

# The Attitudes of Saudi EFL Teachers about Using Their Mother Tongue in EFL Classrooms

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## Abstract

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*The aim of this study is to investigate the attitudes of the Saudi EFL teachers towards using their mother tongue (L1) in English classrooms amongst the Female students of three female secondary schools in Tabuk City. A questionnaire and classroom observations were used to achieve the purpose of the study .Fifty female English language teachers participated in this study. The descriptive statistics of percentages were used to analyze the quantitative data. The findings showed that there are positive teachers' attitudes towards using Arabic in EFL classes. The EFL teachers in the study preferred the use of their mother tongue for various situations and reasons and under certain circumstances. The discussion of the findings concludes that the mother tongue can be used by the teachers to facilitate the teaching process as well as a pedagogical tool by to enhance learning experience in the classroom. Recommendations and some future solutions are discussed.*

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**Keywords:** Attitudes, mother tongue, EFL teaching, learning experience

## 1. Introduction

To use or not to use the mother tongue in a second language classroom seems to be an endless debatable issue in the field of second language learning. Several studies focus on the use of L1 in L2 classroom. Some advocate the use of L1 inside the EFL classroom and seem to lean towards reconsidering L1 as a supportive tool rather than a hindrance in language learning. On the other hand, some believe that the use of L1 should be avoided. Few researches have been conducted on the use of Arabic language (L1) in L2 classroom. This paper is organized into four parts: theoretical framework, research methodology, result, discussion, and conclusion. It can be considered as an attempt to investigate the use of Arabic language in L1 in the context of Saudi Arabian EFL classroom and to contribute into literature of the relevant field. The aims of this study is to explore the perception of the teachers from the secondary schools level in Tabuk City, towards L1 use in English classrooms and discover possible reasons for the use of L1 while learning L2. The result is useful for language teachers who are experiencing difficulty in making a decision on which language to be employed with their students.

## 2. Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent is Arabic as (L1) used in Female Saudi secondary schools English classes?
2. What are the attitudes of teachers towards using Arabic in EFL classes?
3. What are the purposes and frequencies of using L1 in EFL Saudi secondary school English classes?

## 3. Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in the fact that it investigates the use of L1 in the English language classroom, which is an important issue in English language teaching. It also provides useful information on the areas where English teachers most frequently use L1 as a tool of instruction and language of communication in the classroom. Furthermore, the study uses a different approach to the problem where the teachers' language in the classroom is quantified.

## 4. Review of Literature

### 4.1 Arguments in Favor of Using L1 in L2 Classes

The issue of using students' first language in learning English as a foreign language has been a critical and controversial issue for a long time. In fact, such issue is as old as language teaching itself (Kelly, 1969). Inclusion or exclusion of L1 from EFL classes has attracted the attention of different linguists and researchers who have shown their beliefs about advocating this trend or objecting it.

There are many studies advocate L1 use in L2 classroom and reveal its advantages in language learning. As in Littlewoods's study (1981) who claimed that L1 can be used for certain purposes such as giving class instructions and class management, but at the same time he emphasizes that learners should be encouraged to use L2 as a medium of communication even for class management. Some researchers who believe that specific use of L1 is a helpful technique in the L2 classroom. Thus, Many researchers have figured ways out to use L1 into the L2 teaching efficiently. For instants, Atkinson (1987) claimed that the use of the mother tongue can facilitate checking understanding and giving instructions; it is a valuable technique for exploiting class time. He considered that the potential of the students' mother tongue use in the classroom requires more and more exploration. David Atkinson (1987) also adds that the gap in methodological literature is somehow responsible for teachers' hesitation and uneasiness about using the students' mother tongue or not in the classroom.

According to Atkinson (1987) using L1 might be useful for three reasons: Translation is preferred by learners, and it helps them to reveal their feelings. As well, building on differences between the L1 and the L2 through translation helps to avoid negative transfer. The oldest methods of teaching a second language is the Grammar Translation Method (Diane Larsen-Freeman, 2000) which is based on translating from the second language, the target language, into students' mother tongue so that they find equivalents for the new vocabulary and grammatical concepts they encounter in the second language. Grammar-Translation Method and the new teaching method that deliberately employs L1 has appeared and is known as the New Concurrent Method, such methods needs teachers to balance the use of L1 and L2 (Faltis, 1990). (Faltis, 1990) identified four areas of code switching to L1 that facilitates language learning: introducing concepts, reviewing a previous lesson, capturing learners' attention and praising learners. Harbord (1992) considered L1 a natural communication tool between teachers and students, in giving class instructions, but he was against using L1 for explaining grammar. According to Stern (1992) L1 was considered as a facilitator for learning L2. In other words, comparing the two languages to pin point the similarities and differences between L1 and L2 would facilitate learning L2

