THE ATTITUDES OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS TOWARDS USING ARABIC IN EFL CLASSROOMS IN SAUDI PUBLIC SCHOOLS- A CASE STUDY

Haifa AL-NOFAIE[*]

Abstract: This paper examined the attitudes of Saudi teachers and students towards employing Arabic as a facilitating tool in English classes, a topic which has gained wide attention recently. The present study was a case study which investigated teachers' and students' attitudes towards this issue in a Saudi intermediate school for females. To reach a clear understanding of this issue, the study focused on one intermediate classroom which had 30 students and three teachers of English in the entire school. Three research tools were used for gathering data: questionnaires, interviews and four observations of one classroom. The results revealed that the attitudes of the teachers and the students about using Arabic were generally positive. The participants preferred using Arabic in certain situations and for specific reasons. Although the attitudes of the teachers and the students received agreements, there were other points on which they disagreed. Recommendations for future studies and solutions were discussed.

Keywords: attitudes, L1 (Arabic), L2 (English), use of L1.

Özet: Bu çalışma, son zamanlarda dikkatleri üzerine toplayan bir konu olarak Suudi öğretmenlerin ve öğrencilerin kolaşlaştırıcı bir araç olarak Arapçayı, İngilizce sınıflarında kullanmaya yönelik tutumlarını incemiştir. Bu çalışma, durum çalışması yöntemiyle, orta seviye bir kız okulunda okuyan Suudi öğrencilerin ve bu okulda çalışan öğretmenlerin ilgili konuda tutumlarını incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Konuyu açığa kavuşturmak amacıyla, 30 öğrencinin bulunduğu orta seviyede bir sınıf ve okulda çalışan üç öğretmen üzerinde yoğunlaşılmıştır. Veri toplamak amacıyla, üç araç kullanılmıştır: anketler, görüşmeler, ve sınıfın dört defa gözlemlenmesi. Sonuçlar göstermektedir ki hem öğretmenlerin hem de öğrencilerin Arapça kullanmaya yönelik genelde olumlu tutumları bulunmaktadır. Katılımcılar belirli durumlarda ve yine belirli sebeplerle Arapçayı kullanmayı tercih etmektedirler. Öğretmen ve öğrenci tutumları katılımcılar arasında benzerlikler gösterse de tutum farklılıklarının olduğu çeşitli konular da bulunmaktadır. Çalışmada, sonraki çalışmalara ve sorunlara yönelik çözüm önerileri de tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: tutum, Arapça, İngilizce, anadil kullanimi.

Introduction
Teaching English in the Saudi context

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has undergone great political, social and economic development. To meet new challenges, the Ministry of education has introduced English as a foreign language in schools since 1925 (Al-Ahaydib, 1986). According to the educational policy in the Kingdom (1974: 13), the aim of teaching English was:

Furnishing the students with at least one of the living languages, in addition to their original language, to enable them acquire knowledge, arts and useful inventions, transmit our knowledge and sciences to other communities and participate in the spreading of Islam and serving humanity.

[*] Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. E-mail: h.a.al-nofaie@newcastle.ac.uk

Besides the above reasons, the position of English as the world's prestigious language seems to place demands on citizens to be able to communicate with people from different parts of the world.

The compulsory educational system consists of three levels: the primary level, which consists of six grades, the intermediate level and the secondary level, each consists of three grades. Students start learning English in the last year of the primary level. The number of weekly English sessions is four and each session lasts 45 minutes. It could be said that students are not exposed to sufficient English due to the limited number of English classes.

Literature Review

One of the major theoretical issues that have dominated the field of second language acquisition for decades is the use of the first language (here after L1) when teaching or learning a second language (here after L2). This issue has been controversial, and several supporting and opposing arguments have been raised. L1 opponent methods believe that using L1 may prevent learners from learning the new language (e.g. the Direct Method and the Audiolingual Method). However, many studies have been conducted in different parts of the world to settle the debate. These studies, as will be explained later in this paper, have found that the advantages of using L1 can outweigh the disadvantages if it is applied systematically. Moreover, these studies have found that most teachers and learners are in favour of using L1 since they believe in it as a natural language facilitator and learning strategy (e.g. Kharma and Hajjaj, 1989; Franklin, 1990; Macaro, 1995, cited in Macaro, 1997; Dickson, 1996; Swain and Lapkin, 2000; Scott and de la Fuente, 2008). The following section of this paper will identify approaches and methods that exclude or include L1.

