

## **Actions speak louder than words! The tension between stated beliefs and practices of a student-teacher during primary school English lessons**

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**Abstract:** At times there seems to be a lack of consistency between what teachers state they do and what they actually do in classrooms. This mismatch between practice and beliefs may also be evident in the perception of language use of teachers or student teachers in a bilingual and multilingual setting. This departure from practice in line with stated intentions or beliefs might be undertaken consciously in order to respond to the situation in a responsible manner. In class teachers may engage in practices that do not support their beliefs or intentions about language teaching or learning due to various reasons. In this paper I delve into the experiences of a student-teacher during English lessons in Maltese Primary Schools to explore whether her practices tally with her stated beliefs. Reasons for tensions between stated beliefs and classroom practices will be studied through qualitative data collected through classroom observations, questionnaires and interviews with the student-teacher.

**Keywords:** Teaching English; classroom practice; stated beliefs; student teachers

### **Introduction**

In this paper, my intentions are to explore the stated beliefs and practices of a student-teacher in Maltese Primary School classrooms. I would like to explore tensions that are present between stated beliefs and practice during the teaching and learning of English as the second (L2) and target language (TL). Gao (2014) holds that beliefs cannot be perceived as being either consistent or inconsistent with practices. The relationship between teacher beliefs and practices is a complex one and may undergo change due to the dynamic nature beliefs and practices (Borg, 2011; Farrell & Lim, 2005; Wei & Martin, 2009).

## **Teachers' Practices and Beliefs in English Language Teaching**

Why do teachers seem to lack consistency between what they state they believe in and what they actually do in classrooms? According to Lacorte (2005) and Fasold (1984), this mismatch between practice and beliefs may also be evident in the perception of language use of teachers in a bilingual or multilingual setting. Borg (2003; 2006) holds that sometimes teachers' classroom practices do not seem to tally with their stated beliefs. He argues that this does not mean that they are trying to mislead anyone but maybe they may not be fully aware of the complex decisions related to language use that they are constantly taking in the classroom. This departure from practice in line with stated intentions or beliefs might be undertaken consciously in order to respond to the situation in a responsible manner (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018). Teachers sometimes state that they used the target language 'all the time' throughout the lesson when transcriptions or observations show that it was clearly not the case. This may happen because during lessons teachers focus on so many other aspects related to the teaching and learning process that they may not be fully aware of their own language use, code-switching or translanguaging they are employing (Garcia, 2009; Johnson, 1994; Mifsud & Farrugia, 2017). Sato and Kleinsasser (2004) argue that although teachers' beliefs and practices may be perceived as in conflict or incongruent, this may make visible the interactive relationship and dynamic relationship between these beliefs and practices that may indicative of change in beliefs or practices. De Costa (2011) holds that reflection has a vital role to play in teachers' belief change. Woods and Cakir (2011) indicated that "when a teacher reflects on practice and begins to articulate his or her "practical" knowledge, it begins to be theorized and to inform his or her theoretical knowledge" (p. 389). This would imply that beliefs are indeed changeable and shifting in the light of new experiences, knowledge and reflection. Woods and Cakır (2011) argued that teachers' beliefs and knowledge in relation to communicative language teaching are to be considered as multidimensional and dynamic. Fung and Chow (2002) also found that there was a very limited correspondence between the beliefs and theoretical orientations held by novice teachers and their practices of language teaching during practicum placements. This is a concern that Basturkmen, Lowen, and Ellis (2004, p243) share as they state that there is a 'tenuous relationship' between teachers' stated beliefs and actual practices in educational settings.

## **Teachers' Use of Language in English Language Teaching**

In the sphere of language learning, teachers have accumulated a wealth of experiences through first-hand observations in class as pupils (Britzman, 2000; Johnson, 1994). These prior learning experiences, or what Lortie (1975) refers to as 'apprenticeship of observation', play an important part in the formation of our beliefs about teaching and learning. Therefore, teachers' practice will invariably

be influenced by prior experiences, levels of bilingualism, comfort with the target language, their beliefs about language learning and teaching, as well as their attitudes towards the L2 (Brownlee *et al.*, 2001; Twiselton, 2006). However, besides these factors at teacher level, the approach to language/s and language teaching that the teacher adopts also depends on the educational, social, linguistic and cultural contexts.

