Teachers ' Attitudes Towards the Use of Arabic (L1) in Primary EFL Classrooms in Iraq

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ABSTRACT:
Having recourse to learners' mother tongue in foreign language (FL) classes has been a controversial topic in the field of teaching English as a foreign language for a long time. There has been a great deal of claims and counterclaims that revolve around the pedagogical appropriateness of teacher usage of learners' mother tongue in foreign language teaching. Recently, the findings of English as a foreign language (EFL) research cast doubt on the rationales of proponents of exclusive use of FL in EFL setting; and researchers come up with the reality that a rational use of first language (L1) is not only inevitable but also profitable in classrooms where teachers and learners share the same L1. Dearth of knowledge on the pedagogical reality of this issue in Iraqi EFL contexts is worth exploring. This study aimed at highlighting English language teachers' attitudes towards using the learners' mother tongue (Arabic) in the EFL classrooms, seeking their viewpoints on the purposes for which Arabic could be used in English classes, and exploring their reasons for using it. For this end, the study was conducted on 50 EFL teachers teaching at public primary schools in Baghdad, using a questionnaire survey developed to fulfill the aim of the study. Findings of the obtained data demonstrate that teachers' overall attitudes towards occasional use of Arabic in EFL classrooms were positive; and they reported using Arabic for both teaching and classroom management purposes. Analysis of the data also indicates that all of the participants were inclined to switch to Arabic in their EFL classrooms for a number of reasons necessary to create a more comprehensible, motivational, relaxing, friendly, and supportive classroom environment for young learners and to save time and effort in overcrowded classes.
Keywords: Attitudes, (mother tongue/ first language/ native language), English as a second/foreign language, (target language / second language/ foreign language)

1- Introduction

The debate over the use of students' first language (L1) in English as a foreign/second Language (EFL/ESL) classes remains a topic of heated controversy (Brown, 2000, p. 195). Historically, the question of L1 use might be said to be as primitive as the antiquity of early language pedagogy, dating back to the era of the Grammar-Translation method to an L2 teaching during which the resort to the learner's L1 was a supreme didactic tool for language teaching for decades (Strens, 1983, p, 455). Across time it has not enjoyed the same popularity when it came to the learning of modern languages in the West. This change was mainly due to the advent of particular mainstream teaching methods. In fact, with the emergence of the Oral and Audio-lingual methods, which call for learning verbal communication in a way that resembles L1 acquisition, as well as the principles of the following humanistic and communicative methods the use of the L1 was discouraged or almost totally banned on the L2 pedagogical grounds. As a result, L1 use has been viewed to be counterproductive (Pennycook, 1994, p136), especially in settings where communicative language teaching is practiced (Brown, 2000, p. 16).

Searching the literature, it can be obvious the mother tongue (MT) was ignored in the past partially because it was thought that an "English only" policy is the one and only path to successful English acquisition for some ideological, linguistic and pedagogical reasons at the time. Moreover, this policy was readily accepted in L2 learning contexts where the teachers and the learners did not share the same first languages. Time was when teachers neither could speak nor did apprehend the need to speak their students' L1 (Phillipson, 1992, p188). In fact, this practice took place in English speaking countries where learners were mostly immigrants from non-English speaking countries or when expatriate English speaking teachers were teaching in EFL contexts. Besides, different linguists and scholars who have come up with new methods and approaches have advocated the English only orthodoxy without having a thorough study investigating the learners' as well as the teachers' points of view on the issue. What is more, they have not taken into the consideration that the main goals and needs of the FL learners in different contexts are subject to change over time, either. As a result, the use of L1 has become a matter of ongoing dispute.

Over the years, EFL methodology has witnessed a gradual move away from "English only" policy in favor of L1 use, especially, in FL learning environments where the justification of English only classroom is questionable on practical grounds as these classrooms mostly consist of students and teachers who share the same L1. Accordingly, the controversy that revolves around the pedagogical appropriateness of teacher usage of students' MT in FL teaching has gained researchers' attention worldwide. In this sense, Cook (2001) supports the novel trend stating that L1 use is a normal fact in a context where the teachers and learners have the same L1 and, then, he suggests that "it is time to open a door that has been firmly shut in language teaching for over 100 years, namely the systematic use of

the first language (L1) in the classroom" (p. 402). Cook (2002: p. 23) goes further to argue that "given the appropriate environment, two languages are as normal as two lungs." Others have even gone as far as necessitating L1 use in the FL classroom (Schweers, 1999, p. 6). Similarly, some researchers (e.g., Forman, 2005) have called for a balanced policy, one in which both languages have the same rank of priority in contributing to the FL teaching-learning context, bearing in mind, the majority of those teaching English in today's world are non-native speaking teachers of English in contrast to what was in the past decades. (Hawks, 2001, p. 50)

Such a change in the demographic profile of EL teachers and their perspectives on the practical realities of the EFL classrooms seems to open trendy gates before EFL pedagogy and raises a necessity to conduct further studies in the light of various language contexts. In this line, many studies have been carried out to examine the perspectives on the issue in different contexts with different languages in the last few decades. Nevertheless, to the researchers' best knowledge, no attention has been paid to the teachers' perceptions of using L1 (Arabic) when teaching EFL at primary schools in Iraq although teachers' attitudes towards L1 use is worthy for the whole education system as they are directly involved in teaching and learning the TL . To Borg (2003, p. 81) and Moroney, et al. (2016, p. 244), teachers' opinions are believed to be crucial in shaping their practices in classrooms and, consequently, can contribute in shaping the education policy. Similarly, David Crystal (2003: p. 256) comments on the issue stating" Knowing about attitudes is an important aspect of evaluating the likely success of a language teaching program." This debated FL pedagogical orientation motivates the researcher to carry out a study on the issue in the Iraqi context to fill the gap in literature with this respect.

