RETHINKING THE ROLE OF LI IN L2 CLASSROOMS: THE PERSPECITIVE OF SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY OF LEARNING AND LANGUAGE AWARENESS PEDAGOGY

Introduction

The institutional policy of emphasizing exclusion of learners' first language (L1) from second language (L2) classrooms is common in Asian contexts and also worldwide (He, 2012; Pan & Pan, 2010; Tamim, 2005). The aim is to provide maximum L2 input to the learners in classrooms, and eventually force them to think in L2 (Macdonald, 1993: Krashen, 1982). Here, the underlying assumption is that L1 interferes and delays L2 learning. Although the overall objective makes sense, yet, the exclusion of L1 cannot be taken for granted, as it is fiercely contested.

However, in Pakistan, programmes designed for the teaching of English as a foreign or second language (TEFL and TESL), hardly raise the question of L1 in L2 classrooms, or refer to them only in negative terms (Tamim, 2005). As a result, teachers try to avoid the use of L1 in classrooms, considering it to be the only legitimate way of teaching L2 (Littlewood & Yu, 2011), even when they share the same linguistic background with their learners. In case, teachers do feel hard pressed to use L1 in L2 classrooms, they express a strong feeling of guilt, inspite of witnessing positive outcomes (Tamim, 2005), an experience, common to L2 teachers in other Asian contexts as well (Prodromou, 2002

as cited in He, 2012). Despite, much evidence of the supportive role of L1 in L2 learning argued by the researchers (He, 2012; Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009; Pan &Pan, 2010; Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Tamim, 2005) the role of L1 remains debated and condemned in L2 classrooms.

This paper situates itself in the debate of the role of L1 in L2 learning since 1950s and invites a rethinking of the role of L1 in L2 classrooms, from two theoretical perspectives: sociocultural theory of learning and Language Awareness (LA) theory of pedagogy and develops a case for its facilitative role. The aim is to present a theoretical perspective against which teachers can make informed language-based choices in their classrooms, and reflect upon their practices**.** The arguments in the paper have a general bearing across Asian educational contexts and levels, where second languages are taught to linguistically diverse communities.

The construct of L1 has been used to mean the home language/s of the learners, acquired in informal settings. L2 has been used here to refer to languages learnt in formal settings. Language Awareness (LA) has been discussed here as a broad term, referring to L2 pedagogical theory, incorporating concepts of Knowledge About Language, Meta-linguistic Awareness of Language, Critical Language Awareness, Linguistic Awareness and Consciousness Raising. Language Awareness, pedagogical approach is presented in a supportive role to communicative methodology and not as its replacement.

This paper is divided into four sections. The first section provides an overview of the stance taken by researchers regarding the role of L1 in L2 learning since 1950s; the

second, analyzes the role of L1 in L2 classrooms from the perspective of sociocultural theory of learning; the third, presents this role of L1 from the pedagogical theory of Language Awareness; the discussion is synthesized in the fourth section, followed by a conclusion.

The Role of L1 in L2 Learning

In the 1950s, L1 was seen as negative interference and the primary cause of learners' errors by behaviourists, as they conceptualized language learning as habit formation, learnt by imitation and repetition (Skinner, 1957 in Ellis, 1999). L2 errors were explained as arising 'primarily out of the special "set" created by the first language " habits" (Fries, 1945). This view of negative interference gained further credence with the bilingual studies by Weinreich (1953) & Haugen (1953).

Robert Lado's Contrastive Analysis (CA) theory was based on the concept that L1 interference was the main impediment towards L2 learning, and the chief cause of errors. It was emphasized that similar aspects of L1 would facilitate L2 learning, while those dissimilar would cause difficulty (Lado, 1957). Therefore, a parallel study of the two languages could predict learner errors in L2 (Ibid.). Sridhar (1981) sees the rationale of CA arising from the experience of language teachers in bilingual situations and L1 interference apparent in 'deviant sentences' when L1 and L2 differ. Marton (1981) argues that learners have a strong tendency to revert to their "strong and persistent habit" of expressing themselves in L1 outside classrooms, and confusion arises when learners are asked to respond to the same stimuli (meaning) in different ways (L1 and L2), leading to "retroactive inhibition". He emphasizes that:

> [T]here is never a peaceful coexistence between the two language systems in the learner but rather constant warfare, and that warfare is not limited to the moment of cognition, but continues during the storing of new items in memory (Marton, 1981, p. 50).

