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### Integrating L1 in L2 Classrooms: The Case of Arabic as a Foreign Language in US Universities

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# INTEGRATING L1 IN L2 CLASSROOMS: THE CASE OF ARABIC AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN US UNIVERSITIES

LA INTEGRACIÓN DE L1 EN LAS CLASES DE L2: EL CASO DEL ÁRABE  
COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA EN LAS UNIVERSIDADES DE LOS  
ESTADOS UNIDOS

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## INTEGRATING L1 IN L2 CLASSROOMS: THE CASE OF ARABIC AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN US UNIVERSITIES

### Abstract

For many years, instructors and scholars of the Arabic language in American higher education schools have debated two pedagogical questions: (1) whether or not non-standardized Arabic varieties, Spoken Arabic, should be integrated with Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in the foreign Arabic classroom, and if so, (2) what that integration should look like (see Al-Batal, 2017). One of the prominent claims of those favoring MSA in the classroom is that MSA is the more prestigious language variety and therefore better represents Arabic literature, religious tradition and culture (Ryding, 1995:226). However, in the last two decades there has been an evolving pedagogical trend that aims to break the firewall of separation between these varieties and to call for a new vision that integrates both varieties in the Arabic classroom (Al-Batal, 2017b). One of the main arguments of this new trend is that it reflects the sociolinguistic changes taking place in Arabic speaking countries and is therefore more responsive to the students' learning needs. In this study, I aim to build on this argument and make a case for flexibility in teaching that allows for both Spoken Arabic varieties and the students' L1 in the Arabic L2 classroom. This study aims to validate the findings of previous studies in which the L1 was found to be an important tool and resource with which to build proficiency in the L2 classroom. Using the L1, specifically English, alongside spoken Arabic in the Arabic L2 classroom, reflects the sociolinguistic

dynamics of the Arab world where English as a global language is widely used both online and in everyday Arabic conversation. The study suggests a model that is based on the communicative approach which focuses on activating vocabulary and building proficiency in Spoken Arabic with the help of the L1 language.

**Keywords:** Foreign Arabic classroom; L1 and L2

### LA INTEGRACIÓN DE L1 EN LAS CLASES DE L2: EL CASO DEL ÁRABE COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA EN LAS UNIVERSIDADES DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS

### Resumen

Durante muchos años, docentes y especialistas de lengua árabe en escuelas americanas de educación superior han debatido sobre dos preguntas pedagógicas: (1) si las variedades no estandarizadas de árabe, el árabe hablado, deberían ser integradas con el Árabe Estandarizado Moderno (MSA) en las clases de árabe como lengua extranjera, y si así fuera, (2) cómo debería realizarse esa integración (ver Al-Batal, 2017). Una de las afirmaciones más destacadas a favor del MSA en el aula de clase es que el MSA es la variante más prestigiosa de la lengua y, en consecuencia, la que mejor representa las tradiciones religiosas, la cultura y la literatura Árabe (Ryding, 1995:226). Sin embargo, en las últimas dos décadas ha habido una evolución en la tendencia pedagógica que apunta a romper esa barrera de separación entre estas variantes y se defiende una nueva visión que integre ambas variantes en la clase de árabe (Al-Batal, 2017b). Uno de los principales argumentos a favor de esta tendencia es que refleja los cambios sociolingüísticos que están teniendo lugar en los países que hablan árabe y, por esa razón,

responde mejor a las necesidades de aprendizaje de los estudiantes. En este estudio, me propongo desarrollar este argumento y defender una enseñanza flexible que permita usar tanto las variedades del árabe hablado como la L1 de los estudiantes en las aulas de árabe como L2. El objetivo de este estudio es validar los hallazgos de las investigaciones previas en las cuales fue encontrado que la L1 es un recurso y una herramienta importante con la cual se generan competencias en la clase de la L2. Utilizando la L1, específicamente inglés, junto al árabe hablado en la clase de árabe como L2, se reflejan las dinámicas sociolingüísticas del mundo árabe donde el inglés es una lengua global y ampliamente utilizada tanto en línea como en el día a día de las conversaciones en árabe.

Este estudio sugiere un modelo basado en el enfoque comunicativo el cual se centra en activar el vocabulario y generar el dominio del árabe hablado con la ayuda de la lengua L1.