The language the teacher uses depends largely on his/her preferences and levels of confidence in using the language (Twiselton, 2006). Language use in class is influenced by attitudes and beliefs held about language learning and teaching (Brownlee *et al.*, 2001; Borg, 2011). The teachers' own language background has an important part to play because the teacher will automatically use the language s/he is most confident and fluent in when interacting with students in a class (Camilleri, 1996). Thus, even if the subject or content of the lesson 'requires' the use of L2 as a medium, a teacher who is accustomed to using English at home will tend to use more English, whereas a teacher who is accustomed to using Maltese at home will use more Maltese and less English during lessons (Camilleri, 1996).

### **Contesting Monolingual L2 Use in Class**

Generally, code-switching in educational contexts has been looked down upon for many years but the monolingual policy of using 'English-only' is contested by researchers who argue that this artificial exclusion of the L1 in L2 learning situations is not appropriate (Butzkamm, 2003; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Nation, 2003; O'Neil and Velasco, 2007). Some researchers hold that complete deletion of L1 in L2 situations is not acceptable (Butzkamm, 2003; Kleyn and García, 2019; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Nation, 2003). Thus, code-switching as a pedagogic tool can be drawn on in the classroom without inhibition or furtiveness by teachers and pupils. According to García (2009, p 298), 'the negative associations with code-switching in the classroom have been increasingly questioned by scholars'. There has been a shift in perception and practice as more teachers are using the L1 in class to convey meaning and to interact meaningfully with their pupils (Butzkamm, 2003; García & Kleifgen, 2018; Nazary, 2008). The trend seems to favour the use of a bilingual approach that is fluid and based on the concept of translanguaging. Such an approach to teaching the L2 would support the use of one's total linguistic repertoire through which the L1 is acknowledged, respected and valued as an additional resource the language teacher may draw on (García & Kleifgen, 2018; Nation, 2003). However, these approaches in favour of L1 use in teaching the L2 do not always uphold the use of the L1 'indiscriminately' and do at times make a distinction between language use in the community and language use in education. Nazary (2008) proposed that the L1 should be used 'judiciously' by teachers and students as a vital source and tool for communication especially when the 'subject' being taught is the language itself.

However, Kleyn and García (2019) do argue forcibly that it is not in the best interest of bilingual learners to disregard their full language repertoire due to restrictive school policies or monolingual approaches to bilingualism.

### **The Maltese Linguistic and Educational Context**

In Malta, both Maltese and English are official languages and were recognised through the Constitution in 1934. Maltese is the national language, whilst English is the second language. Both are used in society and as languages of instruction throughout formal education. The National Minimum Curriculum (Ministry for Education and National Culture, 1999) recommended the use of Maltese and English in schools which some code-switching when necessary for pupils to understand. In all State Schools and many Church Schools, Maltese is the language of instruction for Maltese, Religion and Social Studies. English, on the other hand, is the language of instruction for English, Mathematics, Science and technology. In Independent Schools, most subjects are taught through English, except for Maltese as a subject area. Most pupils and teachers share a similar language background and in Primary School it is usually the same teacher who teaches all subjects. The classrooms in this study were mainly composed of Maltese teachers and pupils who were bilingual, to varying degrees, in both the country's languages.

### **Maltese and English: Code-switching and Translanguaging**

Switching from English to Maltese during English lessons may serve a pedagogical function to construct and transmit knowledge, to scaffold learning, to clarify points and give explanations, to translate when pupils do not follow or to teach a new concept that would be difficult for the pupils to grasp in the L2 (Camilleri Grima, 2013; Ferguson, 2009; O'Neil & Velasco, 2007; Farrugia, 2012). Drawing on the L1 may also serve to establish interpersonal relationships within the class and to reassure pupils (Camilleri, 2000; Ferguson, 2009) or to address classroom management issues efficiently (Faltis, 1990; Ferguson, 2009). 'Responsible code-switching', is viewed as an asset and additional resource for the teacher and pupils to draw on in the classroom (Arthur, 1996; Camilleri, 1995; 2001; Edwards, 2004; Garcia, 2009; O'Neil & Velasco, 2007). Polio and Duff (1994) also argue that the use of the L1 may serve to create a 'comfortable and enjoyable classroom atmosphere, which the teachers by and large consider to be very important' (p 322). However, they also warn that the use of the target language may suffer due to relying on the L1:

*...the students miss useful opportunities to process communicative TL input, to practice new TL structures thoroughly in non-mechanical ways, and also to express and resolve comprehension difficulties in the TL. (p.322)*

However, through the concept of translanguaging the language practices of bilinguals can be perceived as the use of both languages available to the speaker, as one linguistic repertoire. This allows us to understand bilingual language use in a more fluid manner as not separated as L1 and L2 but is a hybrid of the speaker's total linguistic repertoire (Garcia and Kleyn, 2016; Garcia and Wei, 2014). In the classroom, this would mean that the use of our two languages to make meaning and understand the subjects taught without feeling 'guilty' or inadequate for using the 'other language'. Therefore, one may hold that learning in one language and then discussing it in another would be natural in a bilingual or multilingual situation such as ours. This concept may also be extended to include the practice of using one language for reading and writing and the other for speech. Camilleri Grima (2013) expresses this as follows:

*In Maltese classrooms there is continual interaction between the written text in English as the basic point of reference, and the oral discussion in Maltese (with codeswitching) through which participants reiterate, interpret and reinterpret the written text. By using Maltese and codeswitching, participants reason out problems for themselves, and find their ways to the solutions required. (p.4)*

This dichotomous, or complementary, approach is common in Malta where frequently English as the target language is used for reading and writing during lessons whilst Maltese is drawn on for speech, such as: explanations, questions, reprimands, conversations, instructions, classroom management issues and also for upholding positive relationships in the classroom (Caruana, 2007; Milton, 2016; Mifsud and Farrugia, 2017; Farrugia, 2003; 2012). This, in turn, reflects the examination-driven educational system that emphasised reading and writing and side-lined oracy (Grima and Farrugia, 2006).

## **The Study**

This study was undertaken with the aim of exploring the following research questions:

- Is there a mismatch between the student teacher's stated beliefs and practices in relation to English language use in class?
- What are the reasons for this departure in practice by the student-teacher from her stated beliefs and intentions?

This study draws on a corpus of data I collected and compiled as part of a larger study for my doctoral studies. For the purposes of this paper, I will use a selection of the data to focus on experiences of tensions between beliefs and practices of a student-teacher following an Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

programme in Primary Education (B.Ed. Hons. in Primary Education) at the University of Malta.

Data were collected over two years through different sources: questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations. The data were collected in three phases: at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> Year of ITE; at the end of 1<sup>st</sup> Year after a series of weekly observations and a short two-week practicum; and at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Year of ITE, after a longer six-week practicum in a different school. The triangulation of data from these sources was chosen to provide different perspectives of the student teacher's beliefs and practices related to language use in the teaching of English to young children. The qualitative nature of this study is meant to give depth to the research and is based on a constructivist-interpretative research stance (Silverman, 2017).

The data selections in the form of quotes from questionnaires, interviews or lesson observation transcriptions were referenced for authenticity and reliability (Denzin and Lincoln, 2017; Patton, 1990). The reference (S.Q.1.6) refers to the data source as (Sara. Questionnaire 1. Item 6). The source is identified as either a Questionnaire (Q), Interview (I) or Observation (O) together with whether it was the first, second or third questionnaire, interview or observation. The numbers at the end refer to the item number or transcription sequence.

## **Analysis and Discussion**

I chose Sara as the participant for this study as she seemed one of the student teachers who was quite representative of the ITE Primary cohort which was mainly female, of an average age of 19-20 years and with Maltese as a first language and English as a second language.