CA came under strong criticism with Chomsky's (1959) attack on behaviourism and the onset of a mentalist view of language learning. Besides, CA had failed to predict learner errors accurately, and research had proven that L1 was not the major source of learner errors in L2 (Dulay & Burt, 1974; Felix, 1980; James, 1980). The mean percentage of these errors was found to be no more than 33% (Ellis, 1999). It was also realized that similarity, and not difference, between L1 and L2 accounted for L1 transfer (Wode, 1980). Hence, CA was reduced to its weak form of explaining learners' errors in respect to L1 (Wardhaugh, 1970). Nemser (1974) believes that even the weak form of CA is difficult to contest, since the same error can be traced back to different factors.

Dulay and Burt (1974) marginalized the role of L1 in L2 learning by challenging the very assumptions of CA and presenting the concept of 'creative construction of language'. They emphasized that the notion of interference, as espoused by CA theorists, was built on the negative transfer of L1. Central to this was the idea of unlearning, which in this case would be unlearning the habit of L1, and that was not the aim of L2 learning. The studies by Weinreich and Haugen were dismissed as irrelevant to the conceptualized notion of L1 interference and the lack of distinction between children and adults in the

analysis of results was criticized because the evidence had been taken primarily from adult settings.

As, subsequent theorists revisited the role of L1 in L2 learning, although the concept of L1 interference was not totally discarded, there was a significant shift towards its facilitative role. L1 was now seen as only one aspect of the multifaceted nature of error (Hatch, 1985). Now the concepts of "learner syllabus," "transitional competence," "idiosyncratic dialect" (Corder, 1971), "approximative system" (Nemser, 1974), and "interlanguage" (Selinker, 1972) were introduced, and L1 influence came to be studied against this perspective. Selinker (1972) describes L1 "transfer" as the first of five processes at work in learners' interlanguage. Corder (1981) suggests that L1 basic grammar is the starting point of this continuum and L1 transfer is a learner strategy for formulating hypothesis about L2, resulting not from negative transfer but from borrowing (Corder,1974). This reformulated the concept of transfer as "intercession," a strategy for communication (Ellis, 1999).

Research now focuses on the when and how of the transfer rather than the if, since it is acknowledged that L1 transfer will be facilitative to L2 learning in some circumstances and will lead to errors in others (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). Responding to when L1 transfer is most probable, different arguments are put forward. It is suggested that certain similarities in L1 and L2 may lead to negative transfer (Wode, 1980). James (1998) refers to this L1 transfer on lexical level, as "false friends."In addition, similarity between L1 and L2 can also to lead to fossilization, when a developmental element of L2 comes

close to L1 leading to 'retardation' of L2 development (Zobl, 1980). Corder (1992) suggests that borrowing from L1 would be positive in the case of close similarity between L1 and L2 but would lead to errors if only "moderately similar." Jackson (1987**)** asserts L1 interference occurs in proportion to the contrast between the two languages, that is taking into account both its difference and similarity.

According to Eckman (1977), L1 transfer will lead to error when L2 is marked or more marked as compared to L1 that is not marked or less marked. But this will not be so if opposite is the case. Zobl (1983**)** also stresses that learners tend to transfer unmarked forms to L2 rather than marked. Kellerman (1983) stresses that the complexity of constraints on L1 transfer is dependent upon the interaction of learner's perception of L2 distance from L1 and the degree of markedness in L1. This distance, he argues, is in constant flux as progress is made in L2. Hence, an important factor that determines the transfer is the proficiency level of the learner. However, Zobl (1982) emphasizes that L1 can accelerate or inhibit the developmental sequence of L2 learning but cannot alter it, as transfer works with creative construction, not in competition with it.