**Palabras clave:** clases de árabe como lengua extranjera; L1; L2

## INTRODUCTION

The growing interest in teaching Arabic as a foreign language in the United States has evolved in a highly charged atmosphere concerning foreign policy resulting from the rise of political Islam in different forms and practices, and due to the tragic events of September 11, 2001 in the U.S. In response to this interest, Arabic course enrollments increased by 127 percent between 1998 and 2006 ("MLA," 2007), and 46.3 percent between the years 2006 and 2009 ("MLA," 2010). In 2006 Arabic was the tenth most studied foreign language at U.S. colleges and universities, and in 2009 it was eighth on the list, ahead of Russian. Because of this increased interest, American universities and colleges have developed new Arabic programs and allocated a significant, but inconsistent, amount of funding for Arabic language training through a variety of federal grants and scholarships made available for students of Arabic in American universities and abroad programs (Al-Batal & Belnap, 2006).

The rapid growth of the number of Arabic language courses in American universities has had a tremendous impact on the pedagogy of Arabic as a foreign language. Perhaps the most crucial effects are the lack of qualified teachers, and a lack of educational vision or systematic policy of proficiency-based instruction (Al-Batal & Belnap, 2006). In addition, the prevailing ideology in American universities is similar to the Arab world model, in which Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is given priority over Spoken Arabic varieties (Al-Batal, 2017a; Ryding, 1995). The prioritization of MSA is a result of ideological beliefs that MSA is more prestigious than varieties of Spoken Arabic, which are considered to be less important and less worthy of studying. Because of this reality, most of the curricular decisions within the American schools were made to fit this ideology (Al-Batal, 2017a; Al-Batal & Belnap, 2006). Recently, an alternative vision has begun to evolve that recognizes the importance of

integrating multiple registers in the classroom (Al-Batal, 2017a; Al-Batal & Belnap, 2006; Isleem, 2017; K. Wahba, 2006; Younes, 1995, 2006, 2010).

The core argument of this new vision is that adopting the integration approach within the Arabic foreign language curriculum reflects a genuine reality in which both registers coexist and complement each other in the daily lives and linguistic repertoires of native Arabic speakers (Al-Batal, 2013).

Additionally, recent studies conducted in the U.S. have shown that integrating spoken varieties in the Arabic classroom more closely meets the learning needs and goals of the students (Belnap, 1987; Isleem, 2014; Palmer, 2007, 2008; Shiri, 2013). Many students have stated that their primary reason for studying Arabic is to travel and to be able to interact with native speakers (Husseinali, 2006; Palmer, 2007; Younes, 2010). Moreover, students seem to hold more positive learning motivations toward spoken varieties than toward MSA and tend to develop a more negative attitude toward MSA as they continue taking Arabic classes (Isleem, 2014, 2017).

In light of these major pedagogical and ideological challenges, this study aims to explore a new teaching venue that stems from evolving sociolinguistic nuances in the Arab world, that is the widespread use of English in everyday language, media podcasts and social media. This paper presents a teaching model in which learners of Arabic as a foreign language are allowed to alternate between Arabic and English, their first language. In other words, the classroom setting encourages codeswitching between Arabic and English that resembles the sociolinguistic reality of the contemporary Arab world.

To exemplify the wide use of English with other languages in the Arab world, the following are samples of codeswitching between spoken Arabic varieties and English. The first sample is an online conversation between a Lebanese college woman and her friends on social media:

lza ma andek shi **positive** t2uli ensi [If you don't have anything positive to say then forget it]

L **pancake** wl **hash browns** atyab [The pancakes and hash browns are more delicious]

**I just noticed** enno **i didn't like it** [I just noticed that I didn't like it]

**very well said** **status** **كتبت مرة** **ذكرتني**

[You reminded me of a status I once posted. Very well said!]

In the first excerpt, the participant used only one English word, positive, and the rest is in Lebanese Arabic written in roman script. While in the second and third excerpts, English dominates the sentences and Arabic is limited to one or two words: 'wl/and

the – atya/more delicious’ and ‘enno/that’. The last excerpt represents intra-sentential codeswitching between English and Lebanese Arabic in which Arabic is written in Arabic script.