In line with the previous studies, Atkinson (1993) stated that it is impossible to decide on the right balance for using L1 in EFL classes, but he added that L1 can be a precious resource if it is used at appropriate times and ways. Also Auerbach (1993) believed that English teachers should use students' mother tongue in such ways as to help them improve their English skills. She added (1993:19) "Starting with the L1 provides a sense of security and validates the learners' lived experiences, allowing them to express themselves. The learner is then willing to experiment and take risks with English" She went on to say (1993), that the use of L1 in classrooms may reduce anxiety and create more relaxing learning environment. She added, "we need to recognize that respect for learners' languages has powerful social implications" (p. 30).

Cook (2001) stated that if L1 is regarded as a resource for classrooms, it is able to assist both teachers and students in many ways: for teachers, it helps in conveying meaning, explaining grammar and organizing the class, while also being used in collaborative tasks and individual strategy use for students. Furthermore, the learning process between children and adults is different. Tang (2002) found that the that a high percentage of the intermediate group of students agreed with using L1 in their classroom as they believe that it helped them to understand difficult concepts. Generally, they hold positive attitudes towards using L1 in their L2 classes. In his study of using L1 in L2 classes, Chavez (2002) advocated using L1 in L2 classroom as the students prefer using both L1 and L2 because the classroom is not a real context for L2 social culture. According to Nation (2003) the first language has a small but an important role in communicating meaning and content. In pinpointing the importance of using mother tongue in L2 class, Deller (2002) stated "I believe that many teachers have continued to use the mother tongue because it is both necessary and effective." (P: 3)

In accordance with previous studies, Mukattash (2003) mentioned that "using L1 in EFL teaching has been found to " facilitate both teaching and learning, systematize comprehension of EFL structures and items and hence leads to meaningful learning." (P: 224).

In their study (2006) Stapa and Majid concluded that using L1 among students with low English language proficiency assists them in generating ideas, because L1 is connected with their background knowledge. Regarding the support gained from L1 use, Sipra (2007) discussed the facilitative role of L1 and concluded that bilingual teachers are better equipped with teaching aids compared with monolingual teachers.

Sharma (2006) used classroom observation of four teachers and questionnaire responses of one hundred students and twenty high school English teachers. Many respondents report that they prefer occasional use of L1 in the EFL classroom for many reasons: to clarify the meaning of difficult words, to explain grammar rules, to establish close relationship between students and teachers and so on. L1 use ought to be judicious and this is justified since it reveals that L1 helps students learn English more effectively, saves time and makes students feel easy and comfortable when they are provided with L1 equivalents. He suggested that L1 might be used for translating new language, chatting with learners, giving instructions, providing feedback and error correction and checking learners' comprehension. Thus, appropriate use of L1 in EFL classes involves saving class time. Instead of going through long explanations in the target language, it would sometimes be easier and more efficient to give a translation of a vocabulary item or an explanation of a grammar point. In line with the above study, Willis and Willis (2007) considered that L1 can be used in L2 classrooms to translate new words, more specifically those which are difficult to explain or infer. Willis and Willis (2007) advised teachers and learners to avoid overuse of L1 and to prepare guidelines for situations in which L1 can be used in the class. In Meyer's study (2008), L1 use has proved to assist lowering affective filters that are believed to be detrimental to the students' learning. This evidence suggested that one area in language learning that L1 may be creatively applied to be connected with emotions. Latsanyphone and Bouangeune (2009) among the studies that supported using L1 in L2 classes as it considered L1 an effective tool in teaching vocabulary to the lower proficiency group.

In accordance with the previous study Ocak et al. (2010) also found that students usually use their L1 when they are afraid of making mistakes which could be embarrassing to them. Al-Nofaie (2010) carried out a study to examine the attitudes of three teachers and 30 students toward using L1 in English classes. She noticed that many teachers used L1 to explain grammar and new vocabulary. The findings show that the participants' use of L1 seems to be systematic. The results gave support to the assumption that advanced learners manifest good progress when L1 is used. The learners' level and the teachers' professional experience also affected the degree to which teachers resort to L1. (p:69) . Al-Nofaie (2010) showed the positive attitude about the use of Arabic in the classroom by both students and teachers although teachers' attitudes sometimes contradict with those for the students.

