LEARNERS AND TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD USING L1 IN ARABIC CLASSES: DOES CONTEXT MATTER?[i]

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Abstract:
This study aims at exploring learners and teachers' attitudes toward using students' L1 in foreign language classes. Research has paid much attention to using L1 in English as a foreign and second language, but other languages such as Arabic is still under-researched, particularly when distinctive contexts of learning are involved. Thus, in addition to teachers vs. learners' attitudes, and beginner vs. intermediate learners' attitudes, the study compares two different contexts: learning Arabic in Arabic speaking (Cairo, Egypt) and non-Arabic speaking (Indiana – USA) countries. Through a triangulation of observation, questionnaires and interviews, the study attempts to explore the black box of attitudes and whether or not learners and teachers believe students' L1 is useful for Arabic classes. Among the questions the study attempts to answer is whether or not teachers and learners attach any value to L1 use away from its effectiveness, and whether or not the context of learning L2 affects teachers and learners' attitudes toward L1 use.

Keywords: attitude, context of learning, L1, L2, teaching Arabic in Arabic and non-Arabic-speaking countries

Abstract :
Cette étude a pour objectif d'explorer les attitudes des apprenants et des enseignants vis-à-vis de l'utilisation de la L1 des élèves dans les cours de langues La recherche a accordé beaucoup d'attention à l'utilisation de la L1 en anglais comme langue étrangère et seconde, mais d'autres langues telles que l'arabe sont encore sous-étudiées, en particulier lorsque des contextes d'apprentissage distincts sont en jeu. Ainsi, outre les attitudes des enseignants par rapport aux apprenants et des attitudes des apprenants débutants par

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[i] ATTITUDES DES APPRENANTS ET DES ENSEIGNANTS À L'ÉGARD DE UTILISER LE L1 DANS LES CLASSES ARABES: LE CONTEXTE EST-IL IMPORTANT?

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rapport aux apprenants intermédiaires, l'étude compare deux contextes différents: l'apprentissage de l'arabe dans les pays arabophones (Le Caire, Égypte) et les pays non arabophones (Indiana - États-Unis). Par une triangulation de l'observation, des questionnaires et des entretiens, l'étude tente d'explorer la boîte noire des attitudes et de déterminer si les apprenants et les enseignants pensent ou non que la L1 des élèves est utile pour les cours d'arabe. Parmi les questions auxquelles l'étude tente de répondre est de savoir si les enseignants et les apprenants attachent une quelconque valeur à l'utilisation de la L1 en dehors de son efficacité, et si le contexte d'apprentissage de la L2 affecte ou non les attitudes des enseignants et des apprenants à l'égard de l'utilisation de la L1.

Mots-clés : attitude, contexte d'apprentissage, L1, L2, enseignement de l'arabe dans les pays arabes et non arabophones

1. Introduction

The use of First Language (L1) in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) has been the focus of much research all over the world (Kim and Petraki, 2009). Many researchers have been debating whether L1 should or should not be used in EFL and ESL classrooms (e.g. Atkinson, 1987; Schweers, 1999; Larson- Freeman, 2000; Cook, 2001a; Brooks-Lewis, 2009; Levine, 2011; Yavuz, 2012, Shuchi and Islam, 2016, Shabir, 2017); to what extent L1 can be utilized in EFL classrooms (e.g. Tang, 2000; Turnbull, 2001) and what benefits L1 can bring to EFL classrooms (e.g. Brown, 2000; Celik, 2003; Kahraman, 2009, Ghorbani, 2011, Paker and Karaagac, 2015). However, relatively less attention has been paid to contexts other than English including Arabic although this enriches our understanding of individual languages as well as language acquisition in general. Research on Arabic is worthwhile not only because Arabic is increasingly taught in Europe and USA, but also because Arabic is distinctive enough from European languages that it can yield insights into learning these languages as well as broaden and refine our understanding of language teaching and learning in general.