The following is another sample of codeswitching between Jordanian Arabic and English in a mobile text message taken from a study conducted by Al-Khatib A. Mahmoud & Sabbah H. Enaq (2008) on Jordanian youth:

A: hi, keefik? lsn 3ndk m7adara bokra? Coz ana bokra nazleh 3aljam3a. [how are you? do you have class tomorrow?] [I am going to the university tomorrow]

B: sory hla shft msg. Bkra dwamy 72er 3 m7drat at 10 and at 1 and at 3:45 mta jayh lazam ashfk aw ajleha lb3d bkra b5l9 at 2. [I saw your message just now] [tomorrow I have classes at 10, 1, and 3:45, what time are you coming I have to see you, or you could postpone it to the day after tomorrow]

A: hi sorry just checked my mob. Lsn ana ma b2dar aji 3'er bokra coz 3andi ejazeh, ya seti ana b7akeki bokra lama awsal eljam3a nighty (good night) [I can come only tomorrow, because the day after tomorrow I have holiday, anyway, I'll speak to you tomorrow when I reach the university]

These examples show clearly that codeswitching between English and Arabic in Romanized script is used overwhelmingly in mobile text messages and social media. They indicate an emerging sociolinguistic repertoire of the new generation in the Arab world that can't be ignored when teaching Arabic as a second and foreign language.

Moreover, a number of recent studies have confirmed the excessive use of English loanwords and Arabic-English code-switching among college students and in daily conversations (Al Btoush, 2014; Alnamer & Salam Alnamer, 2018; Hazaymeh, 2004). Although, these studies do not directly support the notion of utilizing L1 in the Arabic foreign language classroom, the findings stress the need to rethink L2 language policy in the foreign language classroom due to both the sociolinguistic developments in the Arab World and the growing power of English as a global language. The implications of these studies on teaching Arabic as a foreign language in an English-speaking country suggest that the methodology should not be dismiss the current sociolinguistic environments of Arabic and its speakers.

## USING L1 IN THE L2 CLASSROOM

The predominant teaching philosophy of L2 is that students should receive as much exposure as possible to L2 in the L2 classroom, which has meant restricting the use of L1 to rare situations in order to create an L2 immersion learning environment

(Krashen, 1982). However, recently, there is a growing call for the use of the L1 in the L2 classroom that is supported by field studies and theory (Al Masaeed, 2013, 2016; Anderson, 2008; Cummins, 2007).

The supporters of the use of only L2 in the L2 classroom believe that the use of the L1 would hinder learners' acquisition of the target language. For them, the use of the L1 in the L2 classroom would re-introduce the Grammar Translation Method to the L2 classroom, by habitually and intensively practicing translation from L2 to L1 (De la Campa & Nassaji, 2009; Polio & Duff, 1994), therefore the best practice would be separating the L1 from the learning process of L2.

Supporters of using L1 in the L2 classroom maintain that the process of L2 acquisition cannot be separated from the students' first language in that when learning a second language L1 and L2 are always intertwined in the students' minds. They argue that it would not be natural to separate them in the L2 classroom (Cook, 2001), and that the use of L1 in the L2 classroom would be beneficial since it provides a cognitive scaffolding support that allows for the learning of new concepts of the target language.

Moreover, the advocates of using L1 in the L2 classroom argue that this method would be beneficial to the whole learning experience. For example, this practice encourages more casual relationships between the students and their classmates and between the students and instructors, increases classroom participation and facilitates the exchange of knowledge and ideas (Arthur & Martin, 2006). It is important to note that advocates of the use of L1 in L2 classrooms suggest that the amount of L1 use should be judiciously and systematically limited (Cook, 2001). For example, Auerbach (1993) lists the following areas in which L1 should be used: negotiation of the syllabus and the lesson; record keeping; classroom management; scene setting; language analysis; presentation of rules governing grammar, phonology, morphology, and spelling; discussion of cross-cultural issues; instructions or prompts; explanations of errors; and assessment of comprehension (Auerbach, 1993, p. 21).

