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## **Pakistani university English teachers' cognitions and classroom practices regarding their use of the learners' first languages**

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### **Abstract**

There has been a recent increase in research into language teachers' cognitions regarding their use of the learners' mother tongue(s). However, one strand of this research has tended to elicit idealized cognitions with little reference to actual classroom behaviour through questionnaires and interviews. This is in contrast to the other strand which, through drawing on observations too, has managed to elicit situated cognitions based on classroom events. However, the relationship between these and the teachers' idealized cognitions has often been left unexplored. If there is a gap, this could potentially result in negative emotions, such as guilt and confusion, amongst students as well as teachers. This case study of three Pakistani university English teachers explores (through interview) their idealized cognitions regarding their use of the target language and the learners' first language(s) (Urdu and Pashto); it explores their observed classroom practices and their rationale for these, elicited through stimulated recall. Findings reveal that while the idealized cognitions of all three teachers supported the exclusive use of the target language, two of these teachers used the learners' first languages in class to some extent and subsequently justified 'judicious' first language use. To explain the gap between idealized cognitions and classroom behaviour, the study draws on various personal and contextual factors, e.g. other cognitions including feelings of identity, prior language learning experiences and perceptions of the students' language proficiency. Implications include the need for awareness-raising in Pakistani higher education and public debate on language policy.

**Key words:** Teacher cognition; first language use; Pakistani higher education; English teaching.

## **Introduction**

There has been increasing interest in recent years in teacher cognition, “what teachers think, know and believe” (Borg, 2006, p. 1), and in how this shapes teachers’ classroom practices and is shaped by their experiences. As Borg explains, this interest is inspired partly by insights drawn from the field of psychology as to how action is shaped by cognition and partly by growing recognition of the centrality of the teachers’ role in influencing classroom events. Accordingly, in language learning contexts where educational policy and classroom practices appear to differ widely and learning outcomes seem disappointing, e.g. Pakistan (Shamim, 2008), it may be particularly important to focus research on language teacher cognition, since educational policy and teacher education might then benefit. Notwithstanding this insight, teacher cognition research in international contexts, while growing (Borg, 2012), is still limited. Themes that have been addressed include communicative language teaching (CLT) (e.g. Sato and Kleinsasser, 1999; Mangubhai, Marland, Dashwood and Son, 2004; Wyatt, 2009; Wyatt and Borg, 2011), grammar teaching (e.g. Borg, 1998; Phipps and Borg, 2009), learner autonomy (e.g. Borg and Al-Busaidi, 2012), materials design and development (e.g. Wyatt, 2011) and teachers’ use of the learners’ first language (L1) (e.g. Al-Alawi, 2008; Macaro, 2001; McMillan and Turnbull, 2009).

In this article, we focus on teacher cognition in relation to the last of these themes in a hitherto little-explored Pakistani university context, where teachers’ use of the learners’ L1 can be seen as a controversial issue, as elsewhere. Indeed, in numerous countries this practice has been viewed by many, including administrators and politicians, entirely negatively as a “skeleton in the cupboard ... a taboo subject, a source of embarrassment” (Prodromou, 2002, p. 6). This is despite research evidence that suggests using the L1 can help teachers contribute to learning, either directly, e.g. to explain complicated concepts, or indirectly, e.g. to develop positive relationships with students (Littlewood and Yu, 2009). Accordingly, if they are not allowed to use L1 but find it hard to conform to this and worry they are not using the target language (TL) enough, language teachers are likely to feel guilty (Butzkamm, 2003). The pressures are likely to be particularly acute in the field of *English* language teaching, given the hegemonic role of English in a post-colonial world (Phillipson, 1992), and, in contexts politically unfavourable to L1 use such as ours, we suggest tensions between cognitions and practices might be more likely to arise. After reviewing the literature and introducing the research context and methodology, we present the findings of a multi-case study focused on three Pakistani university teachers of English as a second language (ESL), exploring relationships between their cognitions and practices regarding L1 use and investigating reasons for any apparent gaps.

## **Teacher cognition research regarding L1 use**

There is a relative scarcity of teacher cognition research as far as this relates to L1 use. This is highlighted by Littlewood and Yu (2009), who, given this deficit, conducted their own study that first asked students to recollect the extent of their

former teachers' L1 use in class and secondly (on the basis of their recollections) to identify what these teachers' purposes were in using L1 (in as far as they could interpret them from memory). Obviously, this is asking a lot of students.

Other studies have sought to access teachers' cognitions more directly, e.g. through eliciting their cognitions through questionnaires or interviews, sometimes in conjunction with classroom observations, a combination that allows teachers' actual classroom practices to be compared with their reported beliefs and behaviour. This can provide insights, e.g. into whether there is a gap or fit. A number of studies have been conducted since Macaro's (2001) influential work that identified three broad theoretical positions adopted by teachers: the virtual (using the TL exclusively), the maximal (using the TL as much as possible, with L1 use viewed prejudicially) and the optimal (using the L1 purposefully and 'judiciously' for benefit). A selection of these studies (subsequently discussed) is presented in tabular form below (see Table 1, overleaf).

### *Idealized cognitions in questionnaire/interview studies*

Having introduced these studies, we now analyse them more closely. Before presenting findings, our first observation is that the research methodology used is likely to have impacted the results. Five of the studies listed in Table 1 used questionnaires or interviews but did not include an observational element, and this omission allows for the possibility that some cognitions that related much more closely to *ideals* than actual realities were elicited. Borg (2006, p. 280) reminds us: "data based on and elicited in relation to observed classroom events may better capture teachers' cognitions in relation to actual practice". While he does not suggest "that ideal cognitions are less important [since] they do provide insights into the workings of teachers' minds", Borg also argues that "as researchers we must ensure that cognitions expressed theoretically and in relation to ideals are not used as evidence of the practically-oriented cognitions which inform teachers' actual instructional practices" (p. 280).

As to what idealized cognitions with regard to the proportion of TL/L1 used in teaching might look like, one possibility is that they might support the exclusive use of the TL, partly since this is mandated by many educational authorities worldwide. In Hong Kong, for example, Littlewood and Yu (2009, p. 66) report, teachers are directed to create "a language-rich environment [which involves] the use of English in all English lessons and beyond: teachers should teach English through English and encourage learners to interact with one another in English".