Part of the significance of this study is that it explores Arabic learning in different contexts (an area still in need of more attention as suggested by Macaro and Lee, 2013, p. 720; and Almoayidi, 2018, 378). To start with, it compares attitudes of more than one group of participants (teachers vs. leaners; and beginner vs. intermediate learners). Furthermore, it compares attitudes of participants in crash and regular courses and in Arabic-speaking and non-Arabic- speaking countries (see Loewen, 2014). It also looks into L1 use in terms of both the oral and written modes.

These various contexts are represented in four main research questions:
1) To what extent are teachers and learners' attitudes toward using L1 in class positive/negative?
2) How do teachers' attitudes differ from learners' attitudes?

3) How do learners' proficiency level affect teachers and learners' attitudes toward using L1 in class?
4) To what extent does context affect teachers and learners' attitudes?

As far as the study of attitudes is concerned, the current study can be classified as an attitude describer in the sense explained by Oskamp and Schultz (2004):

"Attitude describers typically study the views held by a single interesting group of people (for instance, recent immigrants, or state legislators). Or they may compare the opinions of two or more groups (for example, the attitudes of white-collar workers versus those of blue-collar workers on the topic of labor unions). To some extent they may overlap with the next two groups of researchers (the measurers and the pollers), but the describers are usually less concerned with sophisticated quantification than are the measurers and less concerned with representative sampling than are the pollers. They are also less interested in understanding and explaining the underlying bases for attitudes than are the theorists and experimenters." (p. 5)

The study is an attitude describer as it compares the beliefs of different groups of people (teachers and learners as well as learners with various proficiency levels). It also describes the attitudes of these groups of people in different contexts (regular and crash courses, and Arabic and non-Arabic speaking countries).

2. Attitudes

Allport (1935; quoted in Oskamp & Schultz, 2004, p. 8) defines an attitude as " ." Breckler and Wiggins (1989) believe that the term *representations* "has a more precise psychological meaning" than *state of readiness* (p. 409). They define attitudes as "*mental and neural representations, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence on behavior.*" Whether attitudes are defined as a *state of readiness* or *representations*, they are not actions, behaviors or responses (Oskamp and Schultz, 2004); they are *representations*, i.e. they are represented in one's actions, behaviors and responses, or a *state of readiness*, i.e. they prepare the individual to behave and respond in a certain way. This means that attitudes "*guide the form and manner of behavior into particular channels, encouraging some actions and deterring others*" (Oskamp & Schultz, 2004, P. 8). Furthermore, the relationship between one's attitudes and one's actions or one's experience in general is mutual interaction. On the one hand, attitudes are not only shaped by past experience, they may also change through new experience although this depends on stability of attitude and significance of experience. On the other hand, attitudes may determine how one experiences and reacts to new situations.

Both stability of attitude and significance of experience depend on a number of factors, including background knowledge, surroundings, attitudes network etc. Because these factors differ from one person to another, attitudes also differ from one person to another; they underlie a person's evaluation of a given object. Hence, "*One fundamental*

attribute of attitudes is that they are subjective – that is, they reflect how a person sees an object and not necessarily how the object exists" (Oslon & Maio, 2003, p. 300). Accordingly, Oslon and Maio (2003: 299) define attitudes as "*the tendencies to evaluate objects favorably or unfavorably.*" Similarly, Ajzen and Fishbein (2000) use the term attitude "*to refer to the evaluation of an object, concept, or behavior along a dimension of favor or disfavor, good or bad, like or dislike*" (original emphasis, p. 3). This evaluative aspect of attitudes together with the fact that attitudes form a network in the individual's knowledge structure may explain the consistency of similar attitudes held by the same person.

3. L1 in Foreign and Second Language Classes

Research into the relationship between L1 and language classes falls into two directions:
   a) those who support the avoidance of L1 use, and
   b) those who support the integration of L1 use. (Kim & Petraki, 2009)

Supporters of the former view endorse Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis, which asserts that second language acquisition occurs by exposure to comprehensible target-language input. Growing out of the input hypothesis, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) stresses exclusive use of target language in foreign language classes.