Others, including Forman (2007) and documents that teacher's own view on his use of both Thai and English in the classroom. It was found that the teacher employed considerable skill and creativity in making English accessible to this group of low-proficiency learners. Data also highlight the role of the learner's first culture and language in learning a second language, through which the meanings of the second language become embedded in those of the first. Following discussion of this EFL episode, the paper returns to document some strategies for L1 use which have been found to be successful in the Australian ESL context. Introduction This paper is in two parts. In the first, I analyse a short episode of bilingual pedagogy taken

from a Thai EFL context. The relevance of this episode to Australian ESL teachers lies not so much in the teacher's skilful layering of two languages as in what it reveals of the learner's mind; in particular, of the ways in which the student's first language and culture represent the foundation for all subsequent language learning. In the second part of this paper, I revert to the Australian ESL context in order to briefly document some strategies and resources which I have used as a monolingual ESL teacher with multilingual classes in the ESL context. L1 and L2 use Ellis (this volume and Cummins (2007) suggest that prior use of L1 in group work or pair work can be a useful foundation for the later use of L2. In such activities, students will be able to tackle complicated tasks in L1 and share their ideas and experiences, and then be able to discuss or present their project in L2 in either spoken or written form.

Students' perspectives of the use of L1 in the L2 classroom, seem to be mixed, with some being for the idea while others are against it. Research findings reveal that students with a lower proficiency in the L2 have a more positive attitude toward using L1 in the L2 classroom, where those with a higher proficiency in L2 prefer to rely less on L1 (Bhooth, Azman, & Ismail, 2014; Norman, 2008).

The current study aims to provide support or the argument that the use of L1 in L2 Arabic language classrooms, is a potential source of assistance to both teachers and learners of Arabic as a foreign language. Additionally, the present study provides evidence that the attitudes of college-level students in Arabic L2 classrooms toward the use of English, their first language, is positive and in line with their learning needs and expectations. This study argues that the use of English, the students' L1 language in the Arabic foreign language classroom would facilitate the learning and teaching process and further improve students' attitudes and motivations toward learning Arabic.

## METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

### Participants

The study took place in a small private university on the east coast of the United States throughout the spring semester of 2018. The Arabic language is offered as a foreign language for 4 semesters, and each class meets weekly for 3 hours with the Arabic instructor and one extra hour with the Arabic Teaching Assistant. Sixteen undergraduate students of the Arabic language participated in this study. Ten of the participants were in their second semester of beginning Arabic, while the other 6 students were in their fourth semester, or second semester of intermediate Arabic. All the participants are native speakers of English except one who is an international



student from a non-Arabic speaking country. The sample contained only one heritage student who had some exposure to Arabic at home and in Sunday school prior to attending college.

The study was carried out in two stages, the first stage having been designed to expose and familiarize the students with the teaching method of judiciously integrating L1, English, in the Arabic L2 classroom. The second stage of the study was carried out at the end of the semester at which time a short survey was used to assess the students' perspectives on the use of L1 in Arabic L2 classroom.

## Stage One

To familiarize the students with the use of the L1 in the Arabic L2 classroom, students were asked to judiciously and systematically incorporate L1, English, in class whether for communication with the instructor or with their classmates in group work. The students were also encouraged to use English in their assignments such as in daily homework, recordings, group skits, writing assignments, written quizzes, oral exams and the final test. The use of English was restricted to single words or to very short phrases as is seen in native speakers' codeswitching production. In class, and particularly in group work students were given the liberty to discuss and share ideas in English prior to the use of Arabic in order to facilitate communication and to better accomplish the learning task.

To provide systematic support of L1 integration in the L2 Arabic classroom, the instructor incorporated English in a regular manner within the Arabic framework production. The incorporation of English was limited to single words, particularly unfamiliar or new Arabic words, and in some cases when English words were used the Arabic equivalent meaning was provided. The instructor also used English when there was a need to give instruction, communicate a grammatical topic or introduce a controversial cultural aspect. On a weekly basis, the instructor assessed the use of English vocabulary used in the classroom and in assignments, and used the results to provide the students with new vocabulary lists via the Quizlet teaching aid. Throughout the semester the instructor also provided the students with vocabulary lists of English words used in everyday language in the Arab world (see Chart 1). Some of these commonly used words were listed in their original spelling, and some were phonologically modified to match Arabic phonology.