In the purely questionnaire/interview studies listed below, there is significant support for exclusive use of the TL. In Al-Shidhani's (2009) survey of 150 English teachers in Oman, only 40% agreed with the statement: "The teacher should be allowed to use Arabic" (their own first language and that of their learners) (p. 187). Likewise, a majority (59%) of the 29 native-speaker teachers of English in Japan, surveyed by McMillan and Rivers (2011), felt negatively or had mixed feelings about

*Table 1: Teacher cognition studies regarding use of the learners' L1*

<i>Source</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Methods</i>	<i>Number of teachers</i>	<i>Subject taught</i>	<i>Experience</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Educational level</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Learners' L1</i>
Al-Alawi (2008)	Teachers' use of learners' L1 & beliefs about this use	Observations & interviews	5	English	1-13 years	Omani & Indian	Lower secondary school	Oman	Arabic
Al-Buraiki (2008)	1. Teachers' L1 use & rationale 2. Teachers' reported beliefs and practices	1. Observations & interviews 2. Questionnaires	6 & 40	English	Not stated	Omani	Primary school	Oman	Arabic
Al-Hadhrami (2008)	Frequency of teachers' uses of L1 & rationale	Observations & interviews	4	English	10+ years	Omani	Lower secondary (Grade 5)	Oman	Arabic
Al-Jadidi (2009)	Extent & purposes of teachers' use of learners' L1 & effect of non-use	Observations & interviews	10	English	Experienced	Various (Arabic & non-Arabic speakers)	University	Oman	Arabic
Al-Shidhani (2009)	Teachers' self-reported beliefs & practices regarding L1 use	Questionnaires	150	English	1-10+ years	Not stated (but all Arabic-speakers)	Primary - Secondary school	Oman	Arabic
Barnard, Robinson, da Costa & da Silva Sarmiento (2011)	Teachers' code-switching & attitudes towards this	Observations & interviews	4	English	Not stated	Timorese	University	Timor-Leste	Tetum (also spoke Indonesian, Portuguese)
Chimbutane (2013)	Teachers' beliefs & code-switching practices in L1 & the second language	Observations & interviews	3	Changana & Portuguese	1-12 years	Mozambican	Primary school (Grades 4-5)	Mozambique	Changana
Hobbs, Matsuo &	Teachers' uses of	Observations &	3	Japanese	1-3 years	Japanese &	Secondary	UK	English

Payne (2010)	TL/L1 & rationale for code-switching	interviews				British	school		
Macaro (2001)	Teachers' use of learners' L1, reflections & beliefs about code-switching	Observations & interviews	2	French	Pre-service	Not stated	Secondary school	UK	English
McMillan & Rivers (2011)	Teachers' attitudes towards using their learners' L1, & knowledge & beliefs regarding CLT & TL use	Questionnaires	29	English	1-15 years in-country (Japanese proficiency: beginner - advanced)	English native-speakers	University	Japan	Japanese
McMillan & Turnbull (2009)	Teachers' beliefs & attitudes regarding TL/L1 use, & code-switching practices	Observations & interviews	2	French immersion	10+ years	Canadian	Lower secondary school (Grade 7)	Canada	English
Trent (2013)	Teachers' reported beliefs & practices regarding L1 use in relation to school policy; their changing identities during a practicum	Interviews	6	English	Pre-service	Chinese	Secondary school	Hong Kong	Cantonese
Wang & Kirkpatrick (2012)	Teachers' attitudes towards using English as a lingua franca & reported practices	Interviews	24	Chinese	1-20 years (English proficiency: limited - good)	Chinese	University	China	Various
Yavuz (2012)	Teachers' reports on their L1 use	Interviews	12	English	Experienced	Turkish	Primary school	Turkey	Turkish

using their learners' L1 (Japanese) in class, even though a similar proportion rated themselves as able to communicate with some effectiveness in the Japanese language. An even higher proportion (over 60%) of 24 native-speaker teachers of Chinese, in Wang and Kirkpatrick's (2012) study, supported a monolingual approach that excluded the use of English as a lingua franca. One of them told the authors:

Our school has a very strict rule prohibiting the use of English. Every teacher knows it. As you can see along the corridors, posters and banners are plentiful on the walls reminding our students about speaking Chinese only. It's our responsibility to hold to the rule and help students to obey it (Wang and Kirkpatrick, 2012, p. 6).

The 'monolingual principle' (Howatt, 1984) is well-established in language teaching. It originally gained widespread recognition more than a hundred years ago, as language teaching specialists rejected the *grammar-translation* approach and embraced alternatives, such as the *direct method*, which was characterized by the avoidance of translation and exclusive TL use in foreign and second language classrooms. The 'monolingual principle' has continued to dominate language teaching approaches since, e.g. through *situational language teaching* and *audiolingualism* that were popular until the 1960s (Richards and Rodgers, 1986).

More recently, it was a tenet of Krashen and Terrell's (1983) *natural approach*, central to which are the *acquisition/learning hypothesis*, which holds that acquisition of a second language parallels first language development, and the *input hypothesis*, which holds that a sufficient quantity of comprehensible input is required for acquisition to take place (Richards and Rodgers, 1986); it has also been argued that the TL can be more motivating to learn if it is required actively for classroom communication (Littlewood and Yu, 2009). Supporters of the 'monolingual principle' thus have second language acquisition theory to draw upon, even though Krashen's views on the *acquisition/learning hypothesis* have subsequently been challenged, e.g. by Butzkamm (2003), who suggests that a more appropriate model than the monolingual baby would be the young developing bilingual, using one language as support while learning the other.

Despite such reservations, the 'monolingual principle' has drawn support from western countries furthering the spread of dominant languages in a post-colonial world, as well as educational administrators in different international contexts, particularly those who, as part of the establishment, might possess conservative views about language, dislike code-switching and gravitate towards 'inner circle' norms (Phillipson, 1992). Schools, too, often tend to endorse the 'monolingual principle'. In Hong Kong, Trent (2013) reports, the parents may complain if the TL is not used exclusively.

Accordingly, it might not be surprising if teachers are influenced by arguments supporting the 'monolingual principle'. Idealized cognitions, elicited through questionnaire/interview studies, might reflect this, with their results determined partly by the research methodology used as well as the broader context in which the study was conducted. Interestingly, for example, Yavuz's (2012) research in Turkey, drawing on interviews with primary school teachers, reported that only one of 12 claimed not to use the L1 at all. However, Yavuz suggests that Turkish teachers are under less pressure to use the TL exclusively. Furthermore, the research question used: "What is the place of L1 in your teaching?" (p. 4342), which Yavuz describes as 'neutral', actually seems to imply that teachers would have found some place for L1.

The influence of the research methodology used is also evident in Al-Buraiki's (2008) study of primary school teachers in Oman. While a majority of the 40 surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "English teachers should use English all the time because pupils do not hear English out of class" (p. 15), all 6 of those from a similar population observed did in fact use some L1. This underlines the need, articulated by Borg (2006), for cognitions to be elicited in relation to observed classroom practices. Accordingly, we now turn to studies that have drawn upon observational data.