As a reaction to CLT, the question of whether L1 should or should not be used in foreign and second language classes is usually raised. Turnbull (2001) confirms the disadvantages of relying heavily on L1 in second and foreign language classes, but he also agrees with Cook (2001b) that there is always a room for L1 in foreign and second language teaching. Likewise, Kahraman (2009) believes that among the false assumptions that are deeply ingrained in the beliefs of most language teachers are that (a) language should be taught monolingually, and that (b) the ideal teacher is a native speaker (p. 108). Similarly, Nazary (2008) supports the view that appropriate use of L1 can be very beneficial (p. 183). As Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) explain, "*the use of L1 may provide learners with additional cognitive support that allows them to analyze language and work at a higher level than would be possible were they restricted to sole use of their L2*" (p. 760). In Storch and Wigglesworth's study (2003), students report that L1 helps them to explain difficult vocabulary items and grammar rules, particularly when their proficiency in L2 fails to establish the meaning they need to express. For the same reason, they find L1 useful in arguing a point (p. 765). Likewise, Cheng (2013) reports that Chinese tertiary EFL teachers use L1 effectively to teach grammar and abstract concepts. Kahraman (2009) investigates "*whether or not using learners' mother tongue judiciously in foreign language classrooms fosters affective factors*" (p. 122). He states that in addition to its effectiveness in clarifying meaning, using L1 can lower learners' language anxiety. It enhances a more positive and secure environment. Thus, L1 use as a compensation strategy, according to Kahraman (2009) does not only further communication in L2 but also has a significant phycological effect (p. 122).

Other studies focus on certain strategies where L1 is employed. Liao (2006) investigates EFL learners' beliefs about the use of translation in English learning. He

indicates that the participants frequently use translation as a learning strategy of English. He concludes that translation has an important facilitative role to play in college students' learning of English. Additionally,

> *"With respect to students' shared beliefs about using translation in learning English, generally they expressed the inevitability of translation use at their present phase of learning, and considered translation as a positive learning resource for them to comprehend, memorize, and produce better English, to acquire English skills, and to complete various English tasks"*. (Liao, 2006, p. 209).

Then and Ting (2009) interview 18 secondary school teachers of science and English in a study which investigates how L1 use may enhance comprehension. The results indicate that all the teachers use L1 to ensure student comprehension although they may have concerns about deviation from the designated medium of instruction and the negative effect L1 use may have on students' English language. Their results suggest that switching to L1 is the norm rather than a marked choice; furthermore, it is inevitable as it is frequently used to solve comprehension problems.

The uses of L1 in foreign language classes are various. Kahraman (2009, p. 112) summarizes various L1 use occasions, which can be broadly divided into two areas:

a) classroom management including negotiating classroom methodology, syllabus and lesson, development of learning strategies, educational counseling, personal contact, setting scenes etc., and

b) teaching including eliciting language, checking, giving instructions, testing, etc. There is a great overlap between the two areas, and for the purpose of this study there is no need to explore the differences.

4. Methods

According to Reid (2006), "*all attitudes must be inferred from observed behavior*" (p. 9; original emphasis). Learners and teachers' attitudes toward a certain teaching technique can then be inferred from classroom observation. However, such observations remain mere clues to the black box of attitudes rather than direct access to it, and so they should be regarded with caution (see Reid, 2006). In spite of that, observations can be helpful in forming assumptions that can then be tested by other tools such as Likert (1932) or Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum (1957) which are now well-established as tools for measuring attitudes. In this study both observations and questionnaires are employed. In addition, the data are cross-examined by open-ended interviews. The interviews are used to confirm and elaborate on the observed behavior. Furthermore, although the questionnaire is well suited for attitude measurement, it does not provide an answer to *how* or *why*, which can provide insights into second language learning.

To increase reliability and validity of results, then, the study cross-examines data from three sources: classroom observations, questionnaires and interviews. I used an

observation list covering two main questions: (a) is L1 used in L2 classes; and (b) who initiates the use of L1 (teacher or learner)? I observed 8 classes which belonged to two different contexts:

A. Survival Arabic program in Egypt

Survival Arabic is an intensive 20-hour course in spoken Egyptian Arabic offered by the American University in Cairo. It targets non-Arab (mainly American) students who would start their studies in Cairo. It aims at enhancing students' Arabic communicative skills in the very first days they move to Cairo.