Saricoban (2010) investigated in further detail using L1 in L2 classes and found that L1 is used to deal with difficult concepts, new words and to recheck the comprehension of the lesson learned from the teacher. In line with the previous study, Horst et al. (2010) stated that L1 is also believed to be a helpful tool to bridge the gap between the newly acquired knowledge and that already existed in the learners. This attribute is essential for the learners to make satisfactory progress with their language proficiency. If the learners are unable to relate what they study to what they already know, it could be very difficult for them to achieve a goal in learning a language. Khassawneh (2011) referred to the students' attitudes about using Arabic (L1) in the EFL classroom that the weaker students, compared to the others, appeared to be more positive towards L1 use.

According to the results of his study, Alshammari's (2011) emphasized that a balanced use of Arabic by both teachers and learners can be beneficial in the language learning process and might increase the students' level of comprehension. McMillan and Rivers (2011) argued that selective use of the L1 can "play important cognitive, communicative, and social functions in L2 learning" (p. 252).

Kafes (2011) investigated the effect of using L1 on the university students' speaking skills in an English intensive course. The study concluded with an emphasis on "judicious and systematic, careful as well as minimal use of L1" as being facilitative and conducive to the EFL classes. Machaal (2012) found in his study of the students' understanding, particularly the students with lower language proficiency that use of Arabic (L1) in English classes and is useful for beginning students as it works well to assist the students' comprehension and learning. Mirza, Mahmud and Jabbar (2012) believed that L1 acts as a facilitator tool to make the learning process easier for learners, L1 use plays an important role when dealing with difficult grammar, talking about new words and abstract ideas. Furthermore, Damra and Qudah (2012) claimed that L1 use could raise students' awareness and knowledge of similarities and differences between their L1 and L2. When the students' awareness is raised, it may lead to more effective learning.

Jamshidi and Navehebrahim (2013) also emphasize the facilitative role of L1. They concluded that the use of L1 in the language class increased the enjoyment and confidence of the learners, explicating “using L1 in an L2 context plays a crucial role for learners to organize, enhance and enrich their speech” (p. 190).

#### 4.2 Arguments Against Using L1 in L2 Classes

Some researchers argue that employing L1 in L2 classroom might affect students’ learning process negatively since it reduces the learners’ exposure to the L2 and reduces their opportunities for using the target language like Krashen (1982) claimed that too much use of the L1 deprives the learners of input in the L2, not only this, but also it does not motivate and encourage learners to use the L2. He suggested that comprehensible input should provide opportunities for subconscious and implicit learning, which leads to achieving language competence. Therefore, the superiority of L2 may indicate prohibiting L1 in the classroom. Some studies are so strict regarding using L1 and emphasis using only L2 as Krashen and Terrell (1983), who advocated using only L2 in classes, they argue that learners acquire L2 following the same path they acquire their L1. Therefore, L1 should not be used in the L2 classroom to enhance students’ exposure to the L2; since students acquire the L2 through the same way they acquire their L1. Prabhu (1987) mentioned in his study that learners are more likely to use L1 when having a private talk with their teachers and doing individual tasks. This may indicate that using L1 in front of peers may create a feeling of guilt.

The advocates of L2 rely on the assumption that that language learning by adults is similar to language acquisition by children, on the other hand some studies differentiate between language acquisition by children and language learning by adults like Bley-Vroman (1990) differentiated between L1 acquisition by children and L2 learning by adults, and considers these differences between adults and children may answer the question: why adults often cannot achieve fluency? Bley-Vroman (1990) mentioned five differences between L1 acquisition by children and L2 learning by adults, Firstly, children's innate ability to acquire their L1 disappears in adults. Secondly, adults rely on their L1 when learning L2, unlike children who do not have previous knowledge of their mother language. Thirdly, in contrast to children, adults' exposure to L2 is not sufficient since language input is confined to being in a learning environment such as schools. Moreover, children are helped by social factors as motivation and personal situations that adults lack. Finally, notwithstanding adults' difficulties when learning, they do, of course, have more mature cognitive abilities Therefore, these differences make it impossible for adults to study a second language by imitating the method of children’s language learning. Therefore, not to use L1 at all in language classrooms seems to be disadvantageous rather than advantageous.