#### *Proponents of the virtual position*

Four of the 9 observational studies introduced above (Table 1) include examples of teachers who adopted the virtual position, i.e. who made exclusive use of the L1 through choice. One of the five Omani English teachers in Al-Alawi (2008), for example, appears to have been convinced about the need to provide plenty of comprehensible input for his lower secondary learners. He "felt that learners should be surrounded with the L2 [second language] in order to develop proficiency in it" and maintained: "Using the L1 might hinder the process of learning the target language" (p. 5). Similarly, one of the four teachers in Barnard et al. (2011) and one of the three in Chimbutane (2013) maintained exclusive TL use. In each case, these teachers positioned themselves as a 'model' for their learners. For the teacher in Chimbutane, maintaining the 'purity' of the Changana language (the TL) was also important. For the teacher in Barnard et al., an important consideration was that the learners were of a high proficiency and were training to be English teachers, so there was no possible justification for using L1 (in this case, Tetum). Interestingly, a teacher in Al-Jadidi (2009) called 'Jasmine' said almost the same thing about the Omani pre-service English teachers she was tutoring. Like the teacher in Al-Alawi, another bilingual teacher in Al-Jadidi's study called 'Jihad' was committed to using the TL exclusively to increase the comprehensible input available. In fact, Jihad went so far as to not answer his students' questions in L1 (Arabic) until they were reformulated in English.

In the 9 observational studies, though, the teachers adopting a virtual position were in the minority. In fact, only 5 of the 39 bilingual teachers in these studies used

no L1 at all in class, for reasons given above, e.g. to increase exposure to the TL or in line with their identity as 'models' to emulate. However, there were also non-L1 speakers in these studies, who did not simply because they could not, but may have done if they were able to, e.g. an Indian teacher in Al-Alawi (2008) who was favourable to the practice but could not speak Arabic.

### ***Proponents of the maximal position***

Besides revealing proponents of the virtual position using no L1 on principle, these 9 observational studies also showcase another 7 teachers who pragmatically took the maximal position. This view holds no pedagogical value lies in L1 use, but recognises that "perfect teaching and learning conditions do not exist" (Macaro, 2001, p. 535), and therefore some L1 might be necessary. An example of these teachers is 'Frank', working on a French immersion programme in Canada with Grade 7 learners, who had been instructed in English in Grades 4-6 (apart from 30 minutes French per day), but were now expected to learn Maths, Science and other subjects in French (McMillan and Turnbull, 2009). Frank supported the virtual position, i.e. he aimed for total exclusion of the L1, on the grounds it would lead to interference and confusion and cause learners to ignore TL input. However, given the language level of the learners, he acknowledged a need to use minimal L1, e.g. for administrative issues, in September, at the beginning of the academic year, while trying to use as much French as possible to increase the comprehensible input available. By October, he was using virtually 100% French, as observational evidence confirmed. Only very rarely did he subsequently use English, e.g. a word or two to remind learners of a key concept they had studied in Grade 6. One can assume that had he been teaching a higher grade he would have excluded the limited L1 he used.

Like Frank, a teacher in Chimbutane (2013) wanted to keep the TL and L1 separate, allowing code-switching only as a last resort when her instructions were not understood. Similarly motivated was a pre-service secondary school teacher in Macaro (2001), who wanted to teach entirely in the L2 (French), as instructed by the National Curriculum. However, concerned with learners' occasional frustration on being unable to follow her instructions, she felt forced to switch to the L1 (English), experiencing this as a kind of defeat. A teacher in Al-Hadhrami (2008) also described using the L1 as a last resort.

Teachers adopting a maximal position may be influenced by the way dominant methodological approaches, e.g. *communicative language teaching (CLT)* and *task-based language teaching (TBLT)*, are presented. According to Vivian Cook (2001, p. 404), while proponents of these approaches might accept some L1 use, these approaches "have no necessary relationship with the L1. . . the only times the L1 is mentioned is when advice is given on how to minimize its use".

### ***Proponents of the optimal position***

A third position is the optimal, which holds that some pedagogical value lies in L1 use, with some aspects of learning consequently enhanced (Macaro, 2001). This



should allow teachers to explore how best to use the L1 in a principled way, exploiting it 'judiciously' to support the three key dimensions of pedagogical communication identified by Littlewood and Yu (2009, p. 69): "establishing constructive relationships, ensuring understanding, and maintaining a disciplined environment". Key to this, though, is how the concept 'judicious use' is understood. Al-Hadhrami (2008), for example, was concerned as one of the four teachers in his study had a very relaxed attitude to L1 use, arguing it should constitute approximately 60%. In the observed lesson, "learners had little exposure to English and, mirroring the teacher, they spoke out in Arabic rather than attempting to do so in English" (p. 25). Hobbs et al. (2010) noted a similar phenomenon in the observed lessons of two Japanese teachers in the UK. 70-75% of their teacher talk was in the learners' L1 (English), a source of embarrassment to one of these teachers in the subsequent interview, when the focus of the observation was brought to her attention; her learners also used considerable L1. Commentators concerned about learners gaining sufficient exposure to the TL and encouragement to use it, e.g. Turnbull (2001), tend to regard such high proportions of teacher talk in L1 as excessive.

However, some teachers might have deeply-held convictions they feel justify their use of the L1. A teacher in Barnard et al. (2011) argued against "the monolingual policy of the institution and department", claiming teachers' needed to "avoid linguistic imperialism by promoting and developing Tetum (the learners' L1), which is an index of [the] national identity" (p. 50). In this teacher's observed 80-minute lesson, teacher talk was dominant (91%) and most of this was in Tetum. Only 36% was in the TL (English). In this case, ideology and concerns about national identity may have trumped other considerations in influencing L1 use. Contrast this with an Indian teacher in Al-Alawi (2008), who used the learners' L1 (Arabic) mostly to joke with them.

Issues of identity also concerned 6 pre-service Chinese teachers of English in Hong Kong in Trent's (2013) longitudinal study. Initially, at the start of their practicum, influenced by school principals who insisted on 'English only' policies, these teachers adhered. "That's what I did", one reported, "I was just a follower of the Hong Kong education policy. But it's really difficult, in reality, in the classroom" (p. 228). Gradually, though, contact with experienced teachers helped these novices realize that this exclusive TL policy could be implemented more flexibly, though there was some guilt and secrecy involved in using the L1. Over time, they then developed more confidence in the belief that "Cantonese can function as a valuable tool for both learning and classroom management" (p. 235), their identities gradually shifting as they moved closer to the optimal position.

Evidence of L1 being used effectively to support learning by proponents of the optimal position is provided in Macaro (2001) and McMillan and Turnbull (2009). In the former, a pre-service teacher of French uses L1 to promote "a deeper understanding of semantic and syntactic equivalents", reduce the danger of

confusion and avoid communication breakdowns (Macaro, 2001, p. 544). Although there had been some awareness-raising on the teacher education course, her use of the L1 appeared largely intuitive, based on her own language learning experiences and reading of the classroom situation. However, it was also consistent with her understandings of CLT; in Macaro's view, her judicious use of L1 (it was never very extensive) supported the learners' engagement in authentic, learner-centred tasks. Similarly, 'Pierre', a French immersion teacher in McMillan and Turnbull (2009), used the L1 (English) judiciously to increase comprehension and "scaffold TL production" (p. 24); he was very concerned about the learners getting frustrated and confused, and accordingly used more L1 at the beginning of the year, gradually reducing this. His approach here, developed through extensive teaching experience, was carefully self-monitored. McMillan and Turnbull suggest that in the observed lessons Pierre's use of English led "to further TL exposure, intake and use of French by students" (p. 33), supporting his aim to provide "rich exposure" to the language (p. 24). They suggest his L1 use was not above 15%, beyond which, they cite Macaro (2005) as arguing, it can begin to have a negative effect on learning. Like the code-switching teacher in Macaro (2001) and, regardless of institutional requirements that mandated exclusive TL use, Pierre was comfortable with the way he used L1.