2- Aims of the Study

This study endeavors to contribute to lasting applied linguistics research which revolves around pedagogical appropriateness of L1 use in FL classrooms. Specifically, it investigates Iraqi public primary school EFL teachers' attitudes toward using Arabic (L1) to teach English in the city of Baghdad. In addition, the study attempts to explore the perceived functions as well as the reasons for doing so. More precisely, the study attempts to seek responses to the following inquiries:

1) What are Iraqi EFL teachers' attitudes toward using L1 (Arabic) in the English classrooms?
2) How often do teachers use Arabic in their classrooms?
3) For what purposes do teachers use Arabic in the English classrooms?
4) What are Iraqi EFL teachers' perceived reasons for using Arabic in their classrooms?

3- Significance of the Study

Along with the findings emerging from teachers' voices, it is hoped the findings of the current study will contribute to the growing literature on the use of learners' L1 in FL classes by shedding lights on what pedagogical stance EL teachers in Iraq take with regard to Arabic as the L1 in EFL

classes. Moreover, this study may function as an additional reference study for researchers who wish to search more in this area.

4- Literature Review

Historically, the exclusion or inclusion of learners' L1 in ESL/EFL settings has been a disputable question and a topic of attention of many applied linguists and researchers for ages. Several debates regarding the positive and negative effects of L1 in L2 teaching have been put forward, resulting in two camps with two contrary stances. At the end of the nineteenth century, with the emergence of the Direct Method to second language teaching, it was believed that L1 has a detrimental effect on the learning of a second language, thus, there was a strong call to ban students' native language use in language classes. While such practice is supported by a number of proponents of target language-only policy, (e.g. Krashen, 1982; Macdonald, 1993; Ellis, 2005), there are others (e.g. Tang ,2002; Nation, 2003) who argue a judicious use of L1 is not only inevitable, but also a fruitful source which assists teaching and learning the target language. Both the proponents and opponents of TL-only policy in SL/FL settings ground their justifications in various practical arguments.

4-1 The Stance for and against L1 in English language teaching: A Brief Account

According to TL-only view holds that optimal learning of a new language is a result of exclusive use of that language in the L2 classroom (Wringe, 1989, p9). That is to say, TL should be used for all purposes even when there are no definitive reasons for its use (Hawks, 2001, p47). This view primarily derives its reasoning from various arguments which have been put forward in the literature by some linguists and researchers (e.g., Eldridge, 1996; Krashen 1982; Krashen & Terrell, 1995) to conduct the class only in TL.

The main argument against the use of L1 seems to derive from the principle of the Natural and Berlitz Methods for adult language learners which underlines learning an L2 should resemble acquiring one's L1 (Phillipson, 1992, p191) without falling back on the learners' L1, justifying that children do not have another language to resort to when they acquire their L1, thus, L2 learning should not depend on another language.

As all normal children acquire the language spoken around them through listening, imitating, and interacting with speakers of the language, so, developing children linguistic skills depends greatly on their exposure to the spoken language (Lewis, 1993, p54). This innate fact of L1 learning gave way to avoid the use of the L1 to maximize exposure to the L2/TL as being the determining factor for learning that language successfully (Yu, 2001, p.176). This view is supported by Krashen who believe that learners learn L2 better in a learning environment where it is spoken. He states that "there is a definite relationship between comprehensible input in L2 and proficiency level" (Krashen, 1985, p14). In support of the view, Phillipson (1992) asserts that "The more English is taught, the better the results." (p.185). Similarly, Gatenby 1950 (cited in Phillipson, 1992, p.185) claims that the language being studied should be the mode of communication in

the lesson. In this line, Ellis (2005) who is one of the opponents of L1 use in the EFL classroom explains that "To maximize the use of (L2) in the classroom ideally means that the (L2) needs to become the medium as well as the object of instruction."(p.10). He furthers that "Everything the teacher does or says in the (L2) classroom provides an opportunity for learning the new language" (Ibid), and since teachers are the only useful linguistic models and source of input in the TL available for their students in EFL settings, it is then rational to argue that maximizing the TL in the classroom is a promising practice (Turnbull and Arnett, 2002, p.205).

This argument implies mainly the exclusion of L1 in TL classes as it also could result in some problems which would hinder learning. Fear of too much reliance on L1 constitutes one of these commonest problems of L1 use (Atkinson, 1987; Cole, 1998). Regular resort to L1 in FL classes may become as a matter of routine for learners and teachers whenever they encounter difficulties resulting in seeing it as only channel to learn TL which likely become a barrier to learn TL in an appropriate way. Another view holds L1 use deprives learners of profitable opportunities to interact in L2 (Ellis, 2005, p.10). One more view against resorting to L1 holds that L1 use promotes interference with L2 learning (Pegenaute 1996: 114) and this probably brings about 'error transference' (Pacek, 2003) which possibly results in fossilization (Martínez 1997: 156), thereby L1 hinders learning.

However, the argument suggesting that L1 acquisition is comparable to L2 learning has been criticized because L2 learning and L1 acquisition actually differ in a number of ways. Martínez and Olivera (2003: p. 196) illustrate many differences between these two processes stating "The acquisition of the L1 is innate, subconscious, takes place effortlessly and fulfills the basic human need for communication, whereas the acquisition of an L2 takes place voluntarily, consciously, requires great effort and is not a basic need as the L2 learner does already have his/her L1 to communicate with."