To present and discuss the case study I will first delve into the questionnaire and interview data that were collected prior to Sara's first two-week teaching practice experience. I also use quotes from the questionnaire and the transcriptions to retain authenticity and to use the participant's own words to describe her own family background, schooling biography, prior experiences and language use in daily life as well as her beliefs about her prospective language use in class. I will then present examples of her language use in class through a selection of extracts from the lesson transcriptions. The questionnaire was completed at the beginning of the ITE programme, whereas the first interview took place once Sara had started visiting the school for some days of observation but before the two-week TP. I will proceed in the same manner for the second and third lessons I observed during Sara's second TP.

## Who is Sara?

Sara was 18 years old when she started the first year of her teacher training. She was the youngest of three siblings and lived in the west-central part of Malta. She came from a state school educational background and was the first in her family to pursue tertiary education. She considered Maltese as her L1 and English as her L2. Sara said that sometimes she felt uncomfortable using her L2 due to a fear of making mistakes (S.Q.1.10). This concern about her use of spoken English was also present when I asked her about it during our first interview as follows:

*At home we talk in Maltese. My father doesn't know any English ... **ehm** (Hmm) ... that's why... so at home I talk in Maltese... even with my friends. I just talk in English in English lessons that's all... I don't practice English that much. Neither in school we didn't talk in English much. That's why. Even my friends talk in Maltese. But when I have to talk to someone in English I do...I try to talk in English... (S.Int.1.56)*

Sara explained that she tended to use Maltese when she was with her family and friends, when she was angry and to ask questions during a lecture. She used both English and Maltese to write assignments, to send short text messages and to read for enjoyment. English was her language of choice for writing emails and shopping lists. She went on to explain that, 'When writing usually I prefer to use English although I do use Maltese as well, when talking I prefer to use Maltese' (S.Q.1.12). This is a common practice in our classrooms where frequently English as the TL is used for reading and writing, whilst Maltese is drawn on for speech (Camilleri Grima, 2013; Caruana, 2007; Mifsud and Farrugia, 2017).

Sara said that she really became aware of her use of English as her L2 when she moved from her state secondary school to the Junior College and then University.

*... everyone was at the same level you know. Everybody had my background really. But then when I went to Junior College and University I felt it most because we are mixed, some come from church school, private schools, state schools ...because normally the students who come from church schools and private schools they are good most in English.... Then when we talk in class and somebody is really brilliant in English and then I have to talk and I am not that brilliant in English I feel a little bit **hekk (like)** ... but that's why. But in secondary and primary it really didn't affect me because everybody was the same. (S.Int.1.162)*

Thus, when she was still in her own village and attended the local school with her group of friends, who came from similar home and linguistic backgrounds, she did not perceive herself as having any difficulties with her use of English or her

level of proficiency. Sara also seemed to be indicating that there may be more prestige in attending private schools and more advantages in that they were ‘really brilliant in English’.

*I think that it was really difficult for me... and I don't want this to repeat again for the pupils I will teach and for my kids. (S.Int.1.238)*

Through having this ‘difficult’ experience, when she started Junior College, Sara was adamant not to perpetuate the same pattern with her pupils or offspring. Her experience of feeling inadequate when speaking in English has left Sara with a strong resolve to give the learners more opportunities to use English communicatively as their L2 and not only as an academic subject used for reading and writing.

### **Sara’s Beliefs about Language Use in Teaching English**

Sara believed that she would be a good teacher and wanted to offer pupils a positive experience of learning that would offer real opportunities to engage in language learning.

*I feel that I am good in teaching/explaining things and I would like to offer children a completely different teaching method than the ones I had when I was a pupil. (S.Q.1.18)*

Here Sara was affirming her determination not to teach in the traditional way she was taught. She believed that a primary school teacher should be fluent in Maltese and English, ‘because it is obvious that if you are going to teach something you must be fluent in it in all ways, in order to teach it in an excellent way’ (S.Q.1.20). Thus, here we can see that she held high a monolingual standard for herself and her language use (Harmer, 2003; Halliwell, 1992). We can also notice the extent of the influence of her own ‘lived experiences’ on her beliefs about teaching (Lortie, 1975).