### *Summary*

This review of the literature demonstrates that language teachers seem to adopt a range of positions towards L1 use. Some seem to use it 'judiciously', carefully attuning this use to their learners' levels (e.g. university/school) and needs, in line with current thinking in second language acquisition research (e.g. Guy Cook, 2007). However, others might seem to over-use it carelessly, use it secretively and fearfully, so compromising their sense of identity as teachers, or avoid it entirely for a variety of reasons, e.g. to 'model' TL behaviour, increase the comprehensible input available or conform to mandated educational policy. The studies of Macaro (2001) and McMillan and Turnbull (2009) highlight how different types of experience, of language learning and teaching, and of how extensive this experience is, can impact teacher cognition and behaviour. Interestingly, in Macaro's study, awareness-raising through teacher education may have had less impact, possibly as he was working with pre-service teachers who presumably had considerable theoretical input to filter slowly into their practical knowledge. Teaching can be very challenging at this stage of a career (Berliner, 1988).

None of these studies reveal any evidence of a gap between cognitions and practices, though teachers clearly experienced tensions, e.g. in Trent's (2013) study, which charted identity shift. This may be because observations were generally used as the basis for subsequent stimulated recall, during which elicited cognitions were situated, i.e. based on actual classroom events. This ordering allowed the research methodology itself to provide a learning experience, a phenomenon highlighted, in fact, by the teachers in McMillan and Turnbull (2009).

This is in contrast to the studies that did not use observations. These may have elicited primarily idealized cognitions, perhaps bearing little relation to the teachers' actual classroom behaviour. If there is a gap, this can be a matter of concern, for if teachers believe they should/do teach in one way but actually teach in another, this may cause psychological and educational problems. Consequences may include not only their learners not reaching their full potential, but also the teachers themselves experiencing fear, guilt, alienation or suffering identity crises or loss of confidence. If this is the case, there may be implications for educational policy, teacher education and supervision, which suggests studies are required that explore potential gaps between idealized and situated cognitions.

### **The research context**

Language teacher cognition research in Pakistan, the national context of this study, is still limited. As Shamim (2008) reports, though, various observational studies have investigated schoolteachers' classroom practices in Pakistan, typically describing lessons (regardless of level, province or type of school) as mostly dominated by teacher talk, with the teachers chiefly utilizing reading aloud techniques, translation and form-focused activities drawn from the coursebook, and additionally making extensive use of the blackboard. However, despite the similarities in observed teaching methodology employed across different contexts, and also noted since (e.g. by Nawab, 2012), some significant differences in the teachers' use of the TL (English) and the learners' L1 were observed, these depending largely on the type of school (Shamim, 2008).

Pakistan's language policies in education have been shaped by its colonial past. As Coleman (2010, p. 14) explains: During the British colonial era, the "policy was that Urdu should be the medium of instruction for the masses and that English should be the medium for the elite". This is a distinction that is still evident in the education provision today, in that most children attend *government Urdu-medium schools* that are free, while a tiny minority go to *private elite English-medium schools* that are very expensive. Shamim (2011, p. 6) notes that in Pakistani society the level of proficiency in English is generally seen as "a major indicator of social class, quality of educational standards and learning outcomes [so that accordingly] for many people there is a fuzzy boundary between being educated and knowing English". Hence the attraction of the *private elite English-medium schools*, even amongst dominant social groups that would like to promote Urdu, which, while the first language of fewer than 8%, is a marker of Muslim identity. There are also other types of school in Pakistan, e.g. *madrasas*, which offer an Islamic-oriented education in Arabic, and *government Sindhi- and Pashto-medium schools* in the provinces where these regional languages are spoken (Shamim, 2008). The situation is not static and the most significant change in recent years is that there has been an upsurge in the number of lower-middle class families sending their children to affordable *private non-elite English-medium schools*, attracted by the promise, Coleman (2010, p. 10) suggests, of an 'English' education, "even though in reality [this claim] may not be fulfilled". Indeed, Shamim (2008, p. 240) reports observing "various levels of code-

switching between English, Urdu and the local languages” in the classroom discourse of ‘English’ teachers in such schools, in contrast to ‘English only’ in the *elite* schools and a mixture of Urdu and local languages in the *Urdu-medium* schools. This suggests that only a very small minority of students (the children of the rich and powerful) gain much exposure to English in English lessons at school. This brings us to the limited research available that casts light on the teachers’ cognitions.

If teachers from *private non-elite English-medium schools* that promise parents ‘English’ education are not providing this, then there would seem to be the scope for tension and the guilt that accompanies a maximal position. Indeed Shamim (2011, p. 9) reports: “as the use of one or more shared home languages is not legitimised (in such schools), the teachers do not admit to using them in the classroom”. The tensions can be considerable. Use of Urdu and regional languages such as Sindh are “strongly discouraged on campus and, at times, also punishable by fine... despite the fact that Urdu [is] unofficially used in classrooms to facilitate teaching/learning in almost all the schools” (Tamim, 2013, p. 10). Teachers expected to use English in *government Urdu-medium schools* also might be less than candid in discussing practices that lack legitimacy. Indeed, Coleman (2010, p. 20) reports meeting informants who “were not expecting to experience any difficulties in teaching through the medium of English because they were ‘educated people’, [but who] nevertheless chose to be interviewed through an interpreter because they did not understand [his] English”.

A key reason for lack of use of the TL (English) might be lack of competence. Rahman (2001) speaks of teachers not “qualified to teach anything but English of a rudimentary kind through rote-learning and spoon-feeding methods” (p. 248) in schools where the “salary structure only attracts teachers who are not fluent – indeed not even tolerably competent – in English” (p. 251). Such teachers might also lack self-confidence (Coleman, 2010), particularly if learners are picking up on their English language ‘deficiencies’, threatening their self-esteem and sense of identity (Tamim, 2013). The notion of ‘deficit’ emerges from other studies too, e.g. Nawab’s (2012). Drawing on observations and interviews of rural schoolteachers employing extensive use of the L1, this encountered those who “did not know how English could be taught in any other way” (p. 700).