Regarding the manifestation of L1 transfer, it is argued that negative transference of L1 is noticeable in comprehension errors, avoidance of structure (Bertkau, 1974; Schachter, 1974), in over-production of certain forms in L2 (Schachter, 1983) and is most obvious in accent (Ellis, 1999). Sajavarra (1981, b) explains that the "persistent problems experienced in pronunciation maybe due to the fact that phonetic choices are seldom optional" (p.114). It is stressed that L1 transfer errors might be overt, as when occurring

in linguistic form but could also be covert, discernible in the difference between intended and expressed meaning (Corder, 1971).

Another manifestation of L1 transfer has been in language pragmatics. Scarcella (1992) perceives its pervasiveness at discourse level and discourse accent, affecting many culturally specific aspects of L2 for example space, time, turn taking etc. Flynn (1983) also draws attention to L1 transfer in L2 functions. Sajavarra (1981a; 1981b) argues thatL1 interference in language use is because "the learner's cue detection mechanism is adjusted to the phenomena and processes of his [her] first language and new information is categorized in terms of the knowledge of L2 structures" (Rivers (1968 as cited in Sanders, 1981, p. 25). This leads the learner to assume that the procedures from deep structure to surface structures are the same (Ibid.).

Although differences of opinion between researchers remain, because of the complexity of issues involved, L1 is not seen as an entirely negative influence. In terms of universal grammar (UG) parameter setting, the role of L1 is regarded as mainly facilitative. Schwartz and Sprouse (1996) describe L1 as an important resource, as learners transfer all the parameters of L1 to L2 and then reset these according to their hypothesis. Hawkins (2001 as cited in Mitchell & Myles 2004, p. 88) views L1 transfer as one of the processes at work for learning L2 and Schachter (1996) suggests that L2 learners can only approach L2 l through the parameters set for their L1.

The facilitative role of L1 in L2 learning is now being gradually recognized. Corder (1992, p.25) finds it "predominantly heuristic," and facilitative in the "process of discovery […] upon which the learning and elaboration of the second language must proceed." Gundel & Tarone (1992) also view the function of L1 as supportive in L2 learning, and Bartelt (1992) emphasizes the need for L1 proceduralized knowledge to fill the gaps in L2 declarative knowledge. The positive role of L1 has also been explained in terms of general psychological behaviour when prior knowledge acts as a natural mechanism of reliance (Ellis, 1999; Richards, 1974; Taylor, 1975; Wode, 1980).

In recognition of the significance of L1, many methodologists endorse "systematic" use of L1 in L2 classrooms (He, 2012) urging a "paradigm shift" in L2 classrooms (Butzkamm and Caldwell, 2009, as cited in Ibid.). It is argued that many language teachers intuitively use L1 to ensure "comprehension and meaningful involvement" of the learners as they code switch, translate or plan bilingual input in their lessons (Romero & Parrino, 1994, p.1). There is need to legitimize judicious use of L1 in L2 classrooms so the teachers can rid of the guilt and conflict they feel with its use (Swain, Kirkpatrick & Cummins, 2009; Tamim, 2005)

L1 has been emphasized as an important resource for exploitation in L2 learning (Anton & Di Camilla, 1999; Atkinson, 1987; Cummins, 1981; Jones & Ghuman, 1995) and recent empirical research has highlighted the significantly important role of L1 in L2 learning (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009; He, 2012; Tamim, 2005). Pan & Pan (2010) argue for planned use of L1 in L2 classrooms," They state that not only the use of L1

can be rationally explained, its positive effects on L2 learning are also well-documented (Ibid.). Cook (2001) argues that there is little theoretical evidence for the need of dismissing L1 from L2 classrooms, and emphasizes that teachers should use L1 in view of four factors: "efficiency," "learning," "naturalness," and "relevance." This facilitative role of L1 can be well understood from the perspective of sociocultural theory of learning.