### **Beliefs about the Role of the L1 in Teaching the L2**

Through having the opportunity to observe a Year 1 teacher and class for one day weekly before taking over the class for two weeks, Sara was becoming familiar with the school and pupils, the class routines, the class teacher’s practices, as well as the language use in class. In the extract below she commented on the class teacher’s lack of use of the L2 for communicative and management purposes. She struggled with this because to her this teacher was ‘a really good teacher’ and Sara placed such high value on speaking English for real purposes in the class, due to her lived experiences.

*They are in Grade 1 ...5-year-olds mostly...but even the teacher she doesn't talk to them in English. You know, not even things like 'hang up your jackets' or 'take out your books'. She says everything in Maltese. She is a **really** good teacher in everything else...but in that way I don't agree with her. They are not getting exposed to English. (S.Int.1.86)*

Despite being a firm believer in the approach of teaching English through a monolingual language separation model, Sara also pointed out that there was a benefit to using Maltese 'sometimes' to explain especially if the pupils did not understand.

*I think that sometimes I have to use Maltese, especially with these kids ...who I know their English is not that good ...But not using Maltese all the time. I will use English most of the time but if they are not understanding or they feel shaky about it, you know... I will have to explain in Maltese. **I think it is nonsense**, to keep talking in English when I see they do not understand anything I am saying. As they are first years... (S.Int.1.216)*

I think here we see how her initial beliefs and intentions about the teaching of English through a monolingual model as expressed in the questionnaire and first part of the interview, are being reflected upon and adjusted in the light of the class teacher's practices she was observing. It was almost like Sara was thinking aloud and 'repositioning' her beliefs and understandings of the complex language teaching and learning situation in class (Basturkem, 2012; De Costa, 2011). Sara exhibited a strong belief about the need to use Maltese, the L1, as here she put the pupils' understanding before her own determination to teach in a 'completely different way' to her own childhood teacher. She also took into account that the pupils were only 5-year-olds and held Maltese as their L1. Here Sara could be seen coming into contact with the reality of teaching and with the complex situations she had to reflect upon and decisions she had to take about language use to aid the pupils' learning. On the one hand she truly believed that she should use the L2 throughout the English lesson to afford the students the opportunity to have maximum exposure and practice of the language for communicative purposes and not only for reading and writing (Gao, 2011; Wood & Cakir, 2014). On the other hand, she was already perceiving the need to use Maltese as the L1 to explain and help pupils who are struggling with the lesson to negotiate learning and understanding (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018). She emphasised this through strong language to assert that in such situations, 'it is nonsense to keep talking in English'. Sara was experiencing tension between her own language experiences and identity as well as to her personal and teacher identity. Basturkmen (2012, p283) argues that 'beliefs drive actions, but experiences and reflection on actions can lead to changes in, or additions to beliefs themselves' (p. 283). Sato and Kleinsasser (2004) hold that there is an interactive relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices and therefore

Sara's tensions, or conflicting beliefs, may be seen as part of her growth and development as a teacher through her reflections.

### Sara's Use of Language during her Teaching Practicum

For her first placement during the 1<sup>st</sup> Year of ITE she was assigned to a Year 1 class in her village primary school. It was a two-week block preceded by regular weekly observation days. I observed Sara during an English reading and conversation lesson towards the end of her two-week placement. The lesson dealt with opposites and she used a graded Oxford Reading Tree book titled 'The Pancake'.

In Example 1 below is an example of Sara's use of language to ensure pupils understood (the last column provides a translation). Here she was helping them to distinguish between the activity the children and their dad (in the story) were doing in general, that is, 'cooking', and the step of the recipe when they were mixing the ingredients together to make a pancake.