There is little evidence of reported optimal use of the L1 in this context, although Gulzar’s (2010) questionnaire completed by a cross-sectional sample of 406 Pakistani English teachers revealed that 87% agreed or strongly agreed that the need to provide clarification prompted code-switching in the classroom. Over two-thirds also agreed that code-switching was used for ‘ease of expression’ and to give instructions effectively, translate, socialize and provide emphasis. The item that gained least agreement (50%) was ‘linguistic competence’, but the item was worded ambiguously in the questionnaire. ‘Linguistic *in*competence’ (in English) might have been a better term, according to the researcher’s apparent intention. Some limited support for optimal use of the L1 is also provided by 10 Pakistani ‘experts’ (with

PhDs or MAs in Linguistics from the UK), interviewed by Gulzar and Qadir (2010). However, although these experts demonstrated a grasp of the theoretical issues regarding 'judicious' L1 use, which might suggest they supported it, they showed no inclination to encourage teachers' use of the learners' L1 due to the dangers of over-use. It may be relevant that some, if not all, were employed at universities.

In Pakistan, there is the expectation that at university English is *the* language in which all content is taught across the curriculum in all faculties. Indeed, Shamim (2008, p. 241) quotes a 2007 white paper that states "for all university education, English should be the medium of instruction", a long-standing policy that has gained widespread support, e.g. by Rahman (2001). However, the virtual position might not be that easy to implement. Where the 'English only' policy is applied strictly, for example, students coming from *Urdu-medium* schools can struggle to adjust (Tamim, 2013), and the reaction of some teachers may have been to abandon the language policy. An elderly professor of Physics, for example, told *The Guardian*:  
Over my 37 years of university teaching I have almost stopped giving lectures in English and have switched into Urdu. This is by necessity rather than choice. Students are less able to read, write and speak in English today than they were some decades ago (de Lotbinière, 2010, 15 June).

Of course, given their subject-specific training (which could nevertheless be improved [Shamim, 2011]), *English language* university teachers might adhere to the language policy rather more closely. Indeed, we hypothesize that their idealized cognitions might offer some support for the 'virtual position', with their classroom practices matching this to some extent. These are hypotheses we explore in research conducted at one of the newer universities in Pakistan, situated in a province close to the Afghanistan border, where most of the students speak Pashto at home as well as Urdu in public places. Though some gain an education at *private non-elite English-medium schools*, most are from the *government Urdu-medium schools*. This suggests their proficiency in English might not, in general, be high on entry to the university, a contextual factor which might impact the practices regarding L1 use of their English teachers. This is a further hypothesis we explore.

### **Research design**

The research reported on here was part of a larger qualitative, 'intrinsic' case study (Stake, 1995) conducted by the first-named author (hereafter 'I'), which explored the cognitions (idealized and situated) and classroom practices of seven English language university teachers. During three rounds of data gathering over five months that incorporated 23 interviews (55-60 minutes each), 19 classroom observations (45-60 minutes each) and 18 stimulated recall discussions (35-50 minutes each), iterative analysis took place and key themes emerged, with differences and similarities in the cognitions and practices of teachers highlighted in this analysis. Use of Pashto and Urdu in the classroom together with English was one of these emerging themes.

For the purpose of this article, this topic (the teachers' use of the learners' L1) is explored with the help of data from three cases, these therefore selected on the basis of 'theoretical' sampling (Silverman, 2009), to further understanding of this particular issue. 'Purposive' sampling was also used, with balance, variety and intuitions about what could be learned from the different individuals, important considerations. I was a cultural insider (a university teacher on study leave), and relationships established prior to the research period facilitated access. My insider status meant 'reflexivity' was a threat, but I tried to be critical of my own judgements throughout and avoid personal prejudices and ideological biases (Holliday, 2007), as explained further below.

The three teachers who are the focus of this study (Hasan, Murad and Waseem, all pseudonyms) participated voluntarily, giving informed consent which guaranteed their anonymity and right to withdraw. Hasan and Murad were in their early thirties while Waseem was in his mid-twenties. Though all three had similar qualifications (MAs in English language and literature), their professional experience varied. Hasan and Murad had 5 and 7 years' university teaching experience respectively, while Waseem had only been teaching for 6 months. All three shared with most of their learners a Pashtun ethnic background, i.e. their mother tongue was Pashto. They taught across different faculties of the university besides the English department, where they taught postgraduate as well as undergraduate courses and literature as well as language.

My research questions (adapted for this particular theme) were as follows:

1. What are the teachers' idealized cognitions regarding TL and L1 use?
2. If there are any gaps between their idealized cognitions and classroom behaviour regarding TL and L1 use, what are the characteristics of these?
3. How can gaps between idealized cognitions and classroom behaviour be explained?

To address these research questions, I used semi-structured interviews, observations and stimulated recall discussions in the following ways: Semi-structured interviews, which involved using written questions as a guide but supplementing these freely to follow-up points of interest (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007), helped develop a picture of educational background, teaching experiences, and perceptions, attitudes and beliefs about English language teaching and learning in the Pakistani context. As well as collecting data relevant to the other questions, I was thus eliciting idealized cognitions (Research Question 1), which might, of course, have little semblance to reality (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). These interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and subsequently checked with the teachers for verification (Stake, 1995).

As I was "ultimately . . . interested in understanding teachers' professional actions, not what or how they think in isolation of what they do" (Borg, 2003, p. 105), I used classroom observations in combination with interviews. These observations

were unstructured to gain “the advantage of serendipity: significant discoveries that [are] unanticipated” (Whyte, 1984, p. 27). To minimize the ‘reactivity’ of these observations (Holliday, 2007), I was a ‘non-participant’ (Robson, 2011), shared only the main aims and objectives of my study with the teachers, as a full disclosure could have encouraged unnatural behaviour (Cowie, 2009) and recorded data unobtrusively, audio- but not video-recording and keeping a narrative record (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). To help me maintain a critical distance, each time I observed I requested one of my colleagues to sit in the classroom with me, as Padgett (2008) suggests. This permitted ‘investigator triangulation’ (Stake, 1995), as I spoke afterwards about the lesson with my fellow observer, before I discussed it subsequently with the teacher. Analysing observational data in relation to interview data helped me address Research Question 2.

My third research method was stimulated recall, which involves prompting “participants to recall thoughts they had while performing a task or participating in an event” (Gass and Mackey, 2000, p. 13). Stimulated recall sessions were conducted soon after each observation. I first selected certain episodes from the observation, and then, during stimulated recall interviews, triggered memories through audio clips and questions based on the narrative record. This technique can encourage the vivid reliving of an original situation, as Gass and Mackey argue, although, of course, respondents might not always be able or willing to identify the situated cognitions underlying their actions (Calderhead, 1981). Much depends on having already established a positive rapport and sense of trust (Holliday, 2007), which was crucial to my research. Insights from the stimulated recall sessions helped me address Research Question 3.

To improve the ‘trustworthiness’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of my research, I drew upon three rounds of data collection; this permitted ‘data source triangulation’ (Stake, 1995). For example, certain key questions were present in all three interviews with each teacher, but somewhat different wording was used each time so that the interviewee would not recognize I was checking understanding of what I had been told previously (van Canh, 2012). Also, where different practices were observed in the first and second observations of a teacher, I was particularly interested in observing a third time. Where consistency was noted, two observations were deemed sufficient. ‘Methodological triangulation’ (Stake, 1995) was employed constantly, with what said compared to what seen.