**Chart 1.** List of English vocabulary used in Everyday Arabic

English	Arabic	Latin transliteration of Arabic
Liberal	ليبرالي	lebiraali
Democracy	ديمقراطية	dimuqraaTiyeh
Democratic	ديمقراطي	dimuqraaTi
Nazi	نازي	naazi
Dictator	ديكتاتور	diktaator
Fascism	فاشية	faashiyeh
Fascist	فاشي	faashi
Feminist	فيمني ست	Feminist
Strategy	استراتيجية	istratijiyyeh
Consulate	قنصلية	qunSuliyeh

The following writing assignment exemplifies how students used English in written assignments:

*Excerpt 1:*

Falls Niagara Falls مطاعم طيب وأكلت في Niagara Falls انا شفت وانا شفت مع والدتي. انا شفت  
 Niagara Falls حلو وكثير كبير. السنة الماضية ابن عمي جيم وزوجته بام had their عرس في  
 [I traveled in my car with my mom. I saw Niagara Falls and ate delicious [food - MI]  
 in restaurants. Niagara Falls beautiful and very big. Last year my cousin Jim and his  
 wife Pam had their wedding in Niagara Falls.]

This excerpt was taken from the second writing assignment of one of the beginning II students. As you can see the student did not know how to say "had their" in Arabic and instead used the English counterpart.

*Excerpt 2:*

المشكلات مع حقوق المثليين في أمريكا يوجد في الأشخاص في بلدة صغيرة و في عيلة متدين. (religious).  
 المثليين ممكن احياناً

يُقتلوا انفسهم (themselves) عشان يروا انفسهم مثل الشيطان او هم ما يُعاملوا كإنسا

[The problems with gays' rights in America that there are (some of them live) in small town(s) and religious family(s). Gays sometimes may kill themselves because they see themselves as evil and (because) they are not treated as human (s)]

This excerpt was taken from one of the students' writing assignments in the intermediate II class. The student used two words in English 'religious' and 'themselves' which she did not know, but was able to provide the Arabic translation for both words: 'متدين' and 'أنفسهم'. It is interesting to note that the second time the student used the word 'themselves/ أنفسهم' was in Arabic. This practice demonstrates judicious use of English and the mindful process of vocabulary retention.

*Excerpt 3:*

ال menu من مطعم إيطالي عندهم بيتزا وحلويات و deliver لبيتي

[The menu from an Italian restaurant, they have pizza and desserts and deliver to my home.]

Excerpt 3 was a description of a picture of a menu in the final exam. The students were asked to describe a number of pictures in Arabic using at least 8 words. As can be seen above the student used two English words to describe a picture of a restaurant menu. The first word, 'menu,' is a very common English word used in everyday Arabic. The second word is a new verb 'deliver' that had not been introduced in class yet. It is worth mentioning here that the student used codeswitching between Arabic and English in a way that resembles native speakers' codeswitching production. Native speakers of Arabic tend to use the Arabic definite article 'al/ ال' in front of English nouns as the student did in this excerpt.

## Stage Two

Toward the end of the semester the students were asked to fill out a short anonymous survey. The survey asked students for their opinions on using L1 in the Arabic L2 classroom, and how using L1 improved their performance in the classroom and their overall language proficiency. The survey included 11 statements that students were asked to rate on a scale of 0 to 5, where 0 represented strong disagreement and 5 indicated strong agreement with the statement. The survey included two statements designed to elicit the students' perspectives on personal and class participation: 'Using English in Arabic classes increased my participation in the class-

room', and 'Using English in Arabic classes increased my classmates' participation in class.' Two statements inquired about exchanging ideas and communication: 'Using English in Arabic classes helped in exchanging ideas between my classmates and me', and 'Using English in Arabic classes improved the communication between the students and the instructor.' One statement was included to measure the students' learning awareness: 'Using English in Arabic classes made me more aware of my learning needs in Arabic,' and two statements inquired about improving specific language skills: 'Using English in Arabic classes improved my writing composition in Arabic,' and 'Using English in Arabic classes improved my listening skills in Arabic.' Four statements had to do with attitudes and motivation such as 'English words used in everyday Arabic motivated me to learn everyday Arabic', and 'It's important to me to pronounce English words used in everyday Arabic with an Arabic accent.' The survey also included the following four open questions: 'If you were given the ability to decide whether to use English in Arabic classes or not, what would your choice be and why? Can you give an example(s) of how using English in the Arabic classroom enhanced your learning experience? Do you have any suggestions on how to use English in the Arabic class to enhance your learning experience? In the event that you do not support the use of English in the Arabic class, would you please elaborate on your opinion?'

## RESULTS

Sixteen undergraduate students of Arabic filled out the survey. Ten (62.5%) of the participants were in the beginning II class, second semester in Arabic, and 6 (37.5%) of the participants were in the intermediate II class, fourth semester in Arabic. With regard to gender distribution, 62.5% were females and 37.5% were males.