3. Sociocultural theory of language learning

Challenging the conceptual segregation of behaviour and cognition, sociocultural theory emphasizes that there is a crucial link between mental processes and sociocultural settings (Minik, 1996; Wertsch, 1991). It asserts that "no amount of experimental or instructional manipulation […] can deflect the overpowering and transformative agency of the learner" (Donato, 2001, p. 46). This agency embedded in their "personal histories, replete with values, assumptions, beliefs, rights, duties, and obligations," inevitably becomes involved in their learning process. I would argue, that this 'semiotic budget' of their social context (Van Lier, 2001, p. 252), is primarily instantiated and represented in their L1, making it an inevitable resource in learning, according to the "general principles of transfer of knowledge" (Leontiev, 1970 as cited in Marton, 1981, p. 149).

A key argument in sociocultural theory is that the primary elements that promote learning and development are social by nature and meaningful learning occurs in interaction.

This is because the "social dimension of consciousness is primary in time and fact, while the individual dimension of consciousness is derivative and secondary" (Vygotsky, 1979 as cited in Wertsch & Tulviste, 1996, p. 54). Since interaction is central to learning, it can be argued that the L1 of learners is an important tool to facilitate interaction and make learning meaningful. The role of L1 in L2 learning, from a sociocultural theoretical perspective can be argued through a discussion of its three basic concepts: mediation; scaffolding in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD); and inner speech.

3.1 Role of L1 in Mediation

The sociocultural concept of mediation holds that humans do not interact with their environment directly, but do so through signs which are culturally and historically determined, and act as psychological or physical tools. Learning is also mediated as the learners co-construct meanings through these tools, of which language is the most important (Lantolf, 2001; Minis, 1996). Language, in this "verbally mediated social interaction" supports memory and enhances its "functional relationship" with speech, facilitating learners to focus, interpret, organize, "plan and articulate" knowledge (Minik, 1996, p. 29). Although the kind of language involved has not been specifically mentioned by the theorists, it is clear that it has to be a language that the learners are able to comprehend, process, and use for collaborative co-construction of knowledge.

Now if L2 learning is seen as a semiotically mediated process, dependent on social mediation, dialogical construction of learning, and led by reflection (Swain, 2001; Wells, 1996), the pivotal meditational role of learners' L1 becomes obvious. L1 remains the

only tool available to the learners as they struggle to learn L2, since the systems and structures of L2 have not been acquired. Van Lier (2001) argues that the "first language use can be seen as a semiotic system that supports emerging second language use" (p.256). This makes L1 a vital part of what Wertsch (1992) terms as the "mediational tool kit," available to learners (p.39).

Anton and Di Camilla (1999) in their study found L1 to be an 'indispensable' tool to mediate learning, both on inter and intra psychological planes. The findings showed that L1 was not only instrumental to "establish and maintain inter-subjectivity," i.e., a common base of understanding, but facilitated social interaction and metacognition. The use of L1 enabled the learners to grasp the task, make it more manageable and indulge in self evaluation as the next decisions were made.

3.2 Scaffolding in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and L1

Scaffolding is the dialogic process, by which learners move from "other regulation," to "self regulation" (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976). A process of supportive dialogue that directs the learners through successive steps of a problem (Wells, 1999**),** this "assisted performance" enables the learners to achieve higher linguistic performance, that was originally beyond them (Tharp & Gallimore, 1991). Language mediates scaffolding of the learners, within ZPD, which can be briefly described as the difference between the individual development level of the learners and their potential level of achievement with collaborative support (Lantolf, 2001).

It can be claimed that L1 assists to establish ZPD of the learners and ensures scaffolding by affording dialogic opportunities for "expansion of established knowledge" (Shonerd, 1994, p. 104). Strikingly different from Krashen's (1982) input concept of " i+1", that conceives of a learner receiving input as "a passive body listening" (Thorne 2001, p. 226), concepts of ZPD and scaffolding are "social practices of assistance that shape, construct, and influence learning," in which the learner actively participates (Donato 2001, p. 46**)**. In this, the value of L1 can hardly be under-estimated as it mediates mutual problem solving and interaction, integral to collaborative knowledge building. L1 becomes the central mediating tool that scaffolds the learning process by simplifying the task of L2, through affording associations, keeping frustration in check and maintaining focus and interest. As such, it facilitates all the primary functions of scaffolding, suggested by Wood et al. (1976).

