, ya vam formuly dam</i>
9		<i>v sleduiushchii raz. Vam prosto nado umet' razbirat'sya na grafikakh i chitat' po</i>
10		<i>grafikam. I v sleduiushchii raz testy na komp'iutere. Popraktikuem'sya, eto eshche</i>
11		<i>poka (xx).</i> [So, next time, because we have to have a task, I will give you
12		the formula next time. You just have to review the charts and read the
13		charts. And next time there will be a test on the computer. We will do it
14		for practice, it's not yet (xx).]

In this example, the teacher explained the meaning of a graph in English. In fact, the entire lesson was conducted in English, but the moment the bell rang, she switched to Russian to give them homework instructions and information about the next class. Such a move illustrates a number of functions of Russian at this moment. It signals the boundaries of when a lesson begins and ends, and

indicates the information shared was not lesson content anymore. Explaining such information in Russian rather than English also saves time, as students and the teacher may have another class to go to or may not pay strong attention in English once the bell has rung.

Interlanguage comparisons were the rarest in EMI classes, while fairly common in EFL classes, as Excerpt 3 illustrates. The students had pictures of different professions in front of them, and they were supposed to name the profession. One of the pictures showed a lawyer, but the teacher decided that, due to the multiplicity of lexical items' meanings in English and Russian or Ukrainian, it was necessary to explain the specific names for lawyers in the British court system, and how those concepts map to the professions in the Russian language and the Ukrainian legal system (original language from video file, October 6, 2010):

Excerpt 3

(TE1=EFL Teacher #1; W1= Wales Program Student #1)

1	TE1:	Who can they be?
2	W1:	Lawyers.
3	TE1:	Lawyers. But lawyers. Well, lawyer, is a generic name. Generic name.
4		<i>Obobshchenniye</i> . But lawyers can be, <i>no</i> [well] if in Russian <i>sudiyi</i> ,
5		<i>advokati</i> , <i>prokurori</i> [judges, lawyers, prosecutors]. So since there are
6		three of them, these lawyers belong to what we call <i>advokati</i> . What's
7		<i>advokat</i> in English for the British court system? Who knows? (.8
8		seconds) Nobody knows. There are two names. (pause while the
9		teacher is looking for chalk, can't find any, asks a student in Russian
10		to go find some and, continues orally). So, in the British law, there are
11		two types of what we call <i>advokati</i> . One is a solicitor. Solicitor. (Writes
12		word on board and spells it out orally): S-o-l-i-c-i-t-or. Solicitor. And
13		the other one is a barrister. B-a-double r-i-s-ter. Barrister.

Note that in this example, the teacher also repeats the word “generic name” in English and Russian without any markers. The term is a metalinguistic descriptor of the word “lawyer” which future economists do not need to know. The teacher wants to be sure the students understand this word so they are not distracted by an unknown word and thereby lose the meaning of the sentence.

Conversely, the use of the L1 for disciplinary reasons was rarer in EFL classes than in EMI courses. This, combined with the knowledge that (with one exception) EFL teachers on average used the L1 twice as often as EMI teachers, suggests that sustained input in the target language and more restricted use of the L1 may cause students to tune out faster, leading teachers to use disciplinary measures more often to keep learners behaving appropriately in the classroom.

Student uses of the L1.

Students were observed using their L1 in EFL classes when:

1. They did not know or understand some vocabulary, grammar, or specific cultural phenomena and asked their teacher for explanations;
2. It was too difficult for them to understand some meaningful material

- (e.g., some passage in the text that they were reading) and they explicitly requested explanations in their L1;
3. They asked for explanations when and how to do some particular in-class or out-of-class assignments or other organizational problems;
 4. They inadvertently slipped to their L1 in pair or small group activities;
 5. They asked a teacher or peer (or answered) some language, organizational, or other lesson-related or lesson-unrelated questions in a soft voice;
 6. They found themselves switching to the L1 during a class discussion or when responding to a teacher's question because they had forgotten the word in the target language, didn't know the word, or were caught up in the heat of debate; and
 7. They were talking with teachers or peers before or after the bell.