In addition, Macaro (1997) puts forth that language learning is correlated with psychological development, thus, equating the psychological development phases of an infant with those of adolescents and adults, who past the language acquisition stage and whose perception of the world is mostly through the L1, is not potential. Cook (2001) rejects drawing an analogy between child language acquisition and adult L2 learning attributing the reason to the nature of L2 learners; and he clarifies his point by stating they have "more mature minds, greater social development, a large short-term memory capacity, and other differences from L1- only young children" (p. 406). He goes further to deny the argument asserting: "If the first language is to be avoided in teaching, this ban must be based on other reasons than the way in which children learn their first language" (2008, p. 182).

Even thinking that maximum exposure to the target language brings about learning has also been criticized. Banning students' L1 for the sake of maximizing students' exposure to the TL, according to Auerbach (1993), is not necessarily effective in producing successful result. Actually, there is no

evidence affirms that teaching exclusively in the TL guarantees a better learning of the TL (Pachler & Field, 2001, p85). Without doubt the quantity of exposure is a salient factor, but other factors such as the quality of the material, practiced teachers, good methods of teaching, learner's motivation and proficiency level all go hand in hand and together contribute in fostering TL learning too (Phillipson, 1992, p210). Thus, it is concluded that teaching in the TL does promote better achievement, but teaching exclusively in the TL will not insure learning among the learners (Pachler & Field, 2001, p101), contrarily, banning the L1 may hinder learning (Auerbach, 1993, p16).

The second argument made in the literature to avoid the use of L1 in L2 learning and teaching is the notion that the L1 and the TL should be kept rigidly apart in students' mind rather than linking them; and learners must develop the ability to think in the TL (Cook, 2001 p.181). This view is inspired by the belief that developing successful TL acquisition depends greatly on perceiving the two languages as separate linguistic entities. To Cook (2001b: p. 406), one main reason underlining this claim is to avoid L1 interference because where the systems of two languages are different, negative transfer might occur. This is also mentioned by Larsen-Freeman (2000: p. 42) who is one of the advocates of the TL only policy stating "the native language and the target language have separate linguistic system; they should be kept apart so that the students' native language interferes as little possible with the students' attempt to acquire the target language." In this vein, Harbord (1992) supports separating the two languages, arguing that overusing L1 makes learners believe that there are 1 to 1 word equivalents between the languages or they begin to assume a word for word translation equivalence is a convenient tool. Accordingly, using L1 to teach TL is seen as a barrier to successful language learning; therefore, it should be abandoned at all costs.

Yet this claim has also been censured for some rationales. To Kelleher (2013: p. 2041) excluding of L1 is unobtainable as it is impossible to stop students thinking in L1 even if they are not allowed to speak in it. This point is supported by Cook (2001) who states that whether language teachers want native language or not, it is always present in the minds of FL learners; and any trail to compartmentalize the two languages in the mind will fail because of the fact that the compartments are connected (p. 403). In contrast, L1 can be considered as a tool for language acquisition and to solve learning and communication problems. As such, Duff (1989, p. 6) defends the importance of L1 saying that "We all have a mother tongue, or first language. This shapes our way of thinking and to some extent our use of the foreign language". Stern aliens with the others arguing that it is impossible to keep L1 and L2 apart and concludes that: "the L1-L2 connection is an undisputable fact of life, whether we like it or not the new knowledge is learnt on the basis of the previously acquired language" (1992, p. 282).

The third argument to avoid L1 use in L2 learning holds that learners should be exposed to authentic TL for communication purposes which is by nature restricted if the students' L1 is used. This view is parallel to the notion which is supported by Krashen's Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1985, p. 14). It calls for learning L2 through maximized L2 input. This is conditioned with providing a rich L2 environment where learners can get maximum opportunities to hear, interact and communicate in L2, and, accordingly, it can likely help demonstrate the importance of the L2. (Cook, 2001, p, 412)

Once more, despite supporting the importance of exposing learners to as much TL as possible, the former claim has also been subjected to criticism for some reasons. In this regard, Cook (2001) emphasizes that the notion does not challenge L1 use but calls for maximizing TL use rather than banning L1. Similarly, Turnbull (2001: p. 535) also objects to the claim stating "A principle that promotes maximum teachers' use of the target language acknowledges that (L1) and (L2) can exist simultaneously." Moreover, Nation (1997) emphasizes L1 contribution to TL comprehension and states L1 use possesses a "small, but important role to play in communicating meaning and content" (p. 214). In addition, Macaro (cited in Pan & Pan, 2010, p. 89) indicates that the avoidance of L1 causes extra dependence on input modification of utterances which might results in negative impacts on interaction, creating less realistic communication, and reducing the lexical diversity.

As a matter of fact, none of the three above-mentioned arguments against L1 use in L2 classes could be empirically proven by research. Macaro (2001) emphasizes there is no single empirical study so far documents a claim denying the value of L1 or excluding it in TL classes would necessarily enhance learning efficiency. Moreover, Auerbach (1993) aliens with others and argues against L2- only policy stating, "The rationale used to justify English only in the classroom is neither conclusive nor pedagogically sound" (p.15).

