

Malaysian Students' Attitudes towards L1 Use in Japanese Language Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

In the history of second language acquisition, the idea of alienating student's mother tongue (L1) in classrooms has become a norm to the extent that its use will leave teachers feeling guilty. This is reflected in teaching methods such as the direct method or the total physical response method. Upon reviewing the related literature, it was found that the students' L1 is helpful to their development and has the possibility of supporting many aspects of language acquisition. The main problem lies in the students' and teachers' attitudes towards the use of L1 in classrooms, which is believed not to benefit students. Inspired by these views, this paper aims to investigate the attitudes of Malaysian students studying in Japanese preparatory schools in Malaysia towards L1 use in classrooms. A preliminary research was conducted to identify the areas in which students prefer using L1. This is used to create a fourteen-item questionnaire. The results were fairly similar to previous studies with most students disagreeing with the use of L1 in classrooms. However, when it comes to explaining Japanese grammar, the students expressed their desire for L1 use. Finally, a few suggestions on why such attitudes are so prominent in Malaysian students were presented.

Keywords: Attitudes, Japanese Second Language Learners, L1, Malaysian students

INTRODUCTION

According to the Directory of Foreign Language Immersion Programmes in U.S Schools Center for Applied Linguistics, an immense growth in Language Immersion Education can be observed from the years of 1991 through 2011. This trend, in relation to second language acquisition, has resulted in second language classrooms that restrict students to only use the target language (L2), especially the increase in classrooms that does not allow students to use their first language (L1). The author studied Japanese for two years in Malaysia and experienced classrooms with such rules. This has invoked the question of why L1 use is not allowed or frequently avoided when it comes to second language acquisition.

Cook (2001) explains that these classroom rules originated as early as 1880 and were taken from the direct teaching methodology. At that time, language teaching methods included the audio-lingual method and Total Physical Response (TPR), which also revolve around the same rule, while some even ignore the existence of the L1 altogether (Cook, 2001). These methods alienate the L1 with the aim of building a direct relationship between the L2 and the brain without any interference from the L1. The underlying basis for these methods is the idea that it is how children naturally acquire language, proving its reliability. Vermes (2010) states that allowing the L1 use in the classroom may provide wrong stimulus to students by allowing them to think in the L1 rather than the L2, which in turn may result in wrong foreign language behaviour.

However, a research carried out by Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) found that the use of the L1 in the second language classroom can support the students' language comprehension and provide additional cognitive support. Mattioli (2004) and Nazary (2008) provided a detailed explanation by listing five functions of the L1 in a second language classroom: explaining vocabulary, giving instructions, explaining language rules, reprimanding students, and talking to individual students.

While there has been significant research to prove the viability of using the L1 in classrooms, the taboo of using it remains prominent especially among teachers. Ford (2009) states that some teachers feel guilty because the use of L1 represents a contradiction to not only their responsibility to provide as much exposure to the L2, but also to their traditional direct-method training. Cook (2001) and Mitchell (1988) agreed with such a view as teachers feel that L1 use is an admission to their professional misconduct in second language learning.

In the case of Malaysia, due to limited number of native English and Japanese teachers, the use of L1 in second language classrooms is more acceptable. Ahmad and Jusoff (2009) found that 74% of teachers frequently use L1 in second language classrooms in Malaysian universities. In addition, 68% of the students agree to the use of L1 in the classrooms. Although this tolerance towards the use of L1 can be observed when it comes to English lessons, the same has yet to be proven for Japanese second language (JSL) learners in Malaysia.

According to the Annual Survey of International Students in Japan 2017 by Japan Student Service Organisation, Malaysia is ranked 10th in the number of international students in Japan. Since its introduction in 1981, the Look East Policy has contributed to the rise of Japanese language learners in the country, making it one of the most sought-after foreign languages offered in various institutions. Due to its importance, there is a necessity to conduct this study to understand the language attitudes of Malaysian students with the hope of improving the current language acquisition trend in the country.