The cases of students' reverting to their L1 in EMI classes are practically identical. The most prevalent reason for switching as observed in EMI and EFL classes was in whole class discussions as the following example with a teacher and two students from a social science class indicates (original language from audio file, December 6, 2010):

Excerpt 4

(TM3=EMI Teacher #3; W2=Wales Program Student #2; W3=Wales Program Student #3)

1 2	TM3:	So, and now, let us summarize. So, and what is amnesia? What is amnesia?
3 4	W2:	Mmm, if I understand, I think that it's uh, it is when you lose access to your memories.
5	TM3:	Mm hmm. So, and what kind of uh, so and uh-
6	W2:	Long term memory.
7 8 9	TM3:	So, long term memory. So and uh, amnesia is a kind of psychological disorder. It is a kind of disorder and when you lose uh, access to the information stored in our long term memory
10	W3:	So it can be uh, (pause)
11	W2:	We may find this access (xx)
12	W3:	Some physical or (quiet) <i>kak budet</i> [how would you say]
13	TM3:	Mmm?
14	W3:	<i>prichiny</i> (xx) [reasons]
15	TM3:	Reasons
16	W3:	Reasons can lead to, or some psychological...
17 18	TM3:	Psychological, and so, and some psychological reasons can lead to amnesia. And what are they? Some negative experiences. And-
19	W2:	Also, maybe, something like, for example, when someone hit you,

20	TM3:	Mm hmm.
21	W2:	You can lose your memory. Also I have heard-
22 23	TM3:	Or some physical so, injuries can lead to amnesia because some, and part of your brain is damaged. So that's, amnesia.
24	W2:	I heard a story when, when a man, he was ill on, canker...
25	TM3:	Cancer
26 27	W2:	Cancer, yes, they cut out part out of his brain, a small part, uh, I don't remember where, but after it he cannot (quiet)
28	W3:	<i>zapomnit'</i> [remember]
29	TM3:	Remember
30	W2:	He cannot remember anything.

Here we see two students attempting to answer review questions posed by the teacher. At line 12, the student W3 pauses and asks in Russian, “how would you say” and then repeats the Russian equivalent of the word “reasons”. The teacher provides the equivalent in English, then helps the student reformulate the whole sentence in more target-like English. Later, another student also pauses. It is not audible on the tape, but likely W2 turns to W3 and says the Russian word, hoping W3 knows it. Instead, W3 repeats it out loud for the teacher, who again provides the Russian equivalent.

In other cases, a student's switch to Russian took the form of a question to the teacher which may or may not be a serious question. In the following example, a student asked question immediately following the teacher's explanation in Russian about the difference between income and profit (original language from audio file, December 14, 2010):

Excerpt 5

(TM1=EMI Teacher #1; W2=Wales Program Student #2)

1 2 3 4	TM1:	If the income is the general sum of money after the sale of products and services, profit is the money earnings got after selling and costs deduction. <i>To est', dokhod minus izderzhki. Na proizvodstvo.</i> [That is to say, income minus costs. Of production.]
5	W2:	<i>I eto budet chistaya pribyl'?</i> [And this is the net profit?]
6 7	TM1:	This is the profit. <i>Sam ty chistaya pribyl'. Seychas dal'she budet.</i> [You yourself are the net profit. We're moving on now.]
8	W2:	(Laughing) <i>Eto budet chistaya pribyl'?</i> [This is the net profit?]
9 10	TM1:	So...er...to calculate the costs which were spent by the entrepreneur to organize...

In line 5, W2 asks a sincere confirmation check in Russian which the teacher answers in line 6 in both sincere English and a joke in Russian before moving on to the next topic. The use of a joke in Russian here reflects a number of issues about learning in a foreign language. One, it is difficult to make such jokes in

a non-native language. Two, such jokes may lighten the burden of learning in a foreign language. Three, the student’s desire (as expressed in line 8) to extend the discussion of the joke rather than move on may reflect a less than serious attitude to education in general that is typical of first year university students, regardless of the language of instruction.