#### Example 1: Cooking eggs

216	T	They are cooking. <b>Qeghdin isajru.</b> They are cooking. <b>Imma ezatt... mhux qeghdin isajru, x'qeghdin jaghmlu? Qed ihalltu il-...</b>	<b>They are cooking.</b> <b>But exactly... they are not cooking, what are they doing? They are mixing the-...</b>
217	Ps	Flour	
218	T	<b>Il-flour mal-bajd.</b> They are mixing eggs with flour. <b>Qeghdin ihalltu l-bajd mad-dqiq biex jaghmlu l-pancake.</b>	<b>The flour with the eggs.</b> <b>They are mixing the eggs with flour to make the pancake.</b>

(S.Obs.1.216-218)

Sara switched to Maltese, first to translate from L2 to L1, but then to extend and go beyond the translation to ask them what the children and their father in the story were actually doing. She then used Maltese to start to answer her own question and then paused to wait for the pupils to continue. A pupil did so in English by saying 'flour' and then Sara took the word and continued in Maltese. Then she said the whole phrase in English: 'They are mixing eggs with flour'. She then translated this to Maltese and added that it was to make a pancake. This idea of translating and then adding more information in the L1 is not uncommon. So it was not only a translation but an explanation and extension of the L2 text as well (Camilleri, 2011; Garcia, 2009).

During the second placement held during her 2<sup>nd</sup> Year of ITE Sara took over a Year 2 class completely for a six-week period during which I observed two lessons. An interview was held with Sara after the TP period. In the following

example, Sara was eliciting the meaning of *true* and *false* from the pupils. The pupils gave the Maltese equivalents and she repeated them. Thus, she was using the L1 effectively to elicit the Maltese versions of the words to ensure they knew the meaning of the concepts and as a preparation for the following activity. On the other hand, if she had used a different approach to assess whether the learners understood what true and false meant she might not have needed to draw on the L1.

*Example 2: True - False*

361	T	What does <i>true</i> mean? Ryan what does it mean?	
362	P	<b>Veru.</b>	<b>True.</b>
363	T	<b>Veru.</b> True <b>jigifieri...</b> <i>False?</i> Adrian..	<b>True.</b>
364	P	<b>Mhux veru.</b>	<b>False</b>
365	T	<b>Mhux veru.</b> Very good. False. It is not true. False. So now we are going to play a small game. We will have a small activity.	<b>False.</b>

(S.Obs.3.361-365)

In Example 3 Sara continued to explain and reinforce the meaning of the concepts true and false, by translating the words from English to Maltese.

*Example 3: True Vera*

371	T	Ok blue or green. Everybody is going to say something about himself. <b>Issa</b> it can be true, <b>vera</b> , or something which is not true, false, <b>mhux vera</b> . Ok. I am going to start. So, I have got pink hair.	<b>Now</b> it can be true, <b>true</b> , <b>false</b> .
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(S.Obs.3.367-371)

This emphasis seemed to indicate that Sara thought that was a difficult concept for Year 2 pupils and thus justified her use of the L1 for conceptual development (Faltis, 1990; Garcia & Wei, 2014) and as a pedagogical tool (Camilleri Grima, 2013; Merritt *et al.*, 1992).

### **Sara's Perceptions and Beliefs about Language Use during TP**

As regards language use in class during her first teaching practicum, Sara said that she used both languages during the English lessons she taught and that she drew on Maltese mainly to explain when some children did not understand or when she had to explain a difficult concept (S.Q.2.21). She said it was difficult to

stick to one language because the children did not know how to speak English very well.

*As the children are only 5-year-olds, in Year 1, it is the first time that they are actually spoken to in English. I tried to use English; in fact, I used English most of the time. But still, I used Maltese to make sure that they understand because I really wanted to make sure, as I told you before, that I really wanted to know that they are understanding. So to do so, I spoke in Maltese so that I know that they are understanding what I am saying. (S.Int.2.84)*

In her rationale above, Sara explained that she used English most of the time and used Maltese to ensure they understood. Maybe she did not seem to realise just how much Maltese she was drawing on. This also indicated that her stated beliefs and intentions (as stated in the first interview and in the questionnaire) were to use English as much as she could during English lessons. The fact that her practice or actions did not seem to follow suit may not be because she was not convinced about her intention (Borg, 2003; 2006). Using English requires more effort since it is her L2, and maybe to her, it did seem like she had used it all the time. Through the lesson observation and the lesson transcription, it is clear that she did use English, but she rarely did so exclusively, without translation or explanation in Maltese. However, Sara had also stated that she would use Maltese if she needed to, to help children understand.