When the learners' active engagement in knowledge construction is conceptualized, their prior knowledge becomes a crucial resource (Teasley, 1995), in "recognition of problems and the attempts to look for meaningful relations" (Boxtel, Linden & Kanselaar, 2000, p.176). This process is as an indicator of "deep processing," imperative for the extension of understanding. Here, L1 can be argued to play a principal role in processing and categorizing of the new input with reference to internalized structures.

Romero and Parrino (1994) also argue that with the use of L1 "a student is better able to understand, clarify, make connections, analyze, [and] raise questions which will extend concepts to a higher level of understanding" (p.6), as the learners' participation is

not inhibited by their lack of L2 proficiency. Given the liberty to co-construct knowledge with the mediation of their L1, encourages the learners to think and formulate rules about L2, which "once verbalized within one context," are easier to replicate and apply "to other contexts" (Ibid).

3.3 Inner speech and L1

The third fundamental tool in learning, conceptualized by the sociocultural theory is the inner speech. The inner speech assists in regulating internal thought, managing actions, appropriating and systematizing information and carrying out meta-cognitive activities (Minik, 1996). Originating in the private speech of a child, it emerges when the learners face difficulty and supports them in effective manipulation of the task, as they struggle to move from "object to self regulation" (Frawley & Lantolf, 1985). Inner speech works as the "dominant mode of verbal thought and remains a central fixture governing our higher mental functions" (McCafferty & Ahmed, 2001, p. 201). In the context of this paper, the question arises: What is the language of this inner speech?

McCafferty (1994) stresses that when engaged in inner speech, although learners do not necessarily switch to L1 but they, in all probability, do so when confronted with a specifically difficult task. In this case, it can be argued, that in the early developmental stages, given the task of L2 learning, learners have to resort to L1, the only resource they have to organize their organize and process new information. This resorting to L1 inner speech is conceived by Tomlinson (2001) as critical for the learners to understand,

contextualize and respond to new knowledge. He argues that encouraging learners to use their L1 inner speech, also allows them the crucial time and space they need to develop their inner speech in L2, until eventually they are able to manipulate the powerful tools of both languages (Ibid.).Ushakova (1994 as cited in Lantolf, 2001) emphasizes the importance of L1 in "establishing inner speech mechanisms." L1 assists in "plugging the newly established structure into the ones worked out earlier, as well as employing already existing verbal skills" (p.203).

The role of L1 in inner speech is also acknowledged by McCafferty & Ahmed (2001, p. 202), as it facilitates "functions related to self-regulation." They argue that "it would seem likely that inner speech and L1 are connected to how we think about things as well, as part of the overall process of the semiotic mediation" (Ibid.). Hence, L1 maintains the vital dialectic relationship between speech and thought; hence it is best utilized and manipulated rather than denied existence in L2 classrooms.

4. Language Awareness (LA)

LA pedagogical theory is suggested as complementary to communicative language teaching, for its unique stance of interface between L1 and L2. In synchronization with sociocultural theoretical position, LA accords value to learners' social background and their L1. It capitalizes on learners' knowledge and experience of L1, to raise consciousness about L2 and facilitate the learning process.

Language Awareness (LA) lays emphasis on "a person's sensitivity and conscious awareness of the nature of language and its role in human life" (Donmall, 1985, p. 7). It maintains that without a concept of the significance of the phenomenon of language and its function in society, learning, especially L2 learning, is reduced to mere acquisition of "alien codes" (Ibid., p.19).

Capitalizing on the learners' L1 experience, LA empowers them to consolidate and systematize the knowledge of L2 and become conscious of the relationship between different languages, used by them at home and school (Donmall, 1985). The aim is to lead the learners towards enhanced communicative effectiveness, not only in their L2 but also in their L1, by cultivating understanding of cross cultural, cross linguistic differences and influences, in its different modes of manifestation. This emphasis of L1 in LA is defended on the following grounds.