The ban of L1 throughout the history of EFL

In the sixteenth century, Latin was widely used in Europe as the supreme language of religion, commerce and education. The focus was mainly on teaching grammar rather than on communication; therefore, translation was the means of teaching. To understand grammar, students were provided with lists of words to translate sentences. This teaching method was known as the Grammar-Translation Method (Byram, 2000).

In the middle of the nineteenth century, foreign language teaching received more attention and progressed, notably through individuals such as Marcel (1793-1896), Prendergast (1806-1886) and Gouin (1831-1896). Their age was known later as the Pre-Reform Movement (Howatt, 2004). They came up with the notion of the similarity between first language acquisition by children and second language learning by adults. In other words, first language acquisition was the model for learning a second language. Therefore, translation was considered as a source of confusion and was replaced by pictures and gestures.

The late nineteenth-century was characterised by the emergence of the Reform Movement whose aim was to develop new language teaching principles (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Using L1 in teaching a foreign language became a controversial issue among reformers. Some believed that mixing two languages would not help students to reach fluency; therefore, learners should employ their mental abilities to understand the meaning of the new language. On the other hand, other reformers emphasised the importance of L1, especially when introducing unfamiliar items (Howatt, 2004).

The appeal for new teaching methods increased. One of the first advocates of excluding L1 was J.S. Blackie (Hawkins, 1981). His philosophy of learning was that words should be associated directly with objects, and thinking in L1 should be banned. This new method was known as the Direct Method. The belief underpinning this method was that learners acquire L2 in the same way children acquire their L1 (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). In fact, this method was an extension to Gouin and his contemporaries' natural view towards language learning (Brown, 2001).

Later, another method known as the Audiolingual Method appeared, and it also emphasised banning the use of L1. This method viewed the target language and native language as two different systems that should not be linked, so only L2 should be used (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Brooks (1964) mentioned various characteristics of this method. For instance, Learners had to learn through repetition and memorising; hence, listening and speaking were introduced before reading and writing. Moreover, learning should take place without referring to L1.The belief that L2 should be developed with no reference to L1 is known as language compartmentalisation and the reasoning behind this belief is to avoid L1 interference (i.e. errors result from L1 negative transfer) (Cook, 2001).

Several language theorists and researchers have emphasised the focus on L2. Krashen (1981), for instance, claimed that comprehensible input provides opportunities for subconscious and implicit learning which leads to achieving language competence. In this respect, the superiority of L2 may indicate prohibiting L1 in the classroom (Macaro, 1997). In response to this argument, Swain (2000) extends this notion to include output as a factor leading to language competence. She emphasises the importance of engaging learners in collaborative dialogues in which learners produce language. The output helps learners to monitor and evaluate their progress. Though the role of L1 in social interaction is not discussed by Swain (2000), it seems that the L2 output is the supreme outcome of the concept of interaction. Classroom interaction in L2 has been encouraged to provide learners with a naturally communicative environment (Cook, 2001).

In accordance with previous views, Halliwell and Jones (1991) claim that using L2 as a realistic and normal means of communication is possible. To achieve success in learning L2, learners should be encouraged to take risks in practicing both speaking and understanding in L2. The reason, according to Halliwell and Jones (1991), is that learners can understand the message even when they do not know the exact meaning of words or structures; this indicates that learners do not need to understand all the words they hear as long as they are able to understand the message.

Similarly, Macdonald (1993) believes that the focus on L2 can enhance communication and activate both conscious and unconscious learning. Also, it creates confident learners and challenges them to communicate with others through their limited language. Macdonald's advice to teachers is "If you get stuck in the middle of a lesson, try to communicate your message by some other means, such as mime or demonstration" (Macdonald, 1993: 23). This leads to the question: What if miming and demonstrations do not work for some reason?

The above discussed methods and opinions which call for avoiding L1 rely on two main weak assumptions, as identified by Cook (2001). The first assumption is the similarity between L1 and L2 learning processes, and the second assumption is that learning L1 and L2 is a separate process. These two assumptions are discussed thoroughly in the next section.