B. The regular Arabic program at Indiana University, USA

This is the regular Arabic program for graduates and undergraduates. Students have daily sessions of 50 minutes for 16 weeks each term.

The methodology used in both contexts is the CLT. The total number of classes observed are 8. The following table summarizes the major similarities and differences between the above two contexts:

Table 1: Survival Arabic of Cairo vs. Indiana University Regular Program

	Survival Arabic of Cairo	Arabic Regular Program of Indiana
Number of Classes	4 (two beginner and two intermediate classes)	4 (two beginner and two intermediate classes)
Kind of Program	Intensive	Regular
Number of Weeks	1	16
Number of Hours	20	66
Main Skills	Speaking & Listening	Four Skills
Material	Handouts	Textbook and handouts
Place	Arabic-speaking country (Cairo, Egypt)	English-speaking country (Indiana, USA)
Number of Students in Class	3-7	10-20

On the basis of classroom observation, two questionnaires (one for learners and one for teachers) were prepared. Originally, a larger group responded to the questionnaires. Out of preference for a balanced sample, however, 48 responses (24 learners and 24 teachers) were randomly selected and eventually included in the final data analyses.

C. Learners

Learners constituted two non-heritage, both male and female, groups: learners of Survival Arabic in Cairo, and learners of Arabic in Indiana university regular program. Survival Arabic learners were 12: six people with no or little exposure to Arabic at level 1 (beginner), and six people with prior exposure to Arabic at level 2 (intermediate class). Learners of Arabic in Indiana university were 12: six people at beginner classes and six at intermediate classes. The Indiana university courses included both graduates and

undergraduates, whereas, the Survival Arabic of Cairo included undergraduates and graduate interns. All the learners are native speakers of English.

D. Teachers

The total number of teachers/participants in the questionnaires was 24 teachers: 12 teachers from the Survival Arabic program and 12 teachers from Indiana University Arabic program. Their teaching experience varies: 20 with experience ranging from 1 to 10 years, and 4 with more than 10 years of experience. To supplement the data of questionnaires, eleven individual interviews (6 learners and 5 teachers) were held. The interviews were semi-structured and included variations on two main questions: whether or not and how L1 helps learners of L2, and whether or not and why L1 use in L2 classes is effective. Depending on the interviewee, some interviews were in Arabic, some in English. The following table includes details of participants for each tool:

Table 2: Summary of Participants in the three tools

Tool	AUC	IU
Observation	4 classes	4 classes
Questionnaires	Learners: 12 (6 beginner / 6 intermediate)	Learners: 12 (6 beginner / 6 intermediate)
	Teachers: 12	Teachers: 12
Interviews	Learners: 3	Learners: 3
	Teachers: 2	Teachers: 3

To sum up, data collected in this study were taken from three sources: observation of 8 sessions, 11 individual semi-structured interviews, and 48 questionnaires. All participants are randomly selected. The data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively in order to elicit information on Arabic learners' and teachers' attitudes to using L1 as a tool for teaching L2.

5. Results and Discussion

The following table (Table 3) includes quantitative analysis of L1 use as initiated by teachers and learners. By *initiation*, I refer to an instance in which one starts using L1 to achieve a certain purpose and until the purpose is achieved or given up.

Table 3: L1 Uses as Initiated by Teachers and Learners from Classroom Observations

L1 uses	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Initiated by Teachers	31	67.4%
Initiated by Learners	15	32.6%
Total	46	100%

In conformity with previous research (e.g. Duff & Polio, 1990; Levine, 2003), Observation of 8 classes indicates that regardless of context, teachers use L1 in L2 classes in varying degrees to achieve a wide range of purposes.