4.1 The interface between acquisition and learning and the role of L 1

It can be argued that LA is predicated on the assumption of 'interface between acquisition and learning" as suggested by McLaughin (1978) and Sharwood-Smith (1981), on the one hand, and the interface between L1 and L2 on the other. In contrast to Krashen's (1982) theory of language acquisition, LA believes that explicit instruction and focus on form leads to L2 acquisition. Ellis (1992) states: "Once consciousness of particular feature has been raised, through formal instruction, learners continue to remain aware of the feature and notice it" subsequently (p. 238). Taking L1 as a point of departure in discussion, LA raises consciousness about L2, as the learners are encouraged

to talk about the language. This meta-talk, that encourages reflection, is expected to be "one of the pedagogical means by which we can ensure that other language acquisition processes operate" (Swain, 1998, p. 69). This is because the knowledge of the formal aspects of language, once explicated, becomes implicit and automated by practice leading to acquisition (Ibid.), as it happens, for example in learning to drive a car.

Sharwood-Smith (1993) terms raising consciousness in learners as "input enhancement," pp. 76-177), which involves focusing on the "formal properties of language" through "induced salience" (Ibid.). One of the ways of inducing salience is that the learners are encouraged to analyze and "over generalize" on the basis of L1 knowledge, which is later used to serve as "negative evidence" to draw attention of the learners to the differences between L1 and L2 (Tomassella & Herron, 1989) . This enables the learners to appropriate their current assumptions about L2 by "noticing" the gap between their current and the target knowledge. Much benefit of LA has been reported (Zhou, 1992; Masny, 1992). In communicative language teaching, as the sole focus is on meaning processing, learners often fail to 'notice' the differences in form, leading to fossilization of errors (Sharwood-Smith, 1993). Drawing on L1, LA focuses on the form and function of L2 by exploiting a methodology that is reflexive, inductive, interactive and investigational in nature.

4.2 LA as interface between L1 and L2

LA sees an integral link between L1 and L2 and strongly stresses the positive role of L1 in L2 learning.This is in contrast to the audio-lingual approach which tries to " insulate"

the two (James, 1999). Ironically, LA takes its inspiration from behaviourial concept of transfer of L1/training, generalizability, and interference, but works to produce the opposite effect: namely to focus on a comparative discussion and raising consciousness about L2 (Ibid.). The structural similarities between L1 and L2 are juxtaposed and meanings are mutually clarified as the "mismatch" is talked about (p.110). James (1999) refers to this as "contrastive salience" as the "contrastive association with the corresponding MT item" is highlighted (Ibid.).The analysis of languages thus undertaken not just questions the linguistic right and wrong but also focuses on the more important question of appropriateness, which learners are assumed to be already equipped, with reference to their L1. From this, "experimental data" they are now encouraged to embark upon the subtleties in the use of L2 (Tinkel, 1985).

Stern (1983) stresses: "all languages have much in common and many shared meanings" (p. 345) which can be exploited. Cummins (1980) in his model of dual iceberg also supports this commonality, and conceptualizes a link between L1 literacy and L2 academic proficiency. LA sets out to facilitate L2 learning by exploiting this commonality and highlighting the divergence. Bruner (1981) points out that the basic difference that marks the L2 learners from native speakers is analytical competence. This, the learners intuitively but implicitly possess in their L1, but lack in L2. LA aims to evoke this analytical insight in the learners and "bridge the space between" L1 and L2 (Perren, 1974).

Hawkins (1987) presents this concept in the form of his 'trivium', (p.41) where language awareness, L1 and L2 each work to strengthen the other, enabling the learner to discern the patterns in L2 and develop expectations for its structure (Ibid.). In this process, LA achieves more than one goal; firstly, it draws upon the sensitivity the learner already possesses towards L1 to develop it for L2. Secondly, it brings the realization that the two levels on which L1 and L2 operate, are the same i.e. form and function. This paves the way for L2 learning, which is more meaningful.