Consequently, despite dominance of TL- only movement on the ground of EFL/ ESL pedagogy, a growing body of literature began to issue questioning the exclusion of the learners' L1 from the TL classes (e.g. Atkinson 1987; Auerbach 1993; Nation 2003; Macaro 2005; Cook 2001; Franklin 1990; Tang 2002) and assist Levine (2003) who rejects imposing sanction against L1 use in the classroom (p. 344). By and large, forbidding L1 use is regarded detrimental to the learners and the learning process (Chaudron, in Polio, 1994, p159). On contrast, Effectiveness of L1 is also recommended in the literature to serve as a supportive and facilitating tool in learning the TL and to be used whenever the situation necessitates (Tang, 2002, p. 39). Thus, Weschler recommends "use English where possible and L1 where necessary" believing that the two languages go hand in hand together to enhance teaching learning process and trying to eliminate this process will only have negative consequences (Harbord, 1992, p351) and impede learning.

Indeed, apart from challenging the imperative role of TL- only method, several researchers and scholars have validated L1 use and reported on a series of benefits it could bring to the classroom (e.g., Atkinson, 1987; Auerbach, 1993; Harbord, 1992; Harmer, 2007; Liao, 2006; Nation, 2003; Cook, 2001; Schweers, 1999; Critchely, 2002; Pan and Pan, 2010; Wills, 1981). Reviewing related literature, one can recognize that a reasonable use of the L1 during the teaching-learning process of the TL can fulfill these purposes, among other ones:

- Explain L2 grammar rules explicitly.
- Facilitate conveying and learning of new words and sentences.
- Check the comprehension of contents, tasks, and activities.
- Explain and correct learners' errors.
- Reduce affricative barrier levels in students.
- Serve giving feedback
- Save time and effort
- Elicit language
- Manage the class
- Be useful to explain test instructions
- Make comparison between L1 and L2
- Establish a good rapport in the classroom
- Foster the sense of security on students' part
- Assist to organize the class
- discussing classroom methodology
- Develop useful learning strategies.
- Focus students' attention
- Give instructions and set up pair and group work
- Enhance the autonomy of students during tasks and activities.
- Give the students cognitive support to be able to explore the language
- Encourage students to initiate and participate in meaningful communication
- Foster students' motivation and involvement in various classroom activities

In conclusion, L1 use in the TL classroom has empirical postulate in its favor proposing that proper and rational use of L1 can be very beneficial to fulfill some specific purposes to boost foreign language learning and that considerable attention and research should be focused on it (Atkinson, 1987, p241).

5- Related Studies Review

As a result of these debates, researches over the last decades has witnessed a great shift in the perceptions on the benefit of L1 in TL learning particularly after most of the claims against L1 use were blamed for not being proven by research. The movement in favor of L1 use in the language classroom has grown and there is now a belief by some that proper and reasonable use of L1 could be a potential resource for teachers to fulfill some specific purposes to enhance FL learning ultimately. Besides, it can be noticed that survey research findings on L1 use in FL classrooms reveal

positive attitudes among teachers as well as students towards L1 use and its benefits in language learning. In this regard, Auerbach (1993), states "When the native language is used, practitioners, researchers and learners consistently report positive results."(p.18) In this sense, for example, a study conducted by Schweers (1999) revealed 88.7% of Spanish students studying English desired L1 use in the class seeing it facilitate learning. Students also desired up to 39% of class time to be spent in L1. In the same context, Patti (1994) carried out a study examining 21 college teachers' attitudes toward the L1 use. The obtained results indicated that 71 % of the participants reported that all ESL teachers at the college should know and use some L1 (Spanish); and a quick use of L1 would save time.

Several studies have provided teachers with the opportunity to share their opinions on the relevance of L1 use in FL classes In Turkey. For instance, Kayaoğlu (2012) conducted an exploratory study with 44 student teachers at a state university in Turkey. Using questionnaire and interview, the researcher explored English teachers' perceptions about the use of L1 in L2 classes. The findings reveal teachers awareness of the potential advantages of L1 use and the more they get experienced, the more they tend to systematize its use in their classes. In another questionnaire and interview based study, Paker and Karaağaç (2015) elicited responses of 20 teachers of English and 286 students on effectiveness of L1 use. In the light of the data obtained, the researchers concluded that teachers and students advocate importance of TL use; nevertheless they do not deny their need to mother tongue whenever necessary. Likewise, Sali (2014) conducted a study to investigate viewpoints of secondary school teachers of English on the functions of L1 (Turkish) in EFL classes through both observations and semi-structured interviews. The obtained results demonstrated that teachers used L1 for academic and managerial purposes.

In support the notion of effectiveness of L1 in FL classes, Ma (2009) carried out a study in an Adult Migrant English Program classroom in Australia to study the attitudes of adult learners and an ESL teacher towards their L1 (Chinese) use. The obtained data revealed that participants acknowledged effectiveness of L1 use and it was counted as a precious pedagogical and cognitive source. In another study examining the attitudes of the students and teachers toward using Chinese in the EFL classroom, Tang (2002) found that L1 promotes the process of the foreign language teaching and learning. Students preferred to use Chinese since it enhanced their comprehension of new concepts and vocabulary items, while teachers reported effectiveness of L1 in the EFL classroom. He also presented a list of potential applications of L1 as: classroom management, language analysis, presenting rules that govern grammar, discussing cross cultural issues, giving instructions, and checking for comprehension.

The same satisfaction reflected by many teachers and /or students has been documented in other FL contexts, for example, Anh (2010) used both questionnaire and semi-structured interview instruments to explore Vietnamese university teachers' attitudes towards using Vietnamese in EFL classrooms. Collected data revealed all respondents were in favor of the

judicious use of L1 in EFL classes. They affirmed its supportive role to assist teaching in their classrooms. In the same vein, Dujimovic (2014) conducted a study in the Croatian context. The data were collected through questionnaires. The results showed effectiveness of translating some words, concepts, or even the whole passage in learning a foreign language. The participated teachers affirmed the supportive and facilitating role Croatian plays in the EFL classes. They also reported their use of L for checking students' comprehension of the text. In Nigeria, Awopetu's (2016) experimental study showed great effectiveness of the mother tongue as a means of instruction in early childhood classroom in improving pupils' learning abilities. The result of the research asserted the direct correlation between the L1 used by the teacher and pupils' learning abilities. In their study, Mirza et al. (2012) disclosed that teachers of tertiary level switch to L1 (Bangla) in EL classes particularly when teaching complex grammar rules and new words and expressions, and giving instructions to students.