As it is clear from Table 3, L1 use is initiated more by teachers (31 times against 15). This is not surprising since teachers have various complicated roles to play such as identifying learners' needs, assessing those needs, eliciting information, setting teaching plans, adopting methodologies and administering the class (Aly, 2017). L1 is more frequently used for classroom administration and giving pre-activity instructions. Sometimes the instructions are written in English so as to minimize oral use of L1 in class. Instructions written in L1 and given to students are considered instances of initiation by teacher as far as they are used for classroom activities. That strategy is valuable as it does not only minimize L1 use in class, it also minimizes time spent on instructions as well as confusion. The following table includes the various L1 uses compared in light of the proficiency level of learners:

Table 4: L1 Uses According to Proficiency Level

L1 uses		Beginner Class	Intermediate Class
Initiated by Teacher	Classroom Administration	4	2
	Pre-activity instructions	5	4
	Giving the meaning of a word.	5	2
	Explaining a grammar rule	1	3
	Explain cultural concepts	4	1
Initiated By Learner	Feedback (confirm understanding or lack of it)	1	2
	Group administration and group discussion	0	5
	Asking for clarification	5	2
Total		25	21

Many of the above uses feature a mixture of L1 and L2. In fact, L1 is used to fill a communication gap and once the foreign/second language is able to fulfill the communicative purpose, it is used. For example, in pre-activity instructions in the beginner class, the page numbers are given in English (clearly the learners had not yet studied the numbers), whereas Arabic accompanied with gestures is used for the rest. Similarly, when learners ask for clarification, they use L1 but also revert to L2 whenever possible. The same is true for group administration and discussion, which occur only in the intermediate level due to complexity of tasks. Context is also an important parameter in the distribution of L1 use. Although the sample is not large enough to provide a strong basis for comparison, it seems that learners of Arabic in Cairo appreciated the use of L2 in the explanation of cultural issues as the four instances of L1 use to explain cultural concepts occurred in Survival Arabic of Cairo.

In spite of the observation that teachers initiate L1 use more than learners, the analysis of question 1 in the questionnaire (see Appendix) indicates that teachers are less assertive in their attitudes to L1 use than learners (Table 5 below).

Table 5: Usefulness of L1: Teachers vs. learners' attitudes

Using English in Arabic classes is …	Extremely useful	Slightly useful	Useful /useless depending on other factors	Slightly useless	Extremely useless
Teachers	1	14	0	5	4
Learners	8	14	0	2	0

In comparison to 15 teachers (62.5%), 22 learners (91.6%) believe that using L1 in L2 classes is useful.

There is, then, contradiction between two data analyses: (a) the observation that teachers initiate L1 use more than learners and (b) the questionnaire result that teachers are less assertive in their expression of attitudes toward L1 use. This inconsistency can be explained in light of the fact that attitudes are learned (see Spolsky, 1989; Gardner, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Quoted in Oskamp and Schultz, 2004). The learnability of attitudes is stressed in many definitions (Gardner, 1991). In addition, according to Spolsky's (1989) model of second language learning, the social context leads to attitudes of various types. That is to say, attitudes are learned out of the social context. Thus, teachers may be less assertive in their expression of attitudes toward L1 use due to the methodology they are required to use in their classes. The methodology which is adopted in both AUC and IU programs is the CLT method, in which the use of L1 is not allowed (see Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000/2003; Nagaraj, 1996/2005). Nearly all teacher training emphasizes the exclusive use of L2. At workplace, supervisors usually state it clearly that L1 is not allowed in class and that a major criterion of teacher's assessment is the use of L2. However, what the data of this study indicate is that teachers use learners' L1 in the foreign language class as a tool for teaching L2 and that both teachers and learners appreciate the positive contribution of that tool. This contradiction between theory and best practices cannot be seen as resulting from indifferent individual decisions behind closed classroom doors. Rather, it should be seen in terms of a description (vs. prescription) of an optimal teaching strategy.

An analysis of the total positive responses in comparison to total negative responses can make the above point clearer. The following table includes the analysis of questions 1 to 10 (see Appendix for the list of questions). All the positive responses are grouped together and compared to the negative responses:

Table 6: A comparison of Total Positive vs. Total Negative Responses by Teachers and Learners

	Total Positive Responses L1 use is useful, practical, appealing, etc.	Total Negative Responses L1 use is useless, impractical, not appealing, etc.	Marginal Column Totals
Teachers	122 (59.5%)	83 (40.5%)	205
Learners	192 (83.8%)	37 (16.2%)	229
Marginal Row Totals	314 (72%)	120 (28%)	434 (Grand Total)

The difference between the total positive (72%) and the total negative (28%) responses of teachers and learners is statistically significant, X^2 (1, n = 434) = 32.0091, p <.05.