Based on the above, this paper aims to investigate the attitudes of Malaysian JSL learners towards the L1 in the second language classrooms. Ringbom (1980) defines second language as "a situation the language is spoken in the immediate environment of the learner, who has good opportunities to use the language by participating in natural communication situations" (pp.38-39). Although Japanese language is commonly referred to as a foreign language in Malaysia, in the context of this paper, it is considered as a second language due to the unique immersive learning environment that the students in this study experience. The research questions that this paper aims to address are:

1. What is the attitude of students towards L1 use in learning Japanese language as a second language?
2. What is the attitude of students towards L1 use if it is used to explain grammar, give instructions, and explain mistakes in the Japanese language classroom?

LITERATURE REVIEW

BACKGROUND OF L1 USE IN THE CLASSROOM

The early arguments against the L1 revolved around the behaviorists learning theory which states that language learning can be seen as formation of habits (Du, 2016). It is the old habits gained from the L1 that by default will interfere with the process of learning new L2 habits and ultimately lead to negative transfer and errors as it tries to facilitate the learning by predicting the similarities between the two languages (Ellis 1985:22). MacDonald (1993) expressed that the language classroom is the only chance for students to practice L2 use, thus it should be maximised. This sentiment is shared and supported by Krashen (1985) in his input hypothesis which states that students are able to acquire a language as long as they are exposed to it with the sufficient amount of input, encouraging teachers and students to reduce or even eliminate the L1 from the language classroom. Meyer (2008) believes that the L1 may provide scaffolding that should be discontinued once the students progress in their proficiency. Considering these views along with the aim of the direct method itself, which is widely used in language teaching today in order to develop the ability to think in the language (Rivers, 1981), it is not surprising why L1 is discarded as it is assumed to hinder the direct association between the language and action.

Cook (2001) counters this argument by expressing that first and second language acquisition is not comparable as they are two different things. L2 learners are not children and are expected to have more developed skill sets. Continuing to rely on this principle is basically another way of saying that “since children do not play golf, we should not teach golf to adults,” Cook (2001:406). Gómez Martínez and Olivera (2003) agree with this and highlighted that L2 students have passed the age barrier, and thus are more inclined to ‘learn’ rather than naturally ‘acquire’. Reviewing these factors, the L2 learners should be recognised as its own entity with its own unique approaches to L1 language acquisition rather than being secondary duplicate of the mother tongue. Thus, this gives us enough reason to consider L1 use in the second language classroom.

A study by Latsanyphone and Bouangeune (2009) found that the use of L1 in teaching vocabulary through translation exercises and dictation on low proficiency Laos’s university students proved to be effective. The students in the experimental group, which applied L1 in teaching new words had better results than the controlled group as they had the words explained to them in the L1 and this resulted in a clearer understanding. Although studies have been carried out to prove the effectiveness of the L1 in the second language classroom (Cook, 2001; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003; Cummins, 2007), its non-acceptance by students and teachers still remain the main issue to its implementation.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS L1 USE IN THE CLASSROOM

Attitudes as defined by Gardner (1985) is “an evaluative reaction of some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual’s beliefs or opinions about the referent” (pp.54-55). In order to ensure the successful application and use of the L1 in language classrooms as proposed by literature, there is a need for teachers and students to firstly have a positive view of the L1. This is because, their attitudes can determine the extent to which students continue to

actively participate in the language learning process (Ming & Ling et al, 2011). However, this is difficult considering the years of stigma surrounding the L1, and initial training that encourages teachers to maximise L2 use at all times. Negative attitudes towards the L1 may result in relatively less participation among the students if they believe that the L1 use in the classroom is not beneficial to their language learning. Thus, investigating attitudes of teachers and students is vital in revealing what they really feel about the L1. In addition it is equally important to discover if they do believe that its use can benefit in their language learning and teaching. Studying the attitudes can also further reveal where and when students find the L1 most useful in the second language classrooms.