References to teachers' desired use of the L1 in class along with different justifications that the teachers have held for deploying the MT has been cited in a number of studies conducted in many Arabic speaking contexts as well. Among these studies, Al-Qadumi (2007) developed a questionnaire to investigate eighty teachers' attitudes towards using Arabic in the EFL classes in Qalqilya district. Results revealed that the participants preferred using Arabic in certain situations and whenever it was felt to be necessary to use it. In another similar research, holding interviews with EFL teachers and observing their classes, Al-Hadrami (as cited in Borg, 2008) investigated Omani English teachers' perceptions about the application of Arabic in English classroom. All participants showed their approval to the benefits of using Arabic in certain cases such as translating new words and concepts as well as for class management and instructional purposes. Three teachers were opposed to use it excessively. Along with other studies on the same topic, Al-Buraiki's (2008) study aimed at examining the attitudes of Omani teachers in basic education schools. Based on the findings, the participants' reported that L1 had a promising role to play in teaching young learners. They mentioned their preference to use Arabic to give instructions and explain new concepts and vocabularies. According to them, L1 use is a time-saving technique to clarify difficult or abstract concepts. Most teachers held that L1 use can also help students improve their language proficiency. Likewise in Saudi Arabia, Al-Shammari (2011) conducted a similar study at two Saudi technical colleges to examine teachers' and students' attitudes toward using Arabic in the English classrooms. The results indicated a balanced use of Arabic for clarification issues was supported by both teachers and learners, believing that it made the learning process more effective especially in developing learners' comprehension.

6- Research Methodology and Procedures
6. 1-The Sample

The participants of this study were randomly-selected 50 females EFL teachers from 21 public primary schools scattered in the city of Baghdad, Al-Risafa district. All of them diploma holders who were

graduated in Teachers Training Institutes with 5 years to more than 20 years of teaching experience. Their age ranged from (30) to (52); and all teachers reported that they speak Arabic as their L1.

6.2 -Data Instrument

To solicit data required to achieve the objectives of the study, a paper based questionnaire was applied since it "is relatively economical, has the same questions for all subjects, and can ensure anonymity" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 194). What is more, it is easy to circulate, gather, and interpret the needed information.

The questionnaire has been adapted from Alshammari's (2011) study which functioned as the basis in designing the one used to collect data for this study, Besides, one question and some items were adapted from (Tang, 2002) and extra items were added by the researcher in the light of literature review to be more suited to the general English teaching and learning setting in Iraq.

As a data collection instrument, the questionnaire consisted of two parts:

The first part explored teachers' demographic Information. It consisted of some items which mainly inquired into the teacher's age, teaching experience, L1, and academic qualification degree.

The second part consisted of 4 questions to discover teachers' attitudes toward using Arabic in the English classrooms, to explore the extent of their actual use of Arabic in the English classes, to identify the necessary occasions when they think L1 can be used, to determine the possible reasons behind their uses of the L1. The items were ordered as follow:

Question (1) consisted of a Yes/ No question employed to gain data about the teachers' perceived needs for the use of Arabic in the primary English classes.

Question (2) was constructed on a five point Likert- scale ranging from "Always" to "Never" in attempt to measure the extent of the teachers' actual use of Arabic in the English classes.

Question (3) was constructed with 12 items based on a five point Likert-scale to identify teachers' views of the necessary occasions to use Arabic in the English classrooms.

Question (4) was followed by 7 items to explore the possible reasons behind teachers' uses of Arabic in the English classrooms. The participants were asked to choose between two options to which they agreed or disagreed with each reason.

The content validity of the questionnaire was verified consulting a panel of two experts in applied linguistics and two researchers of the area. Taking their feedback into consideration, the required modifications were applied to the instrument. To get assurance of the readability and reliability of the questionnaire, the instrument was applied to a pilot sample embodying a randomly chosen group of 10 primary school EFL teachers who were not affiliated to the study sample before gathering data. The

finding suggested reliability, readability, clarity, and suitability of the questionnaire.

7- Data Collection and Data Analysis

Having randomly chosen the schools and participants, the researcher administered the written questionnaire in English to female subjects who had showed interest in taking part in the research through personal contact during the first semester of the academic year 2021-2022 to discover their attitudes toward using Arabic in the English classroom. The researcher administered to participants a brief orientation regarding the aims of this study. They were informed that the study was only for academic and research purposes. All of the questionnaire items answered by the study subjects in a quite frank and facilitating way. The survey took approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. After collecting data, the results were analyzed statistically by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences program (SPSS). The obtained frequencies of all items were converted to percentages to display the percentage of the results.

8- Results and Discussion

This study set out to contribute to the ongoing course of FL research in an attempt to attain a better comprehension of the role of FL learners' L1 in EFL settings. More specifically, the researcher scrutinized teachers' perceptions about employing learners' L1 (Arabic) in EFL classrooms and the occasions when they think Arabic should be used and their rationales for using it. At first, the respondents were asked to take a stance on the issue expressed in the first question "In your opinion, do you think that Arabic should be used in the English classrooms?" Surprisingly, the data collected revealed a positive overall attitude towards involvement of L1 in L2 classes as unanimously all the teachers believed that Arabic should be used in the English classrooms. Table 1 summarizes the percentages of participants' responses to question No. 1.