Halliwell and Jones (1991) believed that both speaking and understanding should be practiced in L2, this strategy helps the learners to understand the message even when they do not know the exact meaning of words or structures. Macdonald (1993) is so strict in avoiding L1 in teaching L2, he argues that using L2 reinforce communication and activate both conscious and unconscious learning. Also, it creates confident learners and challenges them to communicate with others through their limited language. Macdonald (1993) suggested that the teacher can communicate his/her message by some other means, such as mime or demonstration as a solution if the teacher get stuck in the middle of the lesson. He concluded that switching to the L1 to explain what the teacher has said to learners is unnecessary and undermines the learning process.

Similarly, Polio & Duff (1994, p. 322) showed that using L1 “prevent students from receiving input they might be exposed to in social situations outside the classroom”.

In accordance with previous views, Macaro (1997) claimed that learning of L2 by adults combines both conscious and unconscious processes because adult L2 learners can apply more advanced strategies when learning the new language. Moreover, although L2 learners may find it difficult to produce all the new language sounds correctly and achieve oral competence, they are more able to express themselves by applying non-verbal communicative strategies.

Larsen-Freeman (2000) preferred using L2 for class management to help "The students learn from these classroom management exchanges, too, and realized that the target language is a vehicle for communication" (p: 132). Cook (2001) Advocated using L2 classroom interaction for providing learners with a naturally communicative environment. Sharma, (2006) objected using L1 in EFL teaching on the ground that it hinders learning, he adds “the rationale for using only the target language in the classroom is that “the more students are exposed to English, the more quickly they will learn; as they hear and use English, they will internalize it to begin to think in English; the only way they will learn it is if they are forced to use it.” (P.80)

Nazary (2008) found that the intermediate group held the most negative attitude towards L1 use in the classroom. The reason is that they are not the beginning students who may have no alternatives but mainly rely on their first language when they need help. At the same time, the intermediate students, unlike the advanced students, do not realize that L1 has advantages if used properly in the language classroom.

Mouhanna (2009), investigated using Arabic language in English classes at a tertiary institution in the United Arab Emirates, and comes up with the conclusion that most of the sampled students prefer the use of Arabic in their English classes as "an important part of effective learning." But at the same time, Mouhanna (2009) is against the overuse of students' native language in an English class which will be at the expense of learning the target language / the foreign language. Mahmoudi and Amirkhiz (2011) stated that the low-achieving students, as well as the high-achieving, agreed that L2 should be given priority in the language classroom .

#### **4.3 Advantages and disadvantages of using L1 in ELT classes:**

The advantages of using the mother tongue cannot be disregarded. Al- Hinai (2011: 1) highlighted some advantages of using L1 by summarizing researchers' ideas as below

1. It reduces learner anxiety and creates a more relaxing learning environment
2. It is a means of bringing the learners' cultural background knowledge into the class,
3. It facilitates checking understanding and giving instructions.
4. It facilitates the task of explaining the meaning of abstract words and of introducing the main differences in grammar and pronunciation between L1 and L2.

Secondly, the other advantages summarized by Butzkamm (2003) were mentioned in the article of Jadallah & Hasan (2011: 6) as shown below:

1. L1 use gives a sense of security and helps learners to be stress-free.
2. A foreign language friendly asset people bring to the task of FL learning.
3. The use of the L1 saves learners from a feeling of frustration they might have within their FL learning.
4. L1 techniques allow teachers to use richer and more authentic texts, which mean more comprehensible input and faster acquisition.
5. All-newly-acquired FL items have to sink roots in our minds which are eventually deep enough for the items to function independently of the L1".

### **5. Methodology of the study**

#### **5.1 Participants**

50 English language teachers at three female secondary schools in Tabuk City were asked to fill out the questionnaire, and 6 teachers were observed (two teachers of each school).

#### **5.2 Data Collection**

##### **5.2.1 Instruments and Procedures**

In order to collect data from teachers, two methods have been applied for this purpose: a questionnaire and class observation with teachers

##### **5.2.1.1 The questionnaire**

The questions in the questionnaire (taken and modified from Ahmed, 2010) have been designed to measure the attitudes of the teachers about using L1 in EFL classrooms.

The attitudes of the teachers have been investigated through questionnaire consisting of two parts **Part one:** included 5 statements, surveying teacher use of the L1 (Arabic language) in English classroom, with Likert 5-point scale: (Always, often, sometimes, rarely and never). **Part two :** included 7 statements , surveying teachers' attitudes towards using the L1 (Arabic language) in English classroom , with Likert 5- point scale : (Strongly agree , agree , not sure , disagree and strongly disagree) .