However, a comparison between teachers and intermediate students' attitudes indicates no statistically significant difference, X^2 (1, n = 318) = 3.3876, p = .06569.

Table 7: Teachers vs. Intermediate Learners' attitudes

	Teachers	Intermediate Learners	Marginal Row Totals
Total Positive Responses: L1 use is useful, practical, appealing etc.	122 (59.5%)	79 (70%)	201
Total Negative Responses: L1 use is useless, impractical, not appealing etc.	83 (40.5%)	34 (30%)	117
Marginal Column Totals	205	113	318 (Grand Total)

This may indicate that students develop a more positive attitude toward L2-exclusive class as they move from one proficiency level to another. This is further confirmed by a comparison of beginner and intermediate learners' attitudes toward using L1. The following table indicates different degrees of assertion among the learner groups.

Table 8: A comparison between beginner and Intermediate Learners' attitudes

	Beginner Learners	Intermediate Learners	Marginal Row Totals
Total Positive Responses: L1 use is useful, practical, appealing, etc.	114 (98%)	78 (69%)	192
Total Negative Responses: L1 use is useless, impractical, not appealing etc.	2 (2%)	35 (31%)	37
Marginal Column Totals	116	113	229 (Grand Total)

The difference between the total positive and total negative responses of beginner and intermediate learners is statistically significant, X^2 (1, n = 229) = 36.1493, p <.05. A majority of beginners (98%) in comparison to (69%) of intermediate students have positive attitudes to L1 use in Arabic classes. Similarly, in comparison to (2%) of beginners, one third of intermediate students (31%) have a negative attitude to L1 use in Arabic classes. The results are supported by Chavez (2003), who concludes that first, second and third year German students show preference for increased use of L2 as they progress.

However, when comparing the two contexts of the study, the results seem similar. In spite of the differences between the two contexts - the language environment outside the classroom, the number of students in class, and the course duration - the total positive and total negative responses are not statistically significant. X^2 (1, n = 434) = 1.0084, p = .31586.

Table 9: A comparison between Teachers and Learners' attitudes at AUC an IU

Responses	AUC	IU	Marginal Row Totals
Total Positive Responses: L1 use is useful, practical, appealing etc.	154 (71%)	163 (75%)	317
Total Negative Responses: L1 use is useless, impractical, not appealing etc.	63 (29%)	54 (25%)	117
Marginal Column Totals	217	217	434 (Grand Total)

It seems, then, that the major factor that affects teachers and learners' attitude toward L1 use is the proficiency level. The higher the proficiency levels of learners, the more ready and more willing they are to appreciate an exclusive-L2 class. This is mainly because L1, as the interview analysis below indicates, is used to fill communication gaps and compensate for linguistic shortage on the part of learners. The more those communication gaps are narrowed, the less is the need for L1.

The questionnaire questions can be grouped together into two categories: some questions address the value of L1. For example, in Questions 7, 8 and 9, L1 use has a value in itself as it makes an activity more engaging and/or appealing. Questions 2, 4, 5, 6 and 10 address the purpose of using L1 such as saving time, practicality etc. It is interesting that many participants (30.5% of teachers and 13.8% of learners) marked their attitudes as neither positive or negative for Questions 7, 8 and 9.

Table 10: Analysis of questions 7, 8 and 9 which deal with L1 as having a value in itself

	Total Positive Responses Questions 7, 8 and 9	Total Responses to (It depends on other factors) Questions 7, 8 and 9	Total Negative Responses Questions 7, 8 and 9
Teachers	22 (30.5.%)	22 (30.5%)	28 (38.8%)
Learners	55 (76.3%)	10 (13.8%)	7 (9.7%)

It is noticeable that one third of the teachers (30.5%) believe that class qualities such as engaging, and appealing do not depend on L1 use. This is supported by teachers' responses to Question 3.