Table 1- Participants' attitudes toward the use of L1 (Arabic)

Statement	Yes		No	
	No.	%	No.	%
Do you think Arabic should be used in the English classrooms?	50	100%	0	0%
Total	50	100%	0	0%

The data were analyzed to uncover the teachers' attitudes towards the frequency of using L1 in English classes. The findings, as shown in Table 2, display that all study subjects were inclined to moderate use of L1 depending on the necessity of the occasion and context. More precisely, 76 % of the teachers preferred to use Arabic sometimes and 16% of them approved its rarely use in English classes; only 8% of the participants supported their usual recourse to Arabic in the classroom; whereas, no one chose the "never" and "always" options. Generally, this finding corresponds with those of previous studies mentioned earlier which similarly conclude

that participants hold favorable attitudes towards moderate L1 use in EFL classes.

Table 2   Frequency of L1 use viewed by teachers

Statement	Response	
	No.	%
How often do you use Arabic in your English classes?		
Always	0	0%
Usually	4	8%
Sometimes	38	76%
Rarely	8	16%
Never	0	0%

Table 3   Teachers' stances on the extent of Arabic use according the situations given in the questionnaire

	Options	Always		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	I use Arabic to:	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Explain new vocabulary words	10	20%	28	56%	10	20%	2	4%	-	-
2	Explain complex grammar rules	9	18%	26	52%	11	22%	4	8%	-	-
3	Check comprehension	6	12%	20	40%	18	36%	6	12%	-	-
4	Provide feedback to individuals	-	-	-	-	12	24%	25	50%	13	26%
5	Explain difficult and abstract concepts of a listening and reading text	9	18%	32	64%	9	18%	-	-	-	-
6	Give direction and instruction for activities, tasks, and Homework.	-	-	15	30%	25	50%	10	20%	-	-
7	Set and explain exam instructions	15	30%	19	38%	14	24%	2	4%	-	-
8	Praise pupils	-	-			11	22%	21	42%	18	36%
9	Manage the classrooms	-	-	12	24%	28	56%	10	20%	-	-
10	Call pupils' attention	-	-	3	6%	23	46%	17	34%	7	14%
11	Arrange for pair/ group work activities	-	-	2	4%	10	20%	21	42%	17	34%
12	Give administrative issues like course policies, announcements, attendance, etc.	21	42%	19	38%	8	16%	2	4%	-	-

The third question in the questionnaire sought to obtain the respondents' perspectives on the purposes specified in the questionnaire for which L1 should be used and to what extent it should be used while teaching English. Being permitted to tick multiple options, the participants were asked to respond to each purpose on a 5 point Likert scale ranging

from 5 (always) to 1 (never). The preferred purposes for using L1 mentioned by the participants fall into two categories: namely, teaching resource and classroom management.

Table 4 - The findings of the study in favor of L1 use

	Options	Always		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	I use Arabic to	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Explain difficult and abstract concepts of a listening and reading text	9	18%	32	64%	9	18%	-	-	-	-
2	Explain new vocabulary words	10	20%	28	56%	10	20%	2	4%	-	-
3	Set and explain exam instructions	15	30%	19	38%	14	28%	2	4%		
4	Explain complex nmar rules	9	18%	26	52%	11	22%	4	8%	-	-
5	Check comprehension	6	12%	20	40%	18	36%	6	12%	-	-
6	Give administrative issues like course policies, announcements, attendance, etc.	21	42%	19	38%	8	16%	2	4%		
7	Give direction and instruction for activities, tasks, and Homework.	-	-	15	30%	25	50%	10	20%	-	-
8	Manage the classrooms	-	-	12	24%	28	56%	10	20%	-	-
9	Call pupils' attention	-	-	3	6%	23	46%	17	34%	7	14%

Table 5- The findings of the study against L1 use

	Options	Always		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	I use Arabic to	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Provide feedback to individuals					12	24%	25	50%	13	26%
2	Praise pupils					11	22%	21	42%	18	36%
3	Arrange for pair/ group work activities			2	4%	10	20%	21	42%	17	34%

As the data shown in Table 4, majority of the teachers involved in the research are in favor of using L1 in their classes to explain difficult or abstract concepts and new words. Teachers' desires in this study echo Bouangeune's view who stresses "in order to prevent the misunderstanding of the meaning of the new word, teachers should provide clear, simple, and brief explanations of meaning, especially in the learners' first language" (2009, p. 189). In this regard, Butzkamm appreciates greatly the role that L1 plays in FL classes stating "the mother tongue is the master key to foreign languages, the tool which gives us the fastest, surest, most precise, and most complete means of accessing a foreign language" (2003, p. 31). Besides, a great percentage of the study subjects take recourse to L1 while explaining complex grammar points. Also a good percentage of teachers declare they use it to check for pupils' understanding. This stance is supported and demonstrated by Scrivener (2009: p. 309) who states that "when learners read an article or short story, sometimes ask them to summarize it orally in L1.This can reveal interesting insights about what learners have understood or misunderstood." Similarly, Atkinson (1989: p.

93) advocates occasional recourse to the MT assuming that especially young learners almost encounter difficulties in discussing such a complex task unless they resort to their MT. He opines that the use of the MT even can be more economical for checking comprehension (Ibid, p. 91). The finding of the current study is in compatible with the results of Al-Buraiki (2008), Mirza et al. (2012), Alshammari (2011), Sharma (2006), and Tang (2002) studies in that the teachers were in favor of using L1 for explaining difficult points, teaching vocabulary and grammar and checking students' understanding.