In EFL classes, teachers also were seen posing a question which often (but not always) indicated that students should provide the Russian equivalent, as this example shows (original language from audio file, October 20, 2010):

Excerpt 6

(TE1=EFL Teacher #1; W1=Wales Program Student #1)

1	TE1:	Science. What is science?
2	W1:	<i>Nauka.</i>
3	TE1:	<i>Kakaya?</i> [What kind?]
4	W1:	(W1 says “ <i>tochnaya</i> ” [exact], another student overlaps with a different word)
5 6	TE1:	<i>Tochnaya nauka</i> [Exact science]. So, physics, mathematics, chemistry, are all sciences.

At line 2, the student offers a generic translation of the word science (in Russian the word *nauka* means both sciences and humanities). The teacher’s response at line 3, “what kind?” invites a more precise translation or understanding of the English word “science”. Moreover, the fact that the teacher offers this question in Russian validates the students’ use of Russian, and invites further expression from students in Russian. The teacher returns to English in line 5 after restating the correct translation of “science” as *tochnaya nauka* [exact science] being distinct from humanities and then gives examples of exact sciences.

Researcher’s and teachers’ use of teachers’ L1 in researcher-led classes.

The volume of data on the use of the L1 in EFL classes led by the second author (hereafter referred to as the researcher) for university teachers is limited but shows that the researcher switched most often for interlanguage comparisons, as part of comprehension checks, and in response to students’ switches to Russian. Unlike the university EFL teachers, the researcher spent very little time teaching grammar and, when she did, she did not use metalanguage or heavy description in Russian. The rationale was that her co-teachers were already providing detailed input (in English, Russian, or a combination) about grammar; the researcher wanted to focus on speaking and communication (especially as it related to teaching in English). Even if the researcher had taught grammar, it would have required a high level of metalanguage in Russian to offer such an explanation.

Qualitatively, the use of the L1 by the researcher was strongly connected to two factors. One was the behaviors observed by the researcher in other classes, as the following field notes excerpt indicates:

I [the researcher] talked about grade inflation and said it’s a problem in

the U.S. too, though students will often complain about low grades. Also, the problem may be a bit different here (in Ukraine) because grades are given orally. 'You know orally?' I didn't translate. (Field notes, September 10, 2010)

The comment "I didn't translate" suggests that even after one and half weeks of observing classes, the researcher had already internalized the notion that a comprehension check question is usually followed by a translation into Russian. The other factor in the researcher's use of Russian was the perceived level of English of the teachers, as the next vignette illustrates:

I [the researcher] then said in English, "I propose we meet one time next week, then next week we decide when we will meet." But my rate of speech plus the unusual content (which was in more than one sentence) made it difficult for them to understand. So I summarized in Russian: *my vstretemsia odin raz na sleduiushchey (sic) nedele, i togda my reshim kogda my budem obychno vstrechatsya*. One of the teachers summarized that as "we will meet only this one time?" (Original language from field notes, January 27, 2011)

Like the university students, the teachers in these groups most often switched during the course of discussion. All switches were noted to occur more frequently in the intermediate-level group than in the advanced level group. At the beginning of the year, the researcher's reaction to teachers' use of Russian was oriented both to her own level of Russian and the perceived future needs of the teachers, as this unedited field notes excerpt illustrates:

One of my [the researcher's] students, R1, got stuck on the word *nastroen*. I asked, does it mean "upset?" The other students said, no, that's *rastroen*. R1 then used other words in English to explain. I responded that it sounded like "positive attitude." The researcher's co-teacher came in. R1 said *nastroen pozitivno* and the co-teacher said "positive attitude." I said, "of course it's easier to say the word in Russian and get the translation. But, when you explained it in English, I understood it perfectly." My goal was to get students to only use English, because I couldn't support them in Russian. Also if they had to teach only in English, they had to speak only English. They were not using it strategically/proactively as the English teachers did, but in a way that was stumbling. It could be embarrassing in the classroom. (Original language from field notes, September 10, 2010)

By the time the researcher began working with the intermediate group, her Russian ability and confidence had improved; concurrently, her teaching approach became more pragmatic. When the researcher did not know the translation directly, she used a dictionary to look up the word and offer the Russian equivalent.