Yen (2004) studied the attitudes of teachers and students towards the L1 in Japanese conversation classes in Taiwan. The results from this study revealed that the necessity of using the L1 gradually declined as the learning grade, from beginner to intermediate and advanced, increased. The students were also reluctant in using the L1 and tend to avoid it. In contrast, the teachers appreciated the use of the L1 in the second language classroom, especially when it came to the non-native teachers.

Nazary (2008) examined the attitudes and perceptions towards the L1 in L2 classrooms among a group of Iranian college students. A questionnaire on L1 was administered among 85 participants, with L2 levels that included beginner, intermediate, and advanced learners. The result of the research revealed that the students seldom used L1 in the L2 classroom. This is because they believed that the L1 did not have any effective importance in second language acquisition. Specifically, 81% of advanced learners and 68% of intermediate learners answered that the teacher should at least know the L1, however when it comes to its use in the classroom only 22%, 21%, and 16% from each respective level agreed to its use. While this study concluded an overall view of the attitudes of the students of the L1, it lacks specific conditions of how or when the L1 would be used in the classroom settings.

From his interview with 10 English as A Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Japan, Ford (2009) found that a majority of the teachers preferred not to use the L1 in the second language classrooms. The teachers believed that by using the L1, students may become complacent and lazy as they are not required to listen or pay attention. However, the few teachers that did agree to using the L1 only did so in specific situations which were mainly to either give assurance to the students, give instructions, or guide a specified given task. What needs to be questioned here is the ultimate goal of the students and teachers in second language acquisition. Although to an extent a full L2 classroom is able to provide motivation to the students to work harder, there are instances where this can backfire and result in the students not wanting to try at all.

Littlewood and Yu (2011) reported after interviewing 50 second-year tertiary classroom students from Hong Kong and Mainland China that the most common purposes a teacher using the L1 in the classroom fell into three categories: 1) establishing constructive social relationships 2) communicating complex meanings to ensure understanding and/or save time 3) maintaining control over the classroom environment. This is similar to the five functions of the L1 in the classroom as reported by Mattioli (2004). Both studies have been specified to either English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) situations, thus whether the same functions can be applicable to JSL learners has yet to be known. Considering how each language is unique with its own nuances, one can assume that a different function for the L1 might be present when it comes to a different language, in this case Japanese.

Bartlett (2017) concluded on his survey on 64 second-year Japanese University students that the students had a clear preference for L1 use in the EFL classroom. The students indicate that

L1 use enables them to understand and listen to difficult language content, as well as feel more comfortable when they ask questions or report concerns to their teachers. 100% of the students believed that L1 use did not hinder their opportunities to comprehend or communicate in the L2. However, due to strong beliefs in favour of the monolingual classroom, the implementation of it is still difficult to achieve.

Mixed perceptions can be observed from both students and teachers in universities towards L1 use in the second language classroom, however the studies conducted in Malaysia have yielded slightly different results.

Research on L1 use in Malaysia has dominantly been centered on code-switching, which in the context of second language classroom is defined as the alternating use of the L1 and L2 (Jingxia; 2010). Thus, this paper considers code-switching as a form of L1 use in regard to the following studies that have been carried out.

Ariffin and Susanti Husin (2011) conducted a survey that showed mixed attitudes towards the use of L1 in a content-based classroom, particularly by students with higher proficiency in the target language. Students with higher language competence held less favourable attitudes towards L1 use and believed that the L2 (English) should be maximised in the classroom. However, this becomes an issue for lower proficiency students as they may not even be able to comprehend what is being taught, thus having more positive views of L1 use.

Nordin and Ali et al (2013) researched 45 second semester diploma students in Malaysia and found that a majority of learners (82.2%) have positive attitudes towards L1 use in the English language classroom. Furthermore, 86.7% of the learners believed that the L1 should be used when learning English. Despite the students' constructive view towards the L1, they also believed that it should only be used for specific purposes such as giving feedback, checking comprehension, explaining grammar, and not to the extent of going beyond the language that is being learnt in the classroom.