##### **5.2.1.2 Classroom Observation**

With respect to the classroom observations, the study initially hoped to carry out six classroom observations mainly to test "the accuracy of the picture presented" to increase the validity of the study (Mackey & Gass, 2012) because sometimes the participants' report does not match their actions in the classroom, The researcher visited the three schools and observed some language classes .

The observation was conducted to see whether Arabic language was used inside the classroom or not, and for what purpose. The Classroom observations, which involved 6 teachers, were conducted by using checklist to note down observations. The checklist covered the following items: explaining exercises, grammar, and vocabulary, checking understanding, praising, and telling jokes.

## **6. Results and Discussion**

### **6.1 First Question**

The first question of the study is "to what extent is Arabic as (L1) used in Female Saudi secondary schools English classes?"

The descriptive statistics of percentages were used to analyze the quantitative data which were basically derived from the questionnaire shows that the majority of teachers (82%) stated that they often utilize Arabic language to explain concepts while 18% of them stated that they rarely used it. This indicates that Arabic language is often used to explain new concepts. The teacher might face the problem that some aspects of English language cannot be understood unless L1 is used for more clarification. Furthermore, in teaching vocabulary, many teachers considered that using the mother tongue is quite helpful and sometimes necessary for explaining words that cannot be explained in the target language. The study group stated that Arabic language was used in L2 classes in a very high rate (72%) to explain new vocabulary, while (28%) of them stated they've never used this practice. This clarifies that Arabic as a mother tongue is used to explain vocabulary. Teachers found that the shortest and easiest way to explain L2 vocabulary is to translate that vocabulary item in L1. This findings is in line with Duff (1989) as he described: "How translation can help in developing three characteristics essential for language learning: flexibility, accuracy, and clarity". He stated: "Translation trains the learner to search (flexibility) for the most accurate words what is meant (clarity). This combination of freedom and constraint allows the students to contribute their own thoughts to a discussion which has a clear focus-the text". This finding is in line with Nation (2003), Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) who advocated using translation in L2 classes as the most quick and efficient strategy .

According to the findings of this study, out of 50 teachers 40 teachers advocated using mother tongue to explain grammar in L2 classes, more than three quarters of the teachers (80%) stated that they sometimes use Arabic to explain grammar. However, one quarter (20%) stated they never used it. This shows that explaining grammar can be more effective by employing L1 and L2 similarities and differences.

Concerning class control, more than half of the group study teachers (54%) stated that they used Arabic for managerial purposes like class control, (46%) stated it was never or rarely used.

Almost more than half of the group study teachers (56%) stated they used Arabic language to give instructions while (44%) stated they rarely or never used it. This clearly shows that some teachers utilized Arabic language to give instructions, though their range of use varied considerably. The findings of this study is in harmony with Lucas and Katz (1994) who advocated using mother tongue inL2 classes because "for students with little or no proficiency in English, their native language is the only effective means for providing access to content area development". (See table one for more details ).

### **6.2 The Second Question of the Study**

The second question of the study is "what are the attitudes of teachers towards using Arabic in EFL classes? The descriptive statistics of percentages were used to analyze the quantitative data which were basically derived from the questionnaire shows that 54 % of the teachers in the study group agreed that Arabic helps learners to understand new concepts, while 33% stated that they've disagreed, while (12) 12% of those group of study stated that they are not sure. The majority of the group of study is clearly use Arabic language in L2 classes to help learners to understand new concepts. From the point of view of the study group teacher, certain concepts are difficult to be explained in the target language, so L1 could be a valuable tool to explain them.

Concerning understanding new vocabulary, table 2. shows that (64%) of the study group teachers agreed that using Arabic language helps learners to understand new vocabulary, 32% stated that they disagreed, while (4) 4% of those teachers stated that they are not sure. This finding is in line with Nation (2003) who recommended translating L2 words into their L1 equivalents, especially when teaching beginners. This indicates that translation has been considered one of the most effective learning methods. Using L1 will make a lesson clearer and more accessible to all learners as Mirza, Mahmud and Jabbar (2012) proposed that L1 use can be helpful for difficult grammar, new vocabulary and abstract ideas.