Sara maintained that during her second-year practicum she had 'tried to use more English' in class and stated that she used Maltese during Maltese lessons and English during English lessons. She said that she used both languages to explain difficult concepts and also to maintain discipline in class. Sara explained that the class teacher she took over from did not use English to communicate with the pupils during lessons, and therefore it was not easy to use English with the pupils either because they were not used to learning English through English as the language of instruction. She also explained that since she does not speak English at home it was not so easy for her either. Therefore, despite her conscious efforts and intentions to use English it was natural for Sara to draw on Maltese during English lessons.

*And I always wanted to use English, but sometimes, you know, as I'm not used to it... as I don't speak English... as I don't speak English you know at home, so I'm not so used to speak... English, I mean...it's another challenge for me... for me to speak English for about an hour or so... (S.Int.3.88)*

Thus, Sara's experiences uphold the position that teachers will automatically use the language they are most familiar and at ease with, even in class (Camilleri, 1996).

## Conclusions

The perceptions that Sara had of her language use and language choices during the English lessons *do not always seem to match her actual use of language. Despite her clear intentions and stated beliefs, she used less English than she initially aspired to.* A similar finding reported by Mifsud and Farrugia (2017) related to the perception of language use by teachers during science lessons in Maltese secondary schools. This highlights that the student teachers lack accuracy in their perceptions about their own language use in class when teaching (Borg, 2006; Then, 2011). Sara negotiated meaning and used her linguistic resources bilingually by drawing on her linguistic repertoire and the pupils' repertoire to ensure classroom management, comprehension and learning (García, 2009; García & Wei, 2014). I would argue that in some instances the use of Maltese as the L1 was a positive and helpful resource to respond to the needs of the pupils or the teaching and learning situation in class. Indeed, the use of Maltese as the L1 was drawn on together with English as the L2 to allow herself and the pupils the opportunity to access learning through their shared linguistic repertoire.

It seems difficult for student teachers to develop an awareness of their language use as to when, how and to what extent they draw on the L1 while teaching English as the L2 (Borg, 2003; Fasold, 1984; Lacorte, 2005; Polio and Duff, 1994). It is not easy, in a bilingual culture, to always notice which language one is using all the time, especially when in a new and potentially stressful situation, such as a teaching practice placement. However, as a prospective primary school teacher, she may need to become more confident in her use of the L2. She would be in a better position to draw on translanguaging or make language choices 'responsibly' as argued by Ferguson (2009) and Van der Walt et al. (2001). In the Maltese educational context, a primary school teacher has the responsibility of teaching the pupils both Maltese and English as subject areas in their own right, as well as using both languages as a medium of instruction for other curricular subjects as expected. English should be the language the pupils are most exposed to during English lessons. Gaining proficiency and fluency in the TL are important goals in our educational and social context. However, the flexible and fluid use of the total pupils' and educators' total language repertoire during lessons across the curriculum would facilitate learning without the stress generated through the constrained use of one language only.

In Sara's case, this apparent incongruence between initial stated beliefs and her practice whilst teaching English is not a negative or undesirable outcome of a failed attempt to teach English through a separation model of language teaching. Even in her role as a student teacher, Sara gave priority to the pupils and their learning and showed linguistic dexterity in bilingually drawing on Maltese and English for different functions and needs in class and this shows an awareness of

the use of language for social, affective and cultural expression (Camilleri Grima, 2013; Caruana, 2007; Kleyn & Garcia, 2019; Mifsud & Vella, 2018).

A mismatch between some of Sara's beliefs and practices is evident. However, the incongruence between beliefs before, and after, her first and second TP can be perceived as an indication of the dynamic nature of beliefs. Basturkmen (2012, p. 283) stated that "beliefs drive actions, but experiences and reflection on actions can lead to changes in, or additions to, beliefs themselves". As shown in this paper, Sara's belief changes were brought about once she started experiencing the classroom reality through regular observations and teaching practice. These changes in beliefs were undertaken through struggles between her own lived experiences, practices and reflections upon the role of the L1 and L2 during English lessons.

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