Similarly, Azlan and Narusaman (2013) conducted a survey on 28 Malaysian university students and found that a majority of 60.7% agreed that L1 use was effective in the classroom. However, 70% of the students also admitted that the use of L1 will affect their English proficiency, believing that it would result in the decrease of vocabulary and incorrect use of sentence structure.

Studies have generally shown mixed and positive attitudes towards the L1 in Malaysia; and although the students agree to its use, there is still a negative perception towards the L1 in the overall language learning. However, the focus has been mainly centered on English language learning, and to the author's knowledge, is lacking when it comes to other second and foreign languages that are offered in the country. Specifically, in the case of Japanese language education started with its introduction to six secondary schools in 1984 and has expanded to 135 schools as of September 2015 as reported by the Japan Foundation. Considering the on-going Malaysian-Japanese relations and the importance of the language to the country, this paper believes that there is a need to investigate the attitudes of Malaysian Japanese Second Language (JSL) learners to better understand the current teaching methods that are being used in the country.

L1 USE IN JAPANESE LANGUAGE EDUCATION

The direct method has been widely practised in Malaysia following the use of the *Minna no Nihongo* textbook by 3A Network which is the most commonly used textbook for Japanese Language Education as reported by the Japan Foundation in the year of 2016. The textbook is mainly to be used in Japanese context only, without any support from an intermediate language (Tanimori, 2016) or L1. In some cases, it is also the general policy practised in terms of teaching methods in certain schools in the country. However, reflecting on the body of literature that has been presented in positive view of the L1, it is questionable to why L1 use hasn't been considered or included in the current official Japanese Language Education, and only taken as a last resort.

Mizutani (1986) while agreeing to the strengths that the direct method has to offer, mentions that the direct method can be problematic for students to ask questions when facing difficulty in the class. This combined with the rapid speed of drills and repetition forces the students to go forward regardless of whether they understand or not and raises a question of the students' understanding of the class.

Okumura (2002), permitted the use of L1 or intermediate language in the Japanese language classroom, however stated that teachers need to consider the following points first:

1. Classes should be overall conducted in Japanese language, and the L1 must only be used as an ancillary so as not to use it more than it is necessary.
2. As the L1 is meant to compensate for ambiguous points in the Japanese language, the explanation needs to be accurate. Thus, the teacher must be fully proficient in the L1.
3. The teacher must be aware of the class and determine when it is appropriate to use only the direct method or include the L1. Nevertheless, these points may be difficult for the less experienced teachers, as it is difficult to determine how much L1 use is considered more than necessary.

A framework that can be referred to when asking these questions is essential in ensuring that the L1 is used as a beneficial tool rather than an easy option (Macaro, 2001).

Tanimori (2016) argues that using L1 to translate specific grammatical terms can be more effective and less time-consuming than relying solely on the L2. He further elaborates a theoretical framework of the detailed instances to when translation can be used to improve JSL students' grammar comprehension, such as using it to explain extended predicates, negotiation particles, assumption expressions, and manner forms. However, the effectiveness of his suggestions has yet to be tested.

This paper seeks to discover the student's attitudes towards the currently practised direct method and whether the students believe that it is working for them, or if it can be enhanced in certain areas with the L1. This study is important to uncover the view of students towards the use or non-use of L1 in the classrooms, to help teachers better understand their students and how they can further facilitate language learning.

METHODOLOGY

To explore the attitudes of Malaysian students' attitudes towards L1 use, a 14-item survey experimentation method was conducted on two Japanese preparatory schools in Malaysia with a total of 78 participants. Prior to this, a preliminary research with open-ended interviews were