### a. Student and Class Participation

Table 1 shows the students believed that the use of L1, English, increased their participation in the Arabic classroom. About 81% stated that they agreed or strongly agreed that the use of L1 increased their participation. Moreover, 100% of the participants stated that they agreed or strongly agreed that the use of L1 increased their classmates' participation in class.

**Table 1.** Students' Perspective on Participation

Statement	0-2	3	4	5	Total
Using English in Arabic classes increased my participation in the classroom	0%	18.75%	43.75%	37.50%	16
Using English in Arabic classes increased my classmates' participation in class	0%	0%	62.50%	37.50%	16

\*0 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree.

**b. Exchange of Ideas and Communication**

Students indicated strong agreement with the statements concerning the use of L1, English, the exchange of ideas in the classroom and communication between the students and the instructor. As can be seen in Table 2, nearly 94% of the participants indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that the use of English helped them in exchanging ideas with their classmates, and 100% of them agreed or strongly agreed that the communication between students and instructor was improved due to the use of English.

**Table 2.** Students' Perspective Exchange Ideas and Communication

	Statement	0-2	3	4	5	Total
2	Using English in Arabic classes helped in exchanging ideas between my classmates and me	0%	6.25%	43.75%	50.0%	16
4	Using English in Arabic classes improved the communication between the students and the instructor	0%	0%	50.0%	50.0%	16

\*0 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree.

### c. Awareness of Learning Needs

Students' awareness of their learning needs is another factor that seems to be affected by the use of L1. About 80% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that the use of English in the Arabic classroom made them more aware of their learning needs in Arabic.

**Table 3.** Students' Perspective on learning needs' awareness

Statement	0	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Using English in Arabic classes made me more aware of my learning needs in Arabic	0%	0%	6.25%	12.50%	25.00%	56.25%	16

\*0 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree.

### d. Learning Skills

The survey included two statements having to do with whether or not the use of the L1, English, in the L2 classroom has improved the students' writing and listening skills. The responses, as shown in Table 4, indicated that the students do believe that the use of English improved their writing composition and listening skill to some extent. Fifty percent of the students slightly agreed that their writing composition has improved and 37.5% agreed or strongly agreed with that statement. Nearly 44% slightly agreed that the use of English has improved their listening skills and 37.5% of them agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

**Table 4.** Learning Skills' improvement

Statement	0	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Using English in Arabic classes improved my writing composition in Arabic	0%	0%	12.50%	50.00%	25.00%	12.50%	16
Using English in Arabic classes improved my listening skills in Arabic	0%	0%	18.75%	43.75%	18.75%	18.75%	16

\*0 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree.

## Motivation and Attitude toward Using L1

With regard to students' motivations and attitudes toward the use of the L1, English, in everyday Arabic and outside of the classroom, students expressed positive attitudes for both. As can be seen in Table 5:

**Table 5.** Motivation and Attitude of Using L1

Knowing the English words used in everyday Arabic motivated me to learn everyday Arabic	0%	0%	0%	13.33%	40.00%	46.67%	15
It's important to know the English words used in everyday Arabic	0%	0%	0%	12.50%	31.25%	56.25%	16
It's important to me to pronounce English words used in everyday Arabic with an Arabic accent	0%	0%	0%	31.25%	37.50%	31.25%	16
Being able to communicate with Arabic native speakers with a mixture of Arabic and English would satisfy me	0%	0%	18.75%	18.75%	25.00%	37.50%	16

\*0 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree.

Nearly 87% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that it is important to know the English words used in everyday Arabic and that it motivated them to learn everyday Arabic. Moreover, nearly 69% of the participants expressed the belief that it is important to utter the English words in an Arabic accent. Finally, 62.5% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that communicating with native speakers in a mixture of Arabic and English would satisfy them.

## How, Why and When to Use L1 in Arabic L2 Classrooms

Regarding the questions of how, why and when to incorporate L1 in the Arabic L2 classroom, the survey contains two open questions: 'If you were given the ability to decide whether to use English in Arabic classes or not, what would your choice be and why? And 'Do you have any suggestions as to how to use English in the Arabic class to enhance your learning experience?'