Table 11: Professionalism and L1 use

A teacher who uses both English and Arabic in Arabic classes is..	Extremely Professional	Slightly Professional	Professional/ Non-Professional depending on other factors	Slightly Non-Professional	Extremely Non-Professional
Responses	0 (0%)	6 (25%)	13 (54%)	4 (17%)	1 (4%)

As the table indicates, more than half of the teachers (54%) believe that L1 use does not have to do with professionalism.

Generally speaking, the questionnaire analysis indicates that the participants believe that using L1 as a tool for teaching L2 is useful as far as it is linked with learners' proficiency level and is associated with a purpose such as saving time. This is supported by other research such as Storch and Wigglesworth (2003), Nazary (2008), and Kahraman (2009) who all confirm the value of using L1 to achieve a certain purpose such as saving time. However, in the interviews, some teachers warn against losing sight of the main objective of using L1. They stress that L1 should remain a last resort and be used purposefully as the following interview excerpt shows:

"I think like [Pause] I think teachers should be using as much Arabic as possible in the class [mmm] So, I guess that would be [pause] more professional using the language as much as possible and [mmm] only falling back on English when there is like confusion or when you wanna explain this what you should do. I think one sentence explanation is fine. [pause] I think sometimes like you have to do time out and say ok ninety percent of the class is not understanding this and not doing the job properly so I do need to spend one or two minutes [mmm] and it sometimes goes like that [pause] if you say it in English, it clicks right away… I mean you can continue drilling over and over again and it is not clicking [pause] for a small percentage, I think, it is ok. I do not think I should go on and on and on and try and, you know, try and use Arabic, if it just takes one second to say, and say either one word in English or the instructions in English or whatever it might be." [Teacher 1 – Indiana, 5 years of experience]

In the interview, students also reflect critically on the use of L1 in class. Student 1 below compares L1 use when he was a beginner and its use when he was at the intermediate level. Student 2 associates L1 use with certain proficiency levels, and Student 3 stresses L1 use to facilitate understanding and avoid confusion.

"At some level it is really important [mmm] because all of us studied like one semester of Arabic at this point so if the teacher was to use only Arabic it just go over my head, like at this point it is ok but at the beginning there is no way it would even be a possibility." [Student 1 – Third Year of Arabic at Indiana]

"…for me, Arabic more frequently than English depending on what level you are." [Student 2 – Level 2, Arabic of Cairo]

"like I think in lower levels [pause] Arabic classes [pause] it is helpful because we need to like it is more important […] we are making sure we are getting it in English [pause] and so we are not confused like later on in the harder classes." [Student 3 – First Year of Arabic at Indiana]

Two points stand out in the above excerpts: first, participants link L1 use to students' proficiency level, and second, they link L1 use to a certain purpose. That is to say, L1 use is evaluated on the basis of students' proficiency level and the purpose of L1 serves such as filling a communication gap. There is clearly a positive attitude toward a teacher who is able to use as much L1 as possible and immerse students into the target language and culture. However, there is equally a positive attitude toward a teacher who is able to identify communication gaps and employ L1 in the appropriate time. The above results are comparable to Shabir's (2017) results, in which he states that all the teachers in his study believe that L1 use should be limited although they do not rule out positive use of L1. Similarly, Shuchi and Islam (2016) indicate that unless L1 is used purposefully, it may impede EFL classroom progress.

5.1 Limitations of the Study

Although the study is based upon a triangulation of tools, the main tool of data collection is a small sample survey (24 learners and 24 teachers). However, since the study tackles questions which are not well-researched in Arabic classes, particularly comparing learners' and teachers' attitudes in two different contexts, and two proficiency levels, it is hoped that others will replicate the design of the study and add further data in the future.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this study, as stated in the introduction, is to explore learners' and teachers' attitudes to using English as students' L1 in Arabic classes. It compares teachers and learners' attitudes in different contexts: mainly, two different proficiency levels (beginner and intermediate) and two different learning environments (Cairo, Egypt and Indiana, USA). Data analyses of observation, questionnaires and interviews indicate that learners and teachers have positive attitudes toward using L1 for teaching L2. The results also indicate that teachers are less assertive in their attitudes than learners, and that beginner learners have more positive attitudes than intermediate learners. The results also indicate that learning contexts do not affect attitude.