conducted among Malaysian students in Japan in order to create survey questions based on their responses. The three initial questions of the survey were also created based on surveys that were conducted in related studies with appropriate changes made to fit the context of this study.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants of the study consisted of 78 Malaysian JSL learners aged from 18 to 19 years old from two different preparatory colleges in Kuala Lumpur. These students are enrolled in the Japanese university preparatory program where they are required to study Japanese for 21 months in Malaysia before being accepted in a university in Japan. The students chosen are beginner learners who have undergone 45 to 300 hours of Japanese lessons (first-year students), and intermediate learners who have undergone 500 to 1000 hours of Japanese lessons (second-year students). The students study Japanese language exclusively from 9.00AM to 6.00PM and are constantly involved in after-school activities that require them to interact with native Japanese speakers throughout the entire duration of the program. Due to this unique immersive learning environment, this paper refers to Japanese language as a second language. Japanese School A has both native and non-native teachers as staff members while Japanese School B only have native teachers as their staff members. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the students' major, grade, gender, and study year. All the subjects' L1 is Malay language.

Table 1
Student Demographic

	Major		Gender		Study Year	
	Arts	Sciences	Male	Female	1 st Year	2 nd Year
Japanese School A	0	38	27	11	0	38
Japanese School B	13	27	21	19	20	20
Total	13	65	48	30	20	58

INSTRUMENT

As aforementioned, the results from the preliminary research were used to create a detailed 14-item questionnaire. The questions were divided into four categories, namely A, general questions towards the L1 use in Japanese Language Classroom (questions 1 to 3), B, questions that suggest the effectiveness of L1 use in specific situations (questions 4 to 6), C, questions that encourage L1 use in specific situations (questions 7 to 10), D, questions on students' own L1 use in the classroom (questions 11 to 13) and E, a question regarding L1 use and student motivation (question 14). It has to be noted that the questions in Category B, C, and D are mainly shaped based on the results obtained from the preliminary research in which it was found that students prefer the teacher to use L1 to give instructions, explain grammar, and also point out mistakes. The questions are then presented on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, with 1 representing 'Strongly Disagree', 2 representing 'Disagree', 3 representing 'Neither Agree or Disagree', 4 representing 'Agree', and 5 as 'Strongly Agree' to determine the student's attitudes. The choice of 'Neither Agree or Disagree' has been shortened to 'Neither' in the questionnaire and it is included as the

students come from different language learning environments. Thus, there are instances where there is a possibility that the students will have a neutral perspective towards the statements given.

PROCEDURE

The survey was carried out at Japanese School A and at Japanese School B after class hours. The questionnaire was distributed to the students and they took roughly 10 to 15 minutes to answer all 14 questions.

DATA ANALYSIS

The results were divided into three groups. Japanese School A (2nd Year), Japanese School B (1st Year), and Japanese School B (2nd Year). Each group's data were analysed and the frequencies of agreement and disagreement marks were calculated and later converted into percentages to observe and compare the differences of attitudes according to their respective categories.

RESULTS

The overall findings as displayed in Table 2 show that the Malaysian JSL learners from both schools disagreed to the use of the L1 in the second language classroom and is found to be similar to the previous studies above. While no significant difference was observed from the differing study year, upon deeper analysis of the responses, it was discovered that the attitudes and perceptions of the students of each school varied widely according to each category and question.

Table 2
 (N=78) Overall Result

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. In a Japanese classroom the teacher should know Bahasa Melayu or English	3	36	20	14	4
2. The teacher should use Bahasa Melayu or English during Japanese Class	1	8	18	32	18
3. Students should be allowed to use Bahasa Melayu or English during Japanese Class	1	10	24	29	13
4. It is easier to understand Japanese grammar when the teacher uses Bahasa Melayu or English	3	26	25	20	4
5. It is easier to understand when the teacher uses English or Bahasa Melayu to give instructions in the class	4	10	25	33	6
6. It is easier to understand when the teacher explains mistakes in Bahasa Melayu or English	4	23	26	18	7
7. Teachers should use Bahasa Melayu or English to explain Japanese grammar	3	8	26	32	9
8. Teachers should use Bahasa Melayu or English when explaining homework	0	0	23	40	15
9. Teachers should use Bahasa Melayu or English when giving instructions	0	1	18	45	14
10. Teachers should explain mistakes in Bahasa Melayu or English	0	10	25	33	10
11. Students should be allowed to talk in Bahasa Melayu or English when talking in pairs or groups	6	12	30	22	8
12. Students should be allowed to translate a Japanese word to Bahasa Melayu or English to show that they understand the meaning	11	34	17	9	7
13. Students should be allowed to explain what they do or don't understand in Bahasa Melayu or English	3	26	27	18	4
14. Using Bahasa Melayu or English in Japanese class will increase my motivation to learn.	2	8	30	24	13