The majority of the participants expressed very positive opinions with regard to the use of L1, English, in the Arabic L2 classroom. Yet, they seemed to believe that the use of English should be limited to supplementing the missing Arabic words they do not know. The following is a sample of what the students believe about how to incorporate L1, English in the Arabic L2 classroom:

'I think using English to supplement missing Arabic vocabulary...'

'I would use English during Arabic class. We only learn specific vocabulary and there are certain English words that we have to use in our everyday life that we don't know in Arabic...'

'I would choose to use English because it's a difficult language to start coming from English and without something to help students keep up it's easy to get lost in beginning levels'

'I would use some English to help fill in for words I did not know in Arabic while using as much Arabic as I can.'

The students provided several reasons for the use of L1, English, in the Arabic L2 classroom. Among these reasons are facilitating conversation, reducing fear of participation and helping to explain complicated concepts and grammar:

'Using English..... helps move conversations along. I find that sometimes when I don't know a word in Arabic it really stops my thought process and makes me panic a little so being able to use an English word and move past that road block to continue my thought really helps.'

'I would choose to use English in order to convey the meaning of some words that we do not know, which is the only way I think one can effectively learn another language.'

'... I have typically been afraid to participate because I may not have known all the words that I wanted to say but by being able to use English words to replace words that I don't know yet I feel like I am getting a lot better at participating which helps my Arabic speaking skills a lot more. Using English words used in everyday Arabic also helped me to remember certain phrases better.'

'It makes it easier for students to ask questions that they otherwise wouldn't ask.'

'It helps me to communicate better with my classmates and teachers and I feel more comfortable asking questions because it makes me more aware of what words I want to use, and therefore, which words I should focus on learning.'

'It made me more confident to ask questions without worrying how to phrase it.'

'Using English words in class discussions made it easier for me to communicate with my peers. For example, we had a debate in class where we were allowed to use a few English words. This made it easier for us to communicate during the discussion, and then we learned the English words after.'

'During speaking activities it was more beneficial to my Arabic acquisition to use a few English words rather than assuming I do not know how to say any of the sentence



in Arabic. It was also helpful in my writing to look up words and underline them so I am learning vocab that I care about.'

With regard to the question of when to use L1 in the L2 classroom, one of the students recommended that the transition from English to Arabic should 'happen naturally. As we learn more, we'll gain confidence to use more Arabic than English.' Others thought that L1 should be used in 'the lower levels but after 102 (beginning II) only use Arabic.' These results confirm other studies that found that students with higher levels of proficiency prefer to use less L1 in the L2 classroom.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of this research clearly show that students of Arabic as a foreign language favor the use of L1, English, in the L2 classroom. These results are consistent with previous studies (Bhooth, Azman & Ismail, 2014; Norman, 2008). The data also confirms that although the students are open to the use of L1 in the Arabic L2 classroom they expressed a preference for judicial and limited use of L1. The majority of the participants stated that the use of L1 in the L2 classroom should be limited to using English words in the place of Arabic words that the students do not know, or to communicate concepts or grammar (Krashen, 1982). As other studies confirmed, the participants pointed out several benefits of incorporating L1 in L2 classroom, one of them being that the use of L1 helped to increase their participation and improved communication between the students themselves and between the students and the instructor (Arthur and Martin, 2006). Moreover, the students expressed their belief that the use of the L1 creates a less formal relationship and therefore, a less intimidating learning experience that may encourage more students to take part in the learning process (Arthur and Martin, 2006).

Another aspect revealed by this study is that the students are interested in learning more about the sociolinguistic status of English in everyday Arabic conversations, and are more interested in the lives of native Arabic speakers. The study shows that the spread of English as a global language and part of the linguistic repertoire of the younger Arab generation seems to have a positive effect on the students' learning experiences, motivations and attitudes.

Although the pool of this study is relatively small, the participants' responses show that they are aware of the scaffolding role of L1 in the acquisition of L2 (Al Masaeed, 2016). This finding is a valid and important argument against the separation of L1 from the L2 classroom.

To conclude, this study demonstrates that the use of L1 in the L2 classroom is useful and beneficial to the students. It enhances their participation, increases their focus on their own learning needs, and cultivates a more informal relationship between student and instructor. It is important to stress that the use of L1 in the L2 classroom should be done as judiciously and systematically as possible while at the same time allowing the transition from L1 to L2 to happen naturally and mindfully.

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