The weakness of the principle of banning L1

Most L1 opponents argue that language learning by adults is similar to language acquisition by children, and their reason is that both L1 children and L2 learners do not have any previous knowledge about the new language. However, one limitation with this argument is that it takes no account of the distinctions which have been identified between learning L1 and L2 (Cook, 2001). Bley-Vroman (1990) presents a thorough explanation of five basic differences between L1 acquisition by children and L2 learning by adults. Firstly, children's innate ability to acquire their L1 disappears in adults. Secondly, adults rely on their L1 when learning L2, unlike children who do not have previous knowledge of their mother language. Thirdly, in contrast to children, adults' exposure to L2 is not sufficient since language input is confined to being in a learning environment such as schools. Moreover, children are helped by social factors as motivation and personal situations that adults lack. Finally, notwithstanding adults' difficulties when learning, they do, of course, have more mature cognitive abilities. Bley-Vroman (1990) argues that these differences between adults and children may explain why adults often cannot achieve fluency.

Similarly, Macaro (1997) points out further learning differences between L1 children and L2 adults. He states that the learning of L2 by adults combines both conscious and unconscious processes because adult L2 learners can apply more advanced strategies when learning the new language. Moreover, although L2 learners may find it difficult to produce all the new language sounds correctly and achieve oral competence, they are more able to express themselves by applying non-verbal communicative strategies. Finally, while L1 children are corrected by their parents in a natural setting, L2 learners obtain their feedback from their teachers, and they may feel embarrassed and hesitant to produce the language in front of their peers.

Considering children who learn a foreign language, it could be difficult to hypothesise that their L2 learning is similar to their L1 acquisition. It has been believed that children can learn a foreign language better than adults. This belief is related to the Critical Period Hypothesis which claims that effective foreign language learning occurs before puberty (Cameron, 2001). However, research is still needed to support this hypothesis (Cameron, 2001). The similarity between L1 and L2 acquisition among children has been challenged in a study by Kim *et al.* (1997) which found that children apply different mental activities as they use different parts of the brain to activate and recall new language. In addition to Kim *et al.*'s (1997) study, it has been found that applying L1 learning strategies to L2 learning may not lead to success, so children are required to pay attention when learning another language (Cameron, 2001).

 Another drawback with the principle of banning L1, as identified by Cook (2001), is that it considers learning L1 and L2 as two separate processes, as embedded in the Audiolingual Method. This view may indicate that language learning is coordinate; therefore, the compound type of learning is neglected (Cook, 2001). In the1950's, two types of bilingualism were identified: coordinate bilingualism which separated L1 from L2 and compound bilingualism which linked L1 and L2 (Stern, 1992). As a result of this distinction, two types of learning strategies have been proposed: the intralingual and intracultural strategies that focus on using L2 only and the crosslingual and crosscultural strategies that allow using L1 in learning L2 (Stern, 1992). According to Stern (1992), L1 is considered as a facilitator for learning L2. In other words, comparing the two languages may in fact aid learning processes. Regarding the comparison between two languages, certain empirical studies have found that the Contrastive Analysis Approach, which is built on drawing learners' attention to

similarities and differences between L1 and L2, could facilitate learning L2 (e.g. Kupferberg, 1999; Ghabanchi and Vosooghi, 2006). However, as Stern (1992) suggests, the aim beyond learning L2 determines which type of the previous strategies a learner can follow. If the aim is developing communicative skills, intralingual strategies will be used. If translation is the aim, crosslingual strategies will be followed. Since the separation of L1 and L2 has been made in an attempt to avoid L1 interference, it was found that L1 transfer could develop language learning (Cook, 2001).

Therefore, the arguments for discouraging L1 in L2 classrooms, mentioned above, have not provided strong evidence for avoiding L1, nor have clear reasons for banning L1 been identified (Macaro, 2001). As a result several teaching methods encouraging the use of L1 as a helpful teaching and learning tool have emerged.

Methods and principles for employing L1

The literature of teaching EFL reveals that there are teaching methods, which use L1 deliberately. For example, besides the Grammar-Translation Method mentioned previously, a relatively new teaching method that deliberately employs L1 has appeared and is known as the New Concurrent Method. This method requires teachers to balance the use of L1 and L2 (Faltis, 1990). Codeswitching which facilitates language learning should be systematic and purposeful. Four areas of codeswitching to L1 have been identified: introducing concepts, reviewing a previous lesson, capturing learners' attention and praising learners (Faltis, 1990). Adding to this point, a recent study by Raschka *et al.* (2009) in a Taiwanese classroom concluded that codeswitching is a frequent strategic device used by highly communicative competent teachers. Other similar methods which link L1 and L2 are the Bilingual Method, developed by Dodson (1967), and the Reciprocal Language Teaching (Hawkins, 1987) which aims at preparing proficient students and allowing them to switch easily from L2 to L1 and vice versa.