Table 3 shows the results from Category A, which are general questions regarding attitudes towards L1 use in the classroom were overwhelmingly negative with 65% of the students disagreeing to teacher use (Question 2) and 55% to student use (Question 3). The majority of the disagreement for Question 3 comes from Japanese School B (N=30) rather than Japanese School A (N=20). This is in contrast to the results of Malaysian students in the ESL context (Ahmad & Jusoff, 2009; Nordin & Ali et al, 2013; Azlan & Narusaman, 2013). However, more than half agreed that the teachers should know the L1 (Question 1), similar to the results obtained from Nazary (2008) and Bartlett (2017). In terms of proficiency level, the first-year students from School B also have a higher count in negative attitude for both Question 2 (N=14) and Question 3 (N=13). This is different from the study by Yen (2004) and Nazary (2008) that found beginner students as having more needs towards L1 use.

Table 3
Category A Result

CATEGORY A QUESTION	1. In a Japanese classroom the teacher should know Bahasa Melayu or English			2. The teacher should use Bahasa Melayu or English during Japanese class.			3. Students should be allowed to use Bahasa Melayu or English during Japanese class		
	Strongly Agree & Agree	Neither	Strongly Disagree & Disagree	Strongly Agree & Agree	Neither	Strongly Disagree & Disagree	Strongly Agree & Agree	Neither	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
School A (2)	19	10	9	4	14	20	9	13	15
School B (2)	9	4	7	3	1	16	1	5	14
School B (1)	11	6	3	2	3	14	1	6	13
Total (N)	39	20	19	9	18	50	11	24	42
Percentage (%)	50.00	25.6	24.3	11.69	23.38	64.94	14.29	31.17	54.54

Table 4 illustrates the results of Category B where the questions suggested the effectiveness of the L1 in specific situations, a slightly positive attitude from the students can be observed. At least 37% of the students, with a majority from Japanese School A (N=18) agreed that using the L1 to explain Japanese grammar would be easier to understand (Question 4). This echoes the result from Okumura (2002) and Nordin and Ali et al (2013) that showed language learners prefer grammar to be explained in the L1. This sentiment is also seen in the results of Question 6, where 36% of the students agreed that explaining mistakes in L1 will be easier to grasp, parallel to the fifth function of L1 as stated by Mattioli (2004) which is to talk to individual students. However, more than half of the students from both schools disagreed that instructions are easier to comprehend when given in the L1 (Question 5) which is not in line with the previous findings (Atkinson, 1987; Mattioli, 2004; Nazary, 2008).

Table 4
Category B Result

CATEGORY B QUESTION	4. It is easier to understand Japanese grammar when the teacher uses Bahasa Melayu or English			5. It is easier to understand when the teacher uses English or Bahasa Melayu to give instructions in Japanese Class			6. It is easier to understand when the teacher explains mistakes in Bahasa Melayu or English		
	Strongly Agree & Agree	Neither	Strongly Disagree & Disagree	Strongly Agree & Agree	Neither	Strongly Disagree & Disagree	Strongly Agree & Agree	Neither	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
School A (2)	18	13	7	5	14	19	16	15	7
School B (2)	7	3	10	6	2	12	5	5	10
School B (1)	4	9	7	3	9	8	7	6	7
Total (N)	29	25	24	14	25	39	28	26	24
Percentage (%)	37.18	32.05	30.77	17.95	32.05	50	35.90	33.33	30.76