James and Garett (1992) argue that capitalizing on the L1 of learners, LA works in five domains (pp. 12-19): a) in the affective domain, it involves the whole person of learners by encouraging them to develop personal relevance to L2 and assigns importance to their feelings and attitudes, a crucial factor in L2 learning; b) in the social domain, it aims to foster tolerance and acceptance of 'ethnic diversity' and awareness of the 'origins and characteristics…' of 'their own language and dialect and its place among other languages' (Ibid.): c) in the power domain, LA creates awareness of the way language can be used to imply meaning, "tacit assumptions and rhetorical traps" used for manipulation' (Ibid.); d) in the cognitive domain, it allows the learners to analyze the language, draw inferences and categorize new knowledge; e) and in the performance domain it raises the consciousness of the learners, to gear them towards better performance (Ibid.). In all its operational domains, L1 is accorded pivotal facilitative position in L2 learning.

4.3 Achievement of objectivity, when using L1 for L2 learning

Hawkins (1987) claims that by assigning a role to L1 in L2 learning, learners are given an opportunity to view language objectively as a phenomenon. The importance of this awareness of language itself, its de-contextualization for enhancing L2 learning is much emphasized (Donaldson, 1978; Masny; 1992; Zhou, 1992; Heap, 1992). This detachment afforded by the use of L1 in L2 learning, enables the learners to develop an understanding of how the languages operate in society and allows them to know what they can do with language (Tinkel, 1985). This also assists the development of sensitivity, which Widdowson (1992 as cited in James, 1999, p. 105) describes as the "ability to respond to language other than the base functional communicative level," and a step towards understanding functioning of languages across cultures. Hence, LA argues that all the languages spoken by the learners, including the dialects are brought under discussion, for making them more receptive and appreciative of these dimensions in L2. Scott (1992) describes the benefit of this detachment in terms of the analogy of a person, who by standing away from the trees has access to the sight of the shape of the whole forest and what lies beyond it, rather than a person standing close, who can only see the nearest trees.

5. Discussion

The debate about the role of L1 still continues though in cognitive rather than behaviourist terms. The use of L1 in L2 classrooms has been appraised as too complex for learners, requiring them to operate in two different ways. It has been argued that "frequent recourse" to L1 would lead to slower L2 learning because of the habit of

translation (Sanders, 1981). However, as James (1999) explains, it is not possible for the learners to stop the flow of their L1 information and thought; hence it is best to utilize it as a resource, rather than ignore it. It is now being realized that the knowledge and experience of L1 can be effectively exploited to facilitate L2 learning. L1 can be used as reference to draw attention to linguistic form and function, as well as to mediate the learning process itself. The involvement of learners' language and culture in the learning process ensures positive attitude towards L2, which is an important factor in learning. L1 awareness "puts a protective shell" around structures of L1 as the "knowledge that is either privately articulated, is made public [and] subject[ed] to scrutiny and verification" (p. 112). Atkinson (1987) argues that even translation can be effectively manipulated for L2 learning and that the potential of the role of L1 is immense.

Questions have been raised about the contribution of LA towards L2 performance. However, as Sharwood-Smith (1993, p. 173) emphasizes, "knowledge about language" is like knowing how a library has been organized, and "performance" pertains to "control" or execution of that knowledge, that is to find certain books in the library. Hence, the L2 knowledge, the learners are made aware of with L1, does determine the skill with which they are able to learn and use L2. Research is optimistic towards the contribution of LA to L2 performance (see James & Garrett, 1992) and it is argued that the focus on form and conscience raising could lead to cognitive development and better L2 performance (Swain, 1998; Doughty & Williams, 1998; Sharwood-Smith, 1993).

However, it is important to see LA not as a replacement of communicative language teaching but complementary to it. Working with communicative language teaching, LA can focus on form, in a way that "grammatical choices can exemplify the exploitation of meaning potential" (Nicholas, 1992, p. 94). This could become a means of "exemplifying social and individual identity with divergent grammatical forms representing significant choices about the identity the learner seeks to project" (Ibid.).