Apart from the instructional purposes, a great percentage advocates manageable uses of the L1 as well. The maximal use of L1 preferred by the participants is to give administrative issues which are irrelevant to language teaching process. Gill (2005) justifies and even necessitates resorting to the MT in situations such as"...information provision (discussing timetable or room changes, school trips, message to parents,...), classroom management, maintaining discipline,…". From the answers obtained it is clear that the most of the teachers also switch to the L1 while setting and explaining exam instructions. For this purpose the MT is considered as a helpful technique for enhancing the validity and reliability of tests (Atkinson, 1989, p. 94). The table also highlights teachers' inclination to L1 use in giving direction and instruction for activities, tasks, or homework, and managing classrooms. This stance goes in harmony with Atkinson (1989, p. 92) recommendation to get advantage of the MT for such purposes with children or struggling low level learners who are subject to lose concentration and interest if they cannot make sense of what they are supposed to do. Finally, more than half of the participants declare that they fall back on L1 use to capture pupils' attention. In this sense, Moon (2000) demonstrates some disadvantages of using English exclusively to teach English saying " It can take a long time to explain things, even using gesture, etc. pupils who are anxious to do the activity may lose interest or lose concentration. Weaker or slower pupils may lack the confidence to believe they can learn through English; they may be frightened or put off English." (p. 63)

The findings of the present study seems to be in consistent with those of Al-Hadrami (as cited in Borg, 2008) Al-Hinai (2006), and Sali (2014) studies who reported that teachers resort to their L1 for manageable uses such as class management, testing, and giving instructions beside the instructional purposes. Similarly, Atkinson (1987), Auerbach (1993), Macaro (1997) Cook (2001) also mention these purposes among other ones as explaining class activities and tasks; and maintaining contact with the students for which teachers prefer to resort to L1 use to teach the FL.

Table 6 - The reasons for using Arabic in English language teaching

	Options	No.	%
1	1.It aids comprehension greatly	44	88%
2	2.It makes the learning process more effective and pupils can be easily involved	40	80%
3	3.It helps pupils feel more comfortable, confidents and less stressed	42	84%
4	4.It helps to build up a good rapport with pupils	28	56%
5	5.It encourages and motivates pupils especially low achievers	40	80%
6	It saves a lot of time and effort	30	60%
7	6.It is effective in overpopulated and heterogeneous classes to prevent weak pupils 7.from being mentally zone out.	34	68%

Multiple options were accepted for explaining why teachers in this study think that Arabic is used as a necessary tool in English classes. The data shown in Table (6) illustrates that the most four prominent reasons for their uses of Arabic are as follow: first and foremost, constituting the majority, 88% report on their preference for L1 use as being a facilitating method to help pupils comprehend the tasks clearly. The second most chosen reason which constitutes 84% of responses is that they believe it may assist in minimizing pupils' affective barriers often accompanied their learning and boosting their confidence which yields consequential successful TL comprehension. As a matter of fact language learning for many learners is full of anxiety and stress and Norman (2008: p. 692) views use of L1 in L2 classrooms as an effective tool to decrease learners' anxiety and affective concerns which prevent them to get any kind of input from the environment. Being confident and feeling relaxed in the class, the learners will engage willingly in various class activities. This belief is supported by Brooks-Lewis (2009) who advocates effectiveness of L1 use to foster learner confidence and to make "learning meaningful and easier." (p. 234)

Equally, 80% not only believe the occasional use of L1 makes the learning process more effective, but also it encourages and motivates pupils, especially low achievers, to take part easily as well. Accordingly, most participants opine that principled and reasonable use of L1 should be approved for the less proficient pupils in heterogeneous classes in order to provide more interactive and desirable classrooms where all pupils' comprehension and participation are ensured. Without doubt, learner's proficiency level is a critical question to be considered in language teaching learning process, and comprehension holds an important place in any lesson because when learners do not clearly understand what to do, and how to do, for example, an activity or a task, they will not get involved effectively to improve their TL level. In this regard, Butzkamm (2003: p. 12) emphasizes that the principled use of the L1 saves learners from a feeling of frustration they might have within their FL learning. This outcome is in harmony with the viewpoints held by (Weschler, 1997; Cook, 2001; Nation, 2003 and Al-

Nofaie, 2010) that learners' language proficiency levels compels teachers to recourse to learners' L1 in the EFL classrooms.

Besides, 68% also acknowledge that L1 has an effective role to play in overpopulated and heterogeneous classes to prevent weak pupils from being mentally zone out. This reason is related closely to their perceptions of the context in which they work. Their decisions about use of the L1 are affected by class size, the level of the pupils, time constrains, and the type of classroom activity. 60% believe "It saves a lot of time and effort". Using L1 in an appropriate time and way, Wills (1981, p. xiv) argues, could save valuable time in explaining key ideas that otherwise would take a lot more time if explained in L2. Only 56% realize that using Arabic assists them to establish a good relationship with their pupils, and this relationship is influential in keeping pupils open to the learning process. Similarly, Butzkamm (2003) points a friendly FL atmosphere is best attained through eclectic use of the L1. This reason is also justified by Critchely (2002) in dealing with low achievers stating "teachers should use (L1) when appropriate to build positive and mutually supportive relationships that promote students' motivation."(p. 3)

From the foregoing discussions one can come to the conclusion that L1 use takes place in every TL class under the study for some precise purposes and reasons; and it is unattainable to exclude it from English classroom entirely.