Al-nofai (2010) asserted that using Arabic could provide the students with some confidence and lead to better understanding if used in certain situations. When the use of an L1 translation is combined with the use of word cards for the initial learning of vocabulary, then learners have a very effective strategy for speeding up vocabulary growth. Ahmed (2015)

For better understanding of grammar, (48%) of the group of study teachers agreed that using Arabic language helps learners to understand L2 grammar, while (40%) disagreed, and (12%) are not sure. This finding is in line with Harbord (1992) who claimed that teachers resort to the L1 to explain grammar because they feel that the L2 explanation is too complicated, and may even feel themselves incapable of giving a clear and unambiguous explanation of the structure in question exclusively in English. Furthermore, Wang & Wen, (2002) Harbord, (1992) asserted that one of the reasons behind using Arabic in EFL classes is the need to save time, the attention of the teacher is drawn to a specific language skill or item, so any new issue raised by the students which could slow down the pace of the class is dealt with in a quick way.

Concerning using Arabic language to control the class, (50%) of the teachers agreed with the importance of using L1 to control L2 classes, while (4%) of the teachers stated they are not sure, while (46%) of those teachers stated that they agreed. With respect to using Arabic language in reducing pupils stress, (58%) group of study teachers agreed that using Arabic language contributes towards pupils feeling less stressed, (14%) of the teachers stated they are not sure, and only (28%) of those teachers disagreed. This finding matches Auerbach, (1993: 3) who stated "starting with the L1 gives a sense of security and validates the learner's lived experiences, allowing them to express themselves. The learner is then willing to experiment and take risks with English."

(34%) of teachers in the group of study agreed that teachers of young learners need to use a lot of Arabic language, while (52%) of those stated disagreed, while (14%) of the teachers are not sure. This finding supports Cole (1998) stating: "L1 is most useful at the beginning and low levels. If students have little or no knowledge of the target language, L1 can be used to introduce the major differences between L1 and L2, and the main grammatical characteristics of L2 that they should be aware of. This gives them a head start and saves a lot of guessing".

30% of the teachers agreed that use of Arabic language helps pupils learn different language skills, (60%) stated that disagreed, and only (10%) of those are not sure. (See table 2 for more details).

### **6.3 The Third Question of the Study**

The third question of the study is "what are the purposes and frequencies of using L1 in EFL Saudi secondary school English classes? (See table 3).

The descriptive statistics of percentages were used to analyze the quantitative data which were basically derived from the questionnaire shows that Arabic was utilized by six teachers in female secondary schools L2 classes to give instructions, explain meaning, explaining grammar and to organize classroom setting. Arabic was used a total of 43 times to explain the meaning of vocabulary items.

Teacher 1 used Arabic a total of (14) divided as (4) times to explain words, and the students found it easy to understand the new words. (2) times to explain exercise, (4) times to check understanding, (2) times to give instruction, and organizing classroom setting. Teacher 2 used Arabic a total of (14) times divided as (7) to explain words, (3) times to explain exercise, and (3) times for checking understanding and (1) time for praising. Teacher 3 used Arabic a total of (15) times divided as (8) to explain words, (2) times to give instruction, (4) times checking understanding and (1) time to explain grammar rule.

Teacher 4 used Arabic a total of (16) times divided as (7) to explain words, (3) times to explain exercise, (1) time giving instruction and (3) times to explain grammar rules. Teacher 5 used Arabic a total (15) times divided as (6) to explain words, (4) times to explain exercise, (3) time giving instruction and (2) times to check understanding. Teacher 6 used Arabic a total of (17) times divided as (5) to explain words, (4) time to explain exercise in the book, (3) times for checking understanding and (3) times for giving instruction and (2) times to explain grammar rules. These six class observations indicate that the Arabic language was used in L2 classes for different purposes, so the findings of the six observations assert that Arabic language EFL teaching and learning.

## Conclusions

The results of this study revealed that the amount of L1 used in the EFL classroom by English teachers in the secondary schools was clearly very high. Arabic language was used in L2 classes repeatedly and extensively. The findings of this study revealed that the group study teachers used Arabic language in L2 classes up to 80%. Similar findings were revealed by Ahmed (2015) who found that 100 teachers used Arabic in English classes in ranging from 20% “rarely” to 80% “always”. Further, Teachers showed positive attitude towards the use of L1 in some situations: to explain concept, new vocabulary, grammar, to give instruction, to facilitate classroom discussions and checking comprehension, as well as reducing pupils stress.