The two major factors, which affect attitudes toward the incorporation of L1 in the foreign language classroom, are language proficiency and the purpose L1 serves. It is mainly the communication gap due to linguistic shortcomings on the part of the learner that stimulates L1 use. That is why the higher the proficiency level of the learner is, the less L1 use is appreciated. In this case, L1 use is appreciated only when it is practical as when it saves time, facilitates comprehension or removes ambiguity. L1 use, then, is not immanent in second and foreign language learning, but, teleologically speaking, it is beneficial. It is the purpose that L1 serves rather than any inherent value that learners and teachers appreciate.

These results have some implications for the foreign language classroom. To begin with, since the driving force of attitudes contributes positively to learning, and since

learners and teachers have positive attitudes to using L1 in L2 classes, there is a need to incorporate effective uses of L1 in foreign language classes. A word of caution, though. Attitudes toward similar learning situations are expected to be consistent. If learners and teachers have positive attitudes toward using L1 in foreign language classes, some may over generalize this toward a preference to using L1 over other tools. However, due focus on learning outcomes, and whether L1 contributes positively to achieving these learning outcomes do not only regulate L1 use, but also yield insightful application of L1 to the benefit of learning L2. Further research on this topic - how due focus on learning outcomes may regulate L1 use and maximize its benefits, which is out of the scope of the current study, would considerably benefit the foreign language class. In conformity with learners' and teachers' positive attitudes to L1, the statement of learning outcomes and the lesson plan may suggest palatable usage of L1. This would help, in my view, decrease anxiety and bring constructive changes to the foreign language classroom.

About the Author

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Appendix

Questionnaire

This questionnaire explores how students and teachers feel about using English as L1 in Arabic language classes.

Please place a tick for each statement to show your opinion:

Name (optional) …………………………………
Teaching Experience in years (if teacher): …………………………………………

1. **Using English in Arabic classes is (useful/useless):**
   a) extremely useful
   b) slightly useful
   c) useful / useless depending on other factors
   d) slightly useless
   e) extremely useless

2. **Using Arabic to explain grammar is (timesaving/time-consuming).**
   a) extremely timesaving
   b) slightly timesaving
   c) timesaving/time-consuming depending on other factors
   d) slightly time-consuming
   e) extremely time-consuming

3. **A teacher who uses both English and Arabic in Arabic classes is (professional/non-professional).**
   a) extremely professional
   b) slightly professional
   c) professional/non-professional depending on other factors
   d) slightly non-professional
   e) extremely non-professional

4. **Using English to clarify the meaning of abstract words is (straightforward/confusing).**
   a) extremely straightforward
   b) slightly straightforward
   c) straightforward/confusing depending on other factors
   d) slightly confusing
   e) extremely confusing

5. **Using English to explain grammar rules is (practical/impractical).**
   a) extremely practical
   b) slightly practical
   c) practical/impractical depending on other factors
   d) slightly impractical
   e) extremely impractical

6. **Using English to explain foreign concepts and cross-cultural items is (straightforward/confusing).**
   a) extremely straightforward
   b) slightly straightforward
   c) straightforward/confusing depending on other factors
   d) slightly confusing
   e) extremely confusing

7. **When both Arabic and English are used in the class, the class is (appealing/unappealing).**
   a) extremely appealing
   b) slightly appealing
   c) appealing/unappealing depending on other factors
   d) slightly unappealing
   e) extremely unappealing

8. **A teacher who uses only Arabic in the class is (engaging/boring).**
   a) extremely engaging
   b) slightly engaging
   c) engaging/boring depending on other factors
   d) slightly boring
   e) extremely boring

9. **An activity in which both Arabic and English are used is (engaging/boring).**
   a) extremely engaging
   b) slightly engaging
   c) engaging/boring depending on other factors
   d) slightly boring
   e) extremely boring

10. **Using Arabic to explain culture is (timesaving/time-consuming).**
    a) extremely timesaving
    b) slightly timesaving
    c) timesaving/time-consuming depending on other factors
    d) slightly time-consuming
    e) extremely time-consuming