In approaching the data, ‘sequential analysis’ (Holloway and Wheeler, 2002) was adopted, which involves the verbatim transcripts being split into segments, coded and then divided into multiple categories and made into themes. Predetermined categories were not imposed, but rather themes and concepts emerged through the constant comparison (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) of the teachers’ observed actions and interview statements. The data analysis software package, NVivo (QSR, 2009), was employed to search for and aggregate codings, which then supported the development of narrative analysis (Cortazzi, 1993) and the creation of

text that aimed to be lucid, comprehensive and thorough to facilitate understanding (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

## **Findings**

We now present findings in relation to each teacher and then discuss them next to our research questions.

### *Hasan*

Hasan's classroom observations revealed he used the TL as the only medium of instruction, in line with the virtual position (Macaro, 2001), the only exception being when he used Urdu to enquire about a student's health before starting the class (Hasan Observation 1 - HO.1). However, although Hasan also discouraged student use of Urdu, this was done courteously and sympathetically. For example, in response to a request in L1 (for clarification about the differences between formative and summative assessment), he replied with a friendly smile in English (HO.1). He was more tolerant, then, than 'Jihad' in Al-Jadidi (2009), who refused to answer until questions phrased in L1 were reformulated in the TL. Hasan did, however, also explicitly encourage TL use, intervening, during a group work activity, to guide students who had switched to L1 to use English (HO.2).

Interview data revealed a good degree of fit between Hasan's practices and cognitions regarding TL and L1 use. He emphasised that English should be the only medium of instruction, in line with his views on CLT; learners actively involved in negotiating meaning should be exposed to English for communicative uses (Hasan Interview 1 - HI.1). However, it is interesting that, while Hasan used Urdu before the first observed lesson (to speak to a student who had been ill) (HO.1), he also believed that if the university policy was "to speak English outside class with students, it [could] better the standard of English" (HI.1). This might suggest a gap between idealized cognitions and practices. However, this behaviour was also consistent with another declared belief, that building students' confidence by creating a supportive atmosphere and by being 'lenient' facilitated learning, hence his tolerance, too, of occasional L1 use from learners (HI.2). Hasan had received harsh treatment from uncaring teachers as a language learner and was determined the classroom environment should be positive (HI.2).

Hasan acknowledged that in the Pakistani ESL classroom "the use of the mother tongue by the teacher not only eliminates [students'] sense of alienation but also offers them a sense of ownership in the class proceedings" (Hasan Stimulated Recall 1 - HSR.1), demonstrating understanding here of arguments for the optimal position, also advanced by Guy Cook (2007). Despite this understanding, Hasan nevertheless emphasized that "students need to be encouraged, motivated and inspired to speak English [as this] would ultimately lead to [greater] English proficiency" (HSR.2), and he used this argument to justify adopting a virtual position. Once, though, earlier in his career, he reflected, he had been forced by undergraduate student complaints to make maximal rather than exclusive use of the



L1; this demonstrates he could be flexible teaching learners with lower language proficiency. However, in this case, slowly and gradually, like 'Frank' in MacMillan and Turnbull (2009), he had reduced his L1 use. After a couple of months, the students had become accustomed to his exclusive TL use and at the end of the semester some commented favourably on improvements in their English (HSR.1); their interlanguage would also have developed through using English with each other. This experience had thus strengthened his support for the virtual position, although he was also clearly aware of and able to exploit other options.

### ***Murad***

Murad's classroom observations revealed that he occasionally used the L1 (mostly Pashto, but sometimes Urdu) in each, one a literature lesson and the other a communication skills class. The main functions of his L1 use appeared to be to consolidate conceptual understanding and to maintain a positive rapport, which relate to two of the three main purposes for using L1 identified by Littlewood and Yu (2009). So, for example, in the literature class, after explaining several lines of Milton in sometimes simplified English, he switched to Pashto to explain further, drawing on a range of religious and other socio-cultural resources in doing so (MO.1). In the communication skills class, when two students joined the lesson towards the end, Murad addressed them ironically in Pashto, saying "Wakhti ranagh lai?" (Aren't you early?), after a short pause adding "Zama matlab de da bal class da para" (I mean for the next class). This allowed all the students (who were allowed to use L1 themselves) to laugh (MO.2). Such use of L1 for joking with the students might not be rare. It was also employed by an Indian teacher in Al-Alawi (2008). Murad appeared comfortable in his occasional use of code-switching (10-15% of his teacher talk was in L1), and this seemed to fit easily with his lively classroom persona.

Curiously, even though Murad used a mixture of TL and L1 in his classes, his idealized cognitions, elicited a week before the first observation, did not appear to match his classroom practices. In fact, he argued that English teachers should *not* facilitate their learners' understanding by drawing on the L1 (Pashto or Urdu) for translation purposes (MI.1). Asked to justify this, he recalled an experience of attending a short in-service teacher education course in the USA, when he had been asked to conduct micro-teaching to absolute beginners, using Krashen and Terrell's (1983) *natural approach*. He had taught Pashto through "speaking it and acting it out (like shaking hands with them) and not using even a single word" of their L1. It had been "quite challenging", but after a month he had noticed the learners' growing familiarity with Pashto (MI.1). This had given him the conviction it was essential that the teacher's instructions and interactions with the class should be in the TL. In his view, the students also needed to interact in the TL among themselves to develop their interlanguage (MI.2).

Murad's idealized cognitions therefore appeared to support the virtual position, seemingly at odds with his practices, for which there may be various

reasons. Was the teacher education course too psychologically remote from his teaching context so that the ideas were difficult to apply, particularly since the primary focus in some of his teaching was on content? Or was he simply unaware of his classroom language, as research in other contexts suggests can be the case. Al-Bureikhi's (2008) study of primary school teachers in Oman, for example, does reveal that while a majority of those she *surveyed* offered theoretical support for the virtual position, all those from a similar population she *observed* used some L1, which might be an indicator of disparity. Alternatively, was Murad advancing (consciously or sub-consciously) a politically correct position in line with educational policy or one he felt demonstrated knowledge (albeit dated) of second language acquisition research? It is difficult to entirely rule out any of these possibilities.

When Murad's classroom use of the L1 was highlighted to him during stimulated recall, he made the following claim: "I do it intentionally because of my attachment to my mother tongue (Pashto) and also because sometimes using one word or phrase from Urdu or Pashto helps clarify students' understanding. It also saves time" (MSR.1). This suggests that when he reflected on it he realized that his L1 use was motivated by both the wish to express identity, as with the teachers in Trent's (2013) study, and pragmatic concerns. Regarding the latter, Murad emphasized that he was responding to the students' wants and needs (to hear translations into Urdu or Pashto after getting explanations first in English); he ascribed his behaviour as a response to their demands (MSR.2). Again, teachers in Trent (2013) made similar claims. However, Murad reiterated his commitment to using the TL and stressed a preference for making maximal use of it, employing simplified English, which was indeed an observed feature of his teaching (MO.1, MO.2), rather than L1 to offer clarification when he could (MSR.2). Some of these points are discussed further below.