According to Horst et al. (2010) who demonstrated that L1 could be used in bridging between the new knowledge and the existing knowledge of learners.

This finding is in line with Duff & Polio (1990) who identified eight categories of common L1 use: classroom administrative vocabulary, grammar instruction, classroom management, empathy, solidarity, practicing English, unknown vocabulary, translation, lack of comprehension, and an interactive effect on which students’ use of the L1 prompts their instructor to use it. Furthermore, the findings of this study supported by Atkinson, 1987; Harbord, 1992; Nation, 2003, who considered Arabic is a facilitator in L2 classes and it create a feeling of comfort, especially when used for certain purposes. In another word, Teachers considers using mother tongue (L1) in L2 classrooms is a facilitating tool to enhance their students’ language learning progress with more practical and accessible lessons

The observed teachers considered Arabic Language (L1) to be an assisting tool in creating a more welcoming and relaxing atmosphere in a language classroom as Ocak et al. (2010) stated that L1 use could help lower affective filters. Students tend to learn better in a relaxing environment.

To conclude, thus it is recommended that although the use of L1 benefits language learning in some aspects, it is necessary that teachers use it carefully in different contexts.

**Table 1. Teachers use of the L1 (Arabic language) in English classroom**

| Statement  | Always  | Often   | Sometimes | Rarely  | Never   |
|--|---------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|
| 1-I use Arabic language to explain concepts.       | 4(8%)   | 6(12%)  | 31 (62%)  | 5(10%)  | 4(8%)   |
| 2-I use Arabic language to explain new vocabulary. | 3(6%)   | 11(22%) | 22 (44%)  | 8(16%)  | 6(12%)  |
| 3-I use Arabic language to explain grammar.        | 4 (8%)  | 6(12%)  | 16 (32%)  | 9(18%)  | 15(30%) |
| 4-I use Arabic language to control the class.      | 5(10%)  | 6(12%)  | 16(32%)   | 7(14%)  | 16(32%) |
| 5-I use Arabic language to give instructions.      | 6 (12%) | 6(12%)  | 16(32%)   | 7 (14%) | 15(30%) |

**Table 2. Teachers' attitudes towards using the L1 (Arabic language) in English classroom**

| Statement   | Strongly agree | Agree    | Not sure | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|----------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| 1-Using Arabic language helps learners to understand new concepts.              | 4 (8%)         | 23(46%)  | 6(12%)   | 13(25%)  | 4 (8%)            |
| 2-Using Arabic language helps learners to understand new vocabulary.            | 4 (8%)         | 28 (56%) | 2 (4%)   | 13(26%)  | 3(6%)             |
| 3-Using Arabic language helps learners to understand grammatical points better. | 6 (12%)        | 18(36%)  | 6(12%)   | 16(32%)  | 4(8%)             |
| 4-Using Arabic language makes it easier for the teacher to control the class.   | 9(18%)         | 16(32%)  | 2(4%)    | 18(36%)  | 5(10%)            |
| 5- Using Arabic language reduces pupils stress.                                 | 4(8%)          | 25(50%)  | 7(14%)   | 9(18%)   | 5(10%)            |
| 6-Teachers of young learners need to use a lot of Arabic language.              | 4 (8%)         | 13(26%)  | 7(14%)   | 18(36%)  | 9(16%)            |
| 7-Using Arabic language helps pupils learn different language skills.           | 3 (6%)         | 12 (24%) | 5(10%)   | 20(40%)  | 10(20%)           |

**Table 3. A checklist, summarizing the purposes and frequencies of using L1 in an EFL classroom.**

| Purpose of using L1              | Teacher1 | Teacher2 | Teacher3 | Teacher4 | Teacher5 | Teacher6 | Total |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------|
| Explaining exercises in the book | 2        | 3        | 0        | 3        | 4        | 4        | 12    |
| Checking understanding           | 4        | 3        | 4        | 2        | 2        | 3        | 11    |
| Giving instruction               | 2        | 0        | 2        | 1        | 3        | 3        | 9     |
| Explaining meaning of vocabulary | 4        | 7        | 8        | 7        | 6        | 5        | 43    |
| Explaining rules of grammar      | 0        | 0        | 1        | 3        | 0        | 2        | 5     |
| Organizing classroom settings    | 2        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1     |
| Class management                 | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0     |
| Discussing classroom events      | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0     |
| Praising                         | 0        | 1        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0     |
| Telling jokes                    | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0     |

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