"Speak English": Constraints on L1 usage.

The categorizations and examples in the previous sections reflect a general sense of openness and fluidity of use of English and Russian/Ukrainian in classes. They

also show that teachers and students are oriented to using Russian/Ukrainian for the purposes of completing a learning task successfully. There were occasions, however, when students' use of a language other than English was considered inappropriate for the task or interaction at hand. In these cases, the teacher instructed the student or students directly to speak in English with phrases such as "in English please", "speak English", or even "I don't understand Russian." These occasions were observed across EFL and EMI classes, and were directed to both students in group or pair work activities and whole class discussions. The commands also seem to be oriented in two ways: to discouraging students from starting a discussion in Russian (as opposed to trying in English first and then switching to Russian if necessary) and to completing tasks whose main purpose was not absorbing or manipulating the content, but rather spoken language practice in the target language.

In addition, students occasionally asked each other to speak English in pair and group work activities. This may show either uptake of this instruction from their teachers, dedication to honoring the main language of the class, or both. In one class, such a request may also have been made to accommodate students who speak English as an L1. However, in the case of homogeneous and heterogeneous groups, a student's switch to English as a response to such a request was sustained only for several turns before turning again to Russian.

Student and Teacher Attitudes Towards L1

Nearly all of the teachers and students¹ interviewed who were asked about the use of Russian language in their English classes took a pragmatic approach to the use of Russian in English-medium classes. A common response by students was that teacher's use of Russian is "normal" because it makes it easier for students to understand, as the following quote indicates (original English from audio file, February 24, 2011):

I feel okay, because many, um, students in our group, uh, sometimes not understand something, or, mm, don't know the word, or don't understand the sentence so our teacher has to explain. It's normal I think just for first time maybe. (Wales program student)

Even students who felt that using Russian in English-medium classes was inappropriate recognized the necessity of L1 use at times for the purposes of aiding comprehension or professional development, as the following quotes indicate (original language from audio file, March 29, 2011 and April 6, 2011):

Um, I don't like it much, but sometimes when maybe someone can't understand maybe the meaning of the word or something like this, it's better to explain him in Russian. (International Economics student)

Researcher: So how do you feel when teachers or students use Russian in your English language lessons?

S1: Negative.

¹ There was one student who said she wished the teacher spoke more Russian, as the class was taught only English. Another student didn't care what language is used because his level of understanding is equal in English and Russian. Four other students did not acknowledge that Russian was used in their lessons.

Researcher: Negative.

S1: Of course. Because I think that explanation to the words should be given.

S2: In English?

S1: Sometimes the teacher should give an explanation in Russian. An equivalent in Russian if we are asking for some word and we are interested in how to translate that word from English into Russian because we're interpreters, we should know the translation as well. (Philology students)

While the previous examples indicate that teachers' use of Russian in English classes was normal or at least justified, students' use of Russian was viewed slightly more negatively by both teachers and students. Three students were self-critical; they felt using Russian indicated a lack of vocabulary or difficulty in knowing what to say even in Russian about a topic. Teachers would prefer their students to use only English, but recognized that students may need to use Russian until they develop the necessary skills and content knowledge in English to communicate without the use of Russian, as the following interview quote indicates (original language from audio file, February 20, 2011):

I would prefer them not [speaking Russian]. But again, from the practical point of view, it's not always possible. And if I swoop on students for every Russian word that they use, well I can only frighten them or maybe to make them feel that uh, you know, it's a kind of frightening or nervous experience, so uh, actually I believe that the better they know English and they're progressing quite well, the rarer such cases are going to be... of course I would prefer them to use English but in reality it's not always possible. (English as a Foreign Language teacher)

For the foreign students in the English-medium courses, the switch from English to Russian in their classes by teachers and students cannot be said to aid with comprehension. However, the students interviewed demonstrated a surprisingly positive outlook towards their teachers' and classmates' using Russian, as this interview quote from a Nigerian Wales program student (N1) indicates (original language from audio file, March 3, 2011):

Researcher: How do you feel when people use Russian and Ukrainian in the classes, like the teachers and the students?