However, trying to balance L1 and L2 may be problematic in contexts where English is only spoken in the classroom. More systematic methods that encourage the limited use of L1 have appeared. One of these methods is the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The aim of this method is to achieve communicative competence through the focus on the four language skills for active communication (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Using L1 can occur when giving class instructions; however, learners should be encouraged to use L2 as a medium of communication even for class management (Littlewood, 1981). The benefit of using L2 for class management is that "The students learn from these classroom management exchanges, too, and realise that the target language is a vehicle for communication" (Larsen-Freeman, 2000: 132).

Another current method which minimises L1 is the Task-Based Method (Willis and Willis, 2007). This method requires learners to complete a task in L2 through pair or group work. Even though Learners can use different tools to communicate in L2 such as gestures and copying words from the task sheet, translation can be used as the last strategy as proposed by Prabhu (1987: 60):

 Although tasks were presented and carried out in the target language, the use of the learner's mother tongue in the classroom was neither disallowed nor excluded. The teacher normally used it only for an occasional glossing of words or for some complex procedural instructions,

for example: ' Leave the rest of the page blank in your notebooks and go on to the next page, for the next question'.

This definition implies that L1 can be used to explain the meaning of a new word and giving class instructions. Prabhu (1987) adds that learners are more likely to use L1 when having a private talk with their teachers and doing individual tasks. This may indicate that using L1 in front of peers may create a feeling of guilt. Willis and Willis (2007) consider that L1 cannot be avoided in L2 classrooms since it can bring some benefits to the classroom, especially with beginners. For instance, some teachers have found that learners who did a task in L1 before doing it in L2 showed good progress in L2; moreover, their overall use of L1 decreased. Another benefit is that L1 can be used to translate new words, more specifically those which are difficult to explain or infer. In addition, task instructions could be given in L1 to check learners understanding. Finally, teachers should raise learners' attention towards the importance of maximising the use of L2, For the purpose of avoiding the overuse of L1, Willis and Willis (2007) recommend teachers and learners to prepare guidelines for situations in which L1 can be used in the class.

Several views upholding the benefits of using L1 in L2 classrooms have been proposed. Atkinson (1987), for instance, calls for its provision for three reasons. Firstly, translation is the preferred strategy for the majority of learners. Secondly, it is a personal technique since it helps learners to reveal their feelings and ideas. Finally, it is a valuable technique for exploiting class time. Another support for L1 in L2 classroom is provided by Chavez (2002) who claims that students prefer using both L1 and L2 because the classroom is not a real context for L2 social culture.

A similar view is held by Harbord (1992). He considers L1 a natural communication tool between teachers and students, as in giving class instructions, but he stands firmly against using L1 for explaining grammar. Butzkamm (2003) Supports   the previous reasons for employing L1 and adds that L1 promotes learners' dependence on L2. In other words, after presenting an L2 notion in L1 and asking learners for repetition in L2, learners become more motivated to communicate in L2. Therefore, L1 can enhance and keep the flow of communication.

Research and using L1

This section discusses research findings about using L1 in L2 classes from the sides of both teachers and students at school level only, which is the focus of this study. The review below reveals that research at school level seems to be limited, and most recent studies have investigated L1 use among college students (e.g. Schweers,1999; Scott and de la Fuente, 2008; Nazary, 2008; Brooks-Lewis, 2009; Raschka *etal*., 2009).

Reasearch on teachers' use of L1
Several studies have been carried out in different countries to investigate areas in which teachers resort to L1. Most of these studies revealed that a large number of teachers resort to L1 for explaining grammar -66% in Kharma and Hajjaj's (1989) study, 88% in Franklin's (1990) study and 87% in Dickson's (1996) study. These findings offered support to several studies which have found that advanced learners demonstrated good progress when learning grammar in L1 (Cook, 2001).

Another area for using L1 was explaining new words- 71% in Kharma and Hajjaj (1989); 39% in Franklin (1990). The issue of learners' proficiency was identified as another area for using L1. Teachers tend to use L1 with low ability learners (e.g. Kharma and Hajjaj, 1989; Franklin, 1990; Dickson, 1996). Besides learners' level, teachers' professional experience impacts the degree to which they resort to L1. The more they are experienced, the less they use L1 (Crawford, 2004). Using L1 for creating a rapport with learners and giving class instructions formed other cases (Franklin, 1990; Macaro, 1995, cited by Macaro, 1997).