Moving on to Table 5, the results in Category C reported the most negative scores and perceptions in the survey. Even though the students acknowledge that using the L1 in the classroom is more useful as seen in their response to the questions of Category B, on being asked if they thought the teacher should use the L1 in situations as stated in Category C, majority of the students disagreed. In the situation of giving instructions (Question 9) in the L1, disagreement was as high as 70% from both schools. Furthermore, none of the students from both schools

thought that teachers should use the L1 when explaining homework (Question 8). While only 13% agreeing to the usage of the L1 in explaining a student’s mistakes (Question 10), at least 14% agreed that teachers should use the L1 when explaining Japanese grammar (Question 7). This high disregard for L1 use reflects the results from previous studies (Nazary, 2008; Yen, 2004; Wada, 2005) where the students do not believe in the effectiveness of the L1.

Table 5
Category C Result

CATEGORY C QUESTION	7. Teachers should use Bahasa Melayu or English to explain Japanese grammar			8. Teachers should use Bahasa Melayu or English when explaining homework			9. Teachers should use Bahasa Melayu or English when giving instructions.			10. Teachers should explain mistakes in Bahasa Melayu or English		
	Strongly Agree & Agree	Neither	Strongly Disagree & Disagree	Strongly Agree & Agree	Neither	Strongly Disagree & Disagree	Strongly Agree & Agree	Neither	Strongly Disagree & Disagree	Strongly Agree & Agree	Neither	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
School A (2)	7	15	16	0	15	23	0	11	27	7	16	15
School B (2)	4	3	13	0	2	18	0	0	20	1	3	16
School B (1)	0	8	12	0	6	14	1	7	12	2	6	12
Total (N)	11	26	41	0	23	55	1	18	59	10	25	43
Percentage (%)	14.11	33.33	52.57	0	29.49	70.51	1.28	23.08	75.64	12.82	32.05	55.13

Table 6 shows the results of Category D, which involve questions on student’s L1 use in the classroom. In terms of pair or group work use, only 23% of students agreed that L1 use should be allowed, mostly from students of School A (N=13). This echoes the findings by Storch and Wigglesworth (2008) as students believed that using the L1 would slow down the activities. The most positive score with 57% from both schools, agreed that students should be able to translate into the L1 to show that they understand what is being conveyed (Question 12), parallel to Atkinson (1987) and Nordin and Ali et al (2013) who stated that L1 can be used to check comprehension. On the other hand, 37% of the students with the majority from Japanese School A (N=22) agreed that students should be allowed to express what they do or don’t understand in their L1, similar to Bartlett (2017) whose students agreed that they should be able to ask questions in their L1. In contrast, the majority of students from Japanese School B (N=19) disagreed to this statement.

Table 6
Category D Result

CATEGORY D QUESTION	11. Students should be allowed to talk in Bahasa Melayu or English when talking in pairs or groups			12. Students should be allowed to translate a Japanese word to Bahasa Melayu or English to show that they understand			13. Students should be allowed to explain what they do or don't understand in Bahasa Melayu or English		
	Strongly Agree & Agree	Neither	Strongly Disagree & Disagree	Strongly Agree & Agree	Neither	Strongly Disagree & Disagree	Strongly Agree & Agree	Neither	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
School A (2)	13	13	12	29	5	4	22	13	3
School B (2)	2	7	11	8	6	6	4	5	11
School B (1)	3	11	6	8	6	6	3	9	8
Total (N)	18	31	29	45	17	16	29	27	22
Percentage (%)	23.07	39.74	37.18	57.69	21.79	20.51	37.18	34.62	28.21

Finally, Table 7 shows the results from Category E, where both schools disagreed that L1 use in the classroom would increase their motivation to learn with a majority of 48%. This is not in line with the previous studies (Cummins, 2007; Varshney & Rolin-Ianziti, 2006; Bartlett, 2017) that found students in the ESL/EFL context agree that using the L1 in the classroom has a positive effect on their motivation.