N1: I feel very happy because, I really like, I really love the language. And I have desire, I have the desire to learn it, and to speak very well. Because I think my course is really connected to international relationship.

Researcher: Okay.

N1: For you to relate with people, you must be able to speak some languages.

We cannot draw the conclusion that all students from all countries feel so positively about the use of Russian at all times, especially when there were instances when N1 told her classmates she did not understand what they were saying. Yet, there were also a few instances observed of foreign students using Russian in class. These switches were generally single words like greetings, *da* (yes) or *ponyatno* (it

is understood), which index solidarity with the dominant language outside the classroom. In at least one case a Nigerian student switched to Russian to speak with a Ukrainian student who used Russian in a group activity (original language from audio file, December 17, 2010):

(N1=Wales Program Nigerian Student #1; U1=Wales Program Ukrainian Student #1)

1	N1:	U1, we need to ask them questions. What questions can we ask them.
2	U1:	<i>Vobsche ya ne ponimaiu.</i> [In general I don't understand.]
3	N1:	<i>Ty ne ponimaesh? Ya skazala.</i> [You don't understand? I said.]

What comes through clearly is not only N1's shift to Russian in response to U1's switch, but also the repetition of U1's words (with the necessary conjugation shift from "I" to "you") signals an oppositional stance (cf. Goodwin, 2006) as N1 strives to get U1 to participate appropriately in the task.

Conclusions and Implications for Teaching EFL and Academic Subjects in English

As it can be seen from the tapescripts of the interviews, neither the teachers nor the students doubt the necessity and inevitability of recurrently using L1 in the conditions under discussion. Teachers of English, especially those who do research in the EFL area, teachers of other academic subjects taught in English, and the students, both those taking EMI and EFL courses, cannot imagine how, in their practical conditions, L1 can be totally avoided. Furthermore, they cannot understand why it should be avoided if, in fact, it makes learning easier and faster, not damaging or slowing down the process of target language acquisition. The degree of the necessity of the L1 is connected with students' current state of knowledge of English, which in turn is connected to the amount and thoroughness of preparation the students received before entering EFL and EMI classes at the university.

Generalizing the teachers and students' ideas in the interviews, as well as the results of classroom observations during the research period, the following explicit and implicit reasons for justifiably using students' L1 in EFL and EMI classes at this university can be listed. First, limited use of L1 facilitates students' understanding of the target language structure and communication in it, as well as the target culture and content matter of the subjects being learned. It helps to check that understanding, to make students realize inter-language and intercultural similarities and differences more clearly; it even may accelerate and improve the target language acquisition if it is not overused. Second, limited, occasional, and fragmentary recourse to the mother tongue of all those who work in the dominantly monolingual classroom lightens the psychological burden for a while, allowing a return to communication in the target language feeling a little rested from it. This burden includes both the extra effort required to speak, read, write and listen in a foreign language, and the artificiality of communicating in a target language which is imposed on them (or that they willingly and consciously

impose on themselves).

The two reasons listed make using students' L1 in EFL and EMI classes at this university justifiable. It still remains unclear whether such use of L1 is beneficial for learners' acquisition of the target language. To prove the validity of that claim, a special experimental study is required in which some groups of students in EFL and EMI classes would work with limited recourse to their L1 while some other groups would have no possibility of using it in their learning process. Then, the learning outcomes in both kinds of groups in what concerns the language and communication skills acquisition should be compared and contrasted. What can be said with a reasonable degree of certainty on the basis of long-term observations of students' rapid and steady progress in acquiring English communication skills is that using the L1 does no visible harm and does not in any way visibly slow down the rapidity of their progress.

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