### *Waseem*

The third teacher, Waseem, who had much less teaching experience, used the L1 (mostly Urdu) more extensively than Murad throughout the three lessons observed; it accounted for 15-40% of his teacher talk in each lesson. He used it primarily for 'maintaining a disciplined environment' as well as for 'ensuring conceptual understanding', two of the main functions of L1 use identified by Littlewood and Yu (2009). Regarding the former, he asked students in Urdu at the start of a lesson to rearrange the chairs, for example (WO.1), and he invariably used Urdu following English when he gave instructions about how to complete activities. Urdu was also used to check comprehension. For example, Waseem would ask: "Kia ye clear hey?" (Is it clear?) or "Samajh aagayi?" (Have you understood?) at successive stages of the lesson (WO.2). Like a pre-service teacher of French in Macaro (2001), he also used L1 to promote "a deeper understanding of semantic and syntactic equivalents" (p. 544). While explaining the nature and role of adjectives, for example, he wrote pairs of sentences on the whiteboard, such as the following, to stimulate awareness of comparative differences: She is a *clever girl*. (Wo ek *chalaak larki* hey) (WO.1). Pashto, as noted, was used less. The students did gain exposure to it, though, on one

occasion, when Waseem surprisingly took a phone call in the middle of a lesson, interrupting his teaching for a minute or two to chat to a relative in his mother tongue (WO.1), for which he afterwards apologized to the researcher, acknowledging this would have seemed unprofessional (WSR.1).

Waseem's idealized cognitions did not appear to fit his classroom practices. In fact, in all three interviews he emphasized the importance of the teacher's exclusive TL use, arguing, for example, that the teacher's "use of the mother tongue prevents the students' English speaking skills from fully developing" (WI.2). Responding to a question about the most important elements of an effective language teaching environment, Waseem maintained that "an environment in which English is spoken" is crucial: "communication should be in English because it would help the students as well as the teacher" (WI.3). When his cognitions are taken in isolation from his teaching then, Waseem appears to have been a staunch advocate of the 'monolingual principle' (Howatt, 1984).

A different picture emerges in the stimulated recall discussions when Waseem was presented with evidence of his L1 use. He reflected, for example, that the extent of his L1 use was related to the students' academic background (WSR.2), and indeed the lesson in which he used L1 the most (approximately 40%) was to students from a faculty (Management) he regarded as containing students who were relatively weaker in English (WO.1, WSR.2); his other language classes were with students of Science and English (WO.2, WO.3). Learners' limited language proficiency has been cited by other academics in the Pakistani context for relying on Urdu rather than English (e.g. de Lotbinière, 2010, 15 June). Waseem, of course, though, was teaching English rather than Physics (a subject it is nevertheless expected should also be taught exclusively in English at university). And he was using far more L1 than is often recommended; e.g. by Turnbull and McMillan (2009) who cite Macaro (2005) as suggesting that beyond approximately 15% it can start to have a negative effect on language learning. It is possible that Waseem's very limited teaching experience (only 6 months) influenced the extent of his L1 use for some purposes, e.g. classroom management. Classroom management issues tend to preoccupy novice teachers trying to make sense of their unfamiliar roles (Berliner, 1988), yet to develop classroom routines they are comfortable with, unlike experienced teachers able to concentrate much more on the students' learning (Nunan, 1992).

Nevertheless, some of Waseem's L1 use, when he reflected on it in stimulated recall, was clearly principled and in line with an optimal position. For example, he argued that drawing on knowledge of the mother tongue could facilitate conceptual understanding of the TL and he illustrated this point by highlighting how elision works similarly in Pashto and English (WSR.3). In one of his observed lessons on adjectives, as noted above, he had likewise invited students to compare how the English and Urdu languages were structured (WO.1). He also argued, in line with the optimal position, that teachers should make judicious use of the L1 in class if it is

essential for explaining and clarifying students' conceptual understanding, as he thought this to be the teacher's utmost duty (WSR.2). Supporting conceptual understanding, and he was critical of teachers he knew who had not done that sufficiently (WI.3), was perhaps more important to him than excluding the L1. So, one set of values may have been more important to him than another. Gulzar's (2010) research suggests that supporting conceptual understanding is seen as a valid reason to code-switch by Pakistani teachers.

## **Discussion**

We now address our research questions.

### ***1. What are the teachers' idealized cognitions regarding TL and L1 use?***

It is evident from the data presented above that the idealized cognitions of all three teachers supported the exclusive use of the TL. As with many teachers in the studies (reported above) that elicited idealized cognitions through questionnaires, e.g. Al-Shidhani (2009), McMillan and Rivers (2011), Wang and Kirkpatrick (2012), these teachers argued against the classroom use of L1. They indicated it would reduce the comprehensible input available (Murad) and interfere with TL acquisition (Waseem). As well as also supporting this virtual position, Hasan went one step further by suggesting that the university should make it obligatory to speak English with students outside class, i.e. elsewhere on the campus, so that the standard of their English could improve.

### ***2. If there are any gaps between their idealized cognitions and classroom behaviour regarding TL and L1 use, what are the characteristics of these?***

Observational data reveal that in Hasan's case the gap was minor; he used Urdu *before* a lesson out of sympathy, but English exclusively thereafter. He also accepted some L1 use from students; he was not a hard-liner like 'Jihad' in Al-Jadidi (2009).

In contrast, Murad occasionally used L1 (chiefly Pashto), this accounting for 10-15% of his teacher talk, while Waseem used L1 (mostly Urdu) more frequently (15-40% of the time). So there was a clear gap between the idealized cognitions and classroom behaviour regarding L1 use of these two teachers. Interestingly, though, they seemed to code-switch for different purposes, both to ensure conceptual understanding, but Murad additionally to build a positive rapport and Waseem to maintain discipline.

### ***3. How can gaps between idealized cognitions and classroom behaviour be explained?***

Data from the stimulated recall discussions help provide insights into possible underlying reasons for the gaps identified. In Hasan's case, both his classroom behaviour and his idealized cognitions are consistent with a virtual position. In this sense, he is similar to one of the teachers researched in each of the following studies discussed above: Al-Alawi (2008), Barnard et al. (2011), Chimbutane (2013). Nevertheless, he is relatively relaxed about his students' use of L1 (as he seems to want to avoid frustrating them) and he puts demonstrating sympathetic concern

above his idealized cognition that English should be used in all interaction with students, both inside and outside the classroom. This caring behaviour, though, is consistent with another set of beliefs he holds dear; Hasan wishes to be very different from the unsympathetic teachers he had the misfortune to be a student of. As Pajares (1992, p. 315) argues: "Conceptualising a belief system involves the understanding that this system is composed of beliefs connected to one another and to other cognitive/ affective structures, complex and intricate though these connections may be". In this case, it seems the belief that a teacher should be caring trumped the belief that a teacher should use the TL at all times.