9- Conclusion

The current study offers extra an updated account in the line of ongoing dispute over appropriateness of L1 use in EFL contexts. The findings demonstrate positive pedagogical, manageable and psychological stances investigated teachers take on their pupils' shared language (Arabic) in EFL classes. The obtained results reveal that unanimously all teachers hold positive attitudes towards the moderate integration of L1 into their classes. Besides, the results highlight some purposes for which Arabic appeared to be supportive option, including explaining difficult or abstract vocabularies and concepts, explaining grammatical issues and checking pupils' comprehension. Furthermore, the participants also feel that using Arabic is more effective when they come up with some specific classroom management issues. In this sense, they are of the view that Arabic should be sometimes switched to while discussing classroom activities, announcing administrative issues, giving instructions for activities, tasks, homework, and testing, managing the class, and capturing pupils' attention. As the data analysis manifests, in the participants' opinion, Arabic might be employed effectively for different reasons. The foremost justification proposed by the participants is that they consider L1 use as a helpful and facilitating tool in the EFL classes, creating a supportive classroom environment. They acknowledge that they take advantage of L1 use which is argued by Moore (2013, p. 251) to be "a naturally occurring phenomenon" in English classes to afford scaffolding to lower pupils' affective filters. They believe L1 use assists in providing more comprehensible FL and comfortable learning environment for young learners particularly those of low-level of language

competence or motivation. It aids them understand English better and motivate them to take part easily in the class. Moreover, the data analysis shows that the participants prefer using Arabic to build rapport with learners. It is also argued that through deploying learners' L1 in so crowded classes they can save time and effort to explain lengthy tasks.

Although there is still controversy as to whether L1 should be allowed in FL classrooms, its pragmatic and practical benefits could not be overlooked. Taken together, the findings of the present study depict classroom reality that welcomes Arabic in English classrooms. In other words, the obtained results manifest that the teachers' employment of Arabic is an inevitable fact in the primary English classrooms; and underscore its importance in enhancing FL learning. As with any other classroom technique, the purposeful and judicious use of the mother tongue is seen as an auxiliary effective pedagogical and psychological tool to the end of improving FL proficiency. Moreover, "a complete avoidance of the L1, as recommended by approaches derived from the DM (direct method) does not reflect the reality of classroom practice" (Bruen and Kelly, 2014, p. 10); and any attempt made by the policies makers to enforce a ban of the MT do not reflect the realities of learning inside the FL classroom (Kelleher, 2013, P. 2041) as the one who actually opts when to deploy which language is definitely the teacher who perceives the learners, their needs, and their learning strategies as well. Deller (2002) expresses this fact in short stressing that "The mother tongue taboo has been with us for a long time, but fortunately, now things seem to be changing. I believe that many teachers have continued to use the mother tongue because it is both necessary and effective." (p. 3)

To conclude, supporting former research findings, this humble study contributes further evidence on adopting TL- only policy in FL classroom context without considering a vital role for learners' MT seems neither justifiable nor attainable. Finally, it is hoped these findings will open wider doors in the area; and stimulate further studies in different instructional contexts to achieve a better understanding of attitudes towards involving L1 in FL teaching and learning settings.

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اتجاهات المعلمين نحو استخدام اللغة العربية في صفوف اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة اجنبية في المدارس الابتدائية في العراق

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قسم اللغة الإنكليزية – الكلية التربوية المفتوحة ـ بغداد

الملخص

تعد الأستعانة بلغة الأم في دروس اللغة الأنكليزية كلغة اجنبية نقطة جدال في مجال تعليم اللغة الأنكليزية كلغة اجنبية منذ زمن بعيد. هنالك الكثير من الأراء و الأراء المضادة تدور حول مدى ملاءمة استخدام المعلم للغة الأم في تعليم اللغة الأجنبية. فقد أظهرت مؤخرا نتائج البحوث الجارية في مجال تعلم اللغة الأنكليزية كلغة اجنبية وجود شكوك في الأسس المنطقية لمؤيدي الأستخدام الحصري للغة الأجنبية في تدريسها، فقد توصل الباحثون الى الحقيقة التي لا تقتضي فقط استحالة تجنب اللغة الأولى و انما كونها مفيدة ايضا في الصفوف التي يشاطر فيها المعلمون مع المتعلمين اللغة الأم ذاتها. تهدف هذه الدراسة لتسليط الضوء على اتجاهات معلمي اللغة الأنكليزية نحو استخدام اللغة الأم – العربية- في صفوف اللغة الأنكليزية و البحث عن ارائهم حول الغاية من استخدامها و معرفة الأسباب الموجبة لأستخدامها. و لتحقيق الهدف، اجريت الدراسة على عينة قوامها ٥٠ معلما ممن يعلمون في المدارس الحكومية في بغداد مستعينا بالأستبانة المعدة لتحقيق هدف الدراسة. و من خلال البيانات التي تم الحصول عليها، اوضحت النتائج بان اتجاهات المعلمين كانت في العموم ايجابية حول استخدام اللغة العربية عند اقتضاء الحاجة في دروس اللغة الأنكليزية و اقروا استخدامها لكل من الغايات التعليمية و الأمور الأدارية في الصف. كما اظهر تحليل معطيات الدراسة بأن المعلمين المشاركين في هذه الدراسة يميلون الى استخدام اللغة العربية لعدة اسباب تعتبر ضرورية لخلق صفوف دراسية تتسم بأجواء اكثر معرفية و ممتعة و مريحة و ودية، ومعززة لتعليم التلاميذ و لتوفير الوقت و الجهد في صفوف دراسية مكتظة بالتلاميذ.