Bates and Whinney (1981 as cited in Lantolf, 2001, p. 202) in their study found that the subjects even after living in a country for 25 years, where L2 was used as a medium of communication, when given an association task, conformed to associations with their native culture, represented by their L1. To ignore such a strong cultural bond, embodied in L1, can only add to the problems for L2 learners. Bilingual speakers must not only be allowed to adopt 'bilingual medium oriented strategies' but actively encouraged to use them for ensuring real communicative competence rather than a "façade" where speech and utterances remain "ambiguous" in terms of meaning, which causes a lot of academic problems for the learners (p.122) and accounts for the re-emergence of the same errors ,as indicated by the study of French-Canadian Immersion Programmes (Cummins & Genesee, 1985 as cited in Jones & Ghuman, 1995, p. 122).

One would agree with Felix's (1978) argument that the "inter-relationship between L1 and L2 lies at a much deeper level than surface or even near-surface categories" (as cited in Sajavaara, 1981, p. 14), and the role of L1 as prior knowledge in the learning process is "well founded in the light of […] human information processing, perceptual

mechanisms, and memory" (Ibid.). Hence, instead of depriving the learners of the opportunity to use their language, as in immersion programmes or "playing the game" of not knowing any other language (Macaro, 1997), as often happens in L2 classrooms, in Asian contexts, the learners could be encouraged to exploit the richness of bilingualism in the learning process, by developing connections, comparisons and contrasts not only in the form and function of languages but also cultural associations, developing cross linguistic references for knowledge building.

6. Conclusion

This paper contended with the question of the role of L1 in L2 learning classrooms, which confounds L2 teachers and remains much debated, among researchers and educationists. The paper challenges the assumptions on which L1 is officially dismissed from L2 classrooms, by analyzing the issue from dual theoretical perspectives of teaching and learning: a) Language Awareness pedagogical theory; b) sociocultural theory of learning. The paper also provides a brief synopsis of the debate since 1950s and presents the gradual shifting of stance towards the role of L1 as a major interference to some acknowledgment of its positive role in L2 learning.

In the light of the discussion, it can be concluded that L1 can be positively utilized to play a significant role in L2 learning, though its use needs to be planned. There is no denying the concept of transfer, which is a complex and both a "facilitating and limiting condition on the hypothesis testing process" (Schachter, 1996, p. 32); hence, it is best referred to in more neutral terms like "mother tongue influence" (Corder, 1992) and "cross linguistic

influence" (Smith, 1986). The constructive role of L1 is acknowledged by the sociocultural theory of learning and pedagogical theory of LA and many researchers now argue for the advantage of utilizing L1 in L2 learning. This facilitative role of L1 in L2 learning, in the light of the arguments in paper can be briefly summed up with reference to the discussion in article related to affective, cognitive, social, power and performance domains, specified by James & Garrett (1992).

L1 Contribution to L2 Learning Process in Five Domains

Affective	Cognitive	Social	Power	Performance
Involves individual agency	Mediates meta-linguistic talk	Ensures group interaction and co-construction of knowledge	Creates awareness of language manipulation	Expected to reduce chances of fossilization
Resolves tension and stress	Establishes link between form & function	Increases opportunities for participation	Creates understanding of the power relationship between languages and society	Simplifies the L2 task
Keeps frustration in check	Develops cross-cultural /cross-linguistic sensitivity	Facilitates contribution to group knowledge	Allocates responsibility and power to learner	Ensures focus on goal
Develops confidence to progress in learning	Ensures activation of prior knowledge	Engenders acceptance and tolerance of cultural diversity		Assists focus on L2 pragmatics; appropriateness of L2 use
generates positive feelings and attitudes	Leads to effective use of inner speech			Facilitates appropriate language use of L2
Creates	Develops			

readiness to learn L2	analytical insights into link between languages			
	Encourages reflection			
	Encourages noticing			
	Leads to inter-subjectivity and deep processing of knowledge			

Table 5.1

The paper calls for more informed institutional policy making and greater acceptance of L1 in L2 classrooms, in view of its role evident from research and theory. The issue needs to be discussed at length in teacher education programmes, and a more positive role for L1 should be advocated, to allow the teachers to move beyond mere "methodological and procedural knowledge [-based practices]" (Jiménez & Rose, 2010, p. 404), and "identify with the struggles and strengths" of their learners (Ibid.) for meaningful relationships and enhanced L2 learning outcomes.

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