With regard to Murad, as soon as his L1 (Pashto) use was pointed out to him in stimulated recall, he justified his use of it, advancing arguments (e.g. the expression of identity) reminiscent of the optimal position (Macaro, 2001). Indeed, in observed lessons, Murad built rapport with the learners in Pashto in such an easy way, switching seamlessly from English, it appeared to be a deeply-established feature of his teaching. Why then had he been so adamant in interview that L1 should not be used? One possible explanation is that his teacher education course in the USA may have been too remote from his actual teaching experience in Pakistan for him to draw upon, except theoretically. He had developed a strong belief, through the *natural approach* and *immersion* techniques he had been introduced to in America, that it was necessary to teach the TL (English) through English. However, there is of course a vast difference between micro-teaching Pashto (as TL) on a teacher education course to beginners in the USA who have no particular need to learn it apart from interest and teaching English literature or communication skills in Pakistan to university learners with years of TL experience. Murad had taken a belief developed through a teacher education course set in a foreign context, idealized it and misapplied it to his own context, if he had understood the researcher's questions (which, in the next interview, was subsequently checked). He appeared to have been temporarily blinded as to his own practice, which demonstrates the need, firstly, to site teacher education wherever possible in teachers' own contexts (Mann, 2005) and, secondly, to incorporate awareness-raising activities (Borg, 2006). Murad seemed to lack self-awareness, although the process of reflecting on his teaching in stimulated recall through participating in this research may have helped him in this regard, as it appeared to do with teachers in other studies (e.g. McMillan and Turnbull, 2009).

Regarding the third teacher, Waseem, he also appeared to lack self-awareness, as he was adamant in all three interviews that the L1 should not be used, even though in all three observed lessons he made substantial use of it. However, this should not be too surprising, as Waseem had very limited experience and would have been focused, as many novices are, on classroom management issues (Berliner, 1988; Nunan, 1992). In one of his lessons, though, Waseem did make quite extensive use of L1 (approximately 40%), which is far above recommended threshold levels (McMillan and Turnbull, 2009), a finding which might point towards a need for further training; Waseem had received no specific support in this.

However, Waseem also justified his use of L1 to support conceptual understanding in a way that echoed the optimal position (Macaro, 2001). For example, he discussed the value of contrastive analysis and was also observed to make use of this in his teaching. It appears Waseem's idealized cognitions about one aspect of the teacher's role (supporting conceptual understanding) were perhaps more influential in terms of shaping his practice than were his idealized cognitions regarding TL use. As in Hasan's case, prior learning experiences seemed crucial. Waseem indicated elsewhere in interviews he was reacting against the practices of teachers who had taught him but who had not, in his view, been sufficiently thorough in sharing *their own* and supporting *his* conceptual understanding.

Important to Waseem as well as to the other teachers were the needs of the learners, in as far as they perceived them. Interestingly, they responded in different ways. Hasan was more concerned about the affective dimension, Waseem more about the cognitive, Murad with issues of identity. And their TL/L1 behaviour was very different: exclusive TL use, TL use supplemented by Urdu and Pashto. Where learners meet such varied behaviour, e.g. in Barnard et al.'s (2011) study in Timor-Leste too, there must be the potential for confusion as to the institution's expectations. This does suggest that such issues should be aired.

Interestingly, neither in the interviews with Waseem nor in those conducted with the other teachers were the expectations of the university regarding TL use raised. As noted above, there is the expectation that an 'English only' policy is followed. However, at university level in Pakistan, there seems to be very little discussion of this policy and of how it is implemented, unlike the public discussion centred on the code-switching and L1 use in schools, which has received much criticism, e.g. Coleman (2010), Rahman (2001), Shamim (2008). Recently, though, some attention has been paid to the challenges faced by university students trying to follow lessons in English and of how these challenges are responded to (de Lotbinière, 2010, 15 June; Tamim, 2013). The debate regarding the appropriacy of the university 'English only' policy needs to be brought out more into the open for fuller discussion.

## **Conclusions**

In summary, then, this study has demonstrated, in line with other teacher cognition research (Borg, 2006), that a consideration of various personal and contextual factors can help explain identifiable gaps between teachers' idealized cognitions and their classroom behaviour and justifications for this. Specific implications with regard to the particular focus of this article include the following: Firstly, there is a clear need in the Pakistani higher education environment for awareness-raising of TL/L1 issues as part of context-sensitive teacher education that draws on recent understandings of the value of 'judicious' mother tongue use (e.g. Guy Cook, 2007), in relation to virtual, maximal and optimal positions (Macaro, 2001). Secondly, this teacher education initiative could feed into more of an open debate of university 'English only' policies, considering the views not just of 'experts', as in Gulzar and Qadir's

(2010) study, but also the views of a broader range of university teachers, whose capacity to engage would be stimulated by their very involvement in this discussion.

Of course, these findings need to be set against limitations. Firstly, this study drew on data collected from only three teachers (sampled, according to various criteria including balance and variety, from seven), and it is possible, of course, that a sample from a different population would have produced quite different results. However, regardless of this, as Stake (1995, p. 8) reminds us: “the real business of case study is particularization”. The in-depth qualitative investigation aimed to achieve a deeper, richer understanding of the uniqueness of the multi-case of the three teachers in all its complexity, using ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) to encourage readers to generalize to their own experiences (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Secondly, however, the possibility of ‘reactivity’ (Holliday, 2007), both in observations and interviews, cannot be excluded, although methodological procedures described above were designed to mitigate that threat. These procedures included different forms of triangulation, including that of ‘data source’ (Stake, 1995). So, when surprising gaps between idealized cognitions and classroom behaviour were identified, further data collection and reiterative analysis explored these carefully, so that possible misunderstandings could be eliminated.

There is clearly a need for further research, both in this and other contexts. The gap identified here between idealized cognitions regarding TL use (supporting the virtual position) and observed practices, sometimes justified with reference to arguments also drawn on by proponents of the optimal position (Macaro, 2001), demonstrates this. Without such research, educational policy can become divorced from reality. However, one of the puzzles this study did not shed much light on is the possibly deeply-engrained influence institutional and political expectations might exert on teachers’ idealized cognitions regarding TL use in the Pakistani context. The teachers in this study, highlighting other influences, surprisingly made little reference to these pressures and expectations. It is possible that, rather than these influences being unimportant, the teachers may not have been conscious of their impact (on their cognitions and behaviour) and were therefore unable to articulate them, even though the research aimed to explore their cognitions in-depth. This leads us to suggest that additional research methods may possibly be adopted to supplement similar research in future, e.g. psychological tests probing the sub-consciousness.

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