Table 7
Category E Result

CATEGORY E QUESTION	14. Using Bahasa Melayu or English in Japanese class will increase my motivation to learn		
	Strongly Agree & Agree	Neither	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
School A (2)	5	19	13
School B (2)	4	3	13
School B (1)	1	8	12
Total (N)	10	30	38
Percentage (%)	12.99	38.96	48.05

DISCUSSION

The results obtained from the above Categories A through E show mixed perceptions upon being compared to previous literature. These are believed to be affected by two aspects: ① the language learning environment, and ② the aim of studying the language.

In terms of language learning environment, School A is observed to be in the 'Maximal Position' as stated by Macaro (2001) where there is no pedagogical value to L1 use; however, teachers are forced to turn to it due to necessity. Since students from Japanese School A have non-native teachers, they have more experience with L1 use in the classroom and have a broader

perspective on whether its use is beneficial or not. This would also explain why a majority of their responses were either 'neither' or 'agree' as they are not able to disagree completely when comparing their experiences. Thus, to a certain extent it can be said that students tend to be more open to the use of the L1 if they believe that the teachers are capable. Due to this, the results from School A, although widely negative, is more similar to the attitudes of Malaysian ESL students (Ahmad & Jusoh, 2009; Ariffin & Susanti Husin, 2011; Azlan & Narusaman, 2013; Nordin & Ali et al, 2013).

In contrast, School B is observed to be in the 'Virtual Position', where the classroom is treated as the target country and L1 use is completely excluded with no pedagogical value (Macaro, 2001).

Since there are only native speaking teachers from Japanese School B, it is believed that the students have been accustomed to the non-use of L1 learning environment and believe that it is the best way for them to learn. This would also explain why they do not agree to the students using the L1 in the classroom or having the teacher explain the mistakes in the L1 as they believe that it would not be feasible considering that the native teacher is not able to converse in the L1, anyway. However, the results do indicate their desire for at least some aspects of L1 use in the classroom, in terms of having teachers explain mistakes.

Proficiency level difference in School B also does not seem to be an affecting issue to their attitudes as no clear difference, or acceptance of the L1 can be seen between the first-year and second-year students. This is opposed to previous studies which relate positive attitudes towards L1 use and lower proficiency level (Yen, 2004; Nazary, 2008; Ariffin & Susanti Husin, 2011).

The aim of learning the language can also be considered an important factor as to why the students reject the notion of L1 use. As students from both schools aim to further their studies in Japan and enrol in a Japanese university where the target language will be fully utilised, it can be assumed that they prefer to immerse themselves in a full L2 environment in order to enable themselves to get used to the surrounding. For these students, the L2 only classroom can be seen as an extrinsic form of motivation (Dornyei, 1994) as it will ultimately be useful to them once they move to Japan.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the results obtained that to an extent the attitudes of Malaysian JSL learners towards the L1 use in the second language classroom is generally negative. However, depending on the learning environment or certain conditions where the use of the L1 is considered useful to explaining Japanese grammar or a student's mistake, the attitudes of the students towards the L1 has a tendency to be slightly positive. To the author's knowledge, many things are still unknown about the learning conditions and policies of Japanese language classrooms in Malaysia; however, this paper hopes to offer some insights to current teachers when dealing with the issue of L1 use in the classroom.

The findings of this paper is, however, limited by the observation through survey analysis. A more precise and deeper study can be replicated through the survey method and in addition, follow-up interviews with the students in order to understand why they answered in such manner. As the study was only limited to two Japanese preparatory schools in Malaysia, the results obtained cannot be generalized to all Malaysian JSL learners. Should the sample size be increased, a better result and comprehensive view on the students' attitudes can be further

analysed. More importantly, the next question that comes to attention is whether the students' attitudes will change towards the L1 should they experience its positive effects that have been stated by previous studies? It is hoped that through the future development of this research, a more positive view of the L1 in the classroom as well as the guilt towards its use can be eliminated with the aim of improving students' second language acquisition and fostering new ideas for teaching methods which incorporate the L1.

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