In accordance with previous research findings, Cameron (2001) provides precise guidelines for teachers for the beneficial use of L1 with children. For example, teachers can resort to L1 for translating new language, chatting with learners, giving instructions, providing feedback and error correction and checking learners' comprehension. She points out that L1 should be used after trying other tools, such as pictures and gestures. The advice being "Use as much of the target language as possible, and ensure that use of first language supports the children's language learning" (Cameron, 2001: 199). Having discussing teachers' reasons for using L1, the discussion now will move on to include learners' reasons for L1 application.

Research on learners' use of L1

Research has investigated learners' reasons for switching to L1 in EFL classrooms. For example, in Kharma and Hajjaj's (1989) study, 81% of the Arab students were in favour of using L1, especially when they could not express their ideas in L2. Moreover, they thought that their students felt happy about using L1.

Swain and Lapkin (2000) studied learners' use of L1 (English) while doing two tasks in French (L2). According to the study, learners' purposes for using L1 were grouped into three main categories: moving tasks along, as in ordering events, focusing attention on grammar and vocabulary search and finally interpersonal interaction as in explaining disagreement. Besides these findings, it was noticed that lower achieving learners tended to use L1 more excessively than high achieving learners.

Cook (2001) recommends learners to use L1 with each other when explaining tasks, negotiating their roles and checking their production and understanding. A similar view is taken by Cameron (2001) who mentions that learners prefer using L1 when seeking help from peers or teachers.

More reasons justifying learners' use of L1 have been discussed by Nation (2003). He mentions that learners tend to apply L1 either because they are not proficient, or are shy or unmotivated to communicate in L2. Although Nation (2003) acknowledges the importance of L1 in L2 classrooms, he calls for increasing learners' focus on L2 setting out some helpful hints for this purpose. Tasks, as mentioned by Nation (2003) should be within learners' level, and this view is in tune with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. According to Vygotsky (1978), children can develop their language through interacting with each other and/or with adults. During this interaction, they have good opportunities to receive help from others. Vygotsky (1978) refers to children's abilities towards assisted language learning as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Another helpful hint by Nation (2003) is that teachers should use tasks that encourage learners to use L2 such as role plays and telling stories. Moreover, teachers should increase learners' awareness of the importance of learning L2 and remind them to use L2 while monitoring classes.

To sum up, previous studies on teachers' and learners' use of L1 suggest that using L1 is a natural and realistic process. Some studies have found that using L1 is unavoidable and fundamental to L2 acquisition (Schneider, 1979, cited in Kharma and Hajjaj, 1989). This view contradicts many other views which adhere to the possibility of using L2 as a natural communicative device (e.g. Halliwell and Jones, 1991). The reason for highlighting the issue of L1 in different methods and from both teachers' and students' sides is to provide a strong rational for this study. The next section will explain this point more clearly.

Rational and aim of the study

The issue of using L1 in L2 classrooms has grown in importance in light of recent research. However, in Saudi Arabian public schools, the issue has not received sufficient attention and few studies have been carried out to identify the role of Arabic in learning English. For instance, Alam *et al.* (1988) conducted a study in male schools to investigate the attitudes of teachers, students and parents towards learning English. Out of 600 students- 32.8%- disagreed with the exclusion of Arabic in EFL classes. Furthermore, 62% of the students preferred to be taught by Arabic teachers. However, since the aim of the study was investigating the participants' attitudes towards learning English, the study did not identify the reasons or situations in which the students prefer their teachers to use Arabic. Another study on using Arabic in teaching English was conducted by Al-Abdan (1993). The study included 451 male and female teachers and supervisors in intermediate schools in Riyadh City. It revealed that 55.4% of the teachers used Arabic for 10% of the class time. Also, 54.5% of them preferred to use Arabic for grammar while the majority (87.6%) resorted to Arabic when explaining abstract words.

Since research to date has paid little attention to the L1/L2 issue in the Saudi context, I have been motivated to undertake more investigation to find out the attitudes of Saudi teachers and students towards applying Arabic in EFL classrooms. The study has been conducted in an intermediate school in Jeddah city and included two main groups: EFL teachers and students in one classroom in the third intermediate level.

Research questions

The present study aimed at answering the following questions:
Main question
• What are the participants' attitudes towards using Arabic in EFL classes and to what use is Arabic put in EFL classes?
Sub questions
1. Is Arabic used by teachers and students in the third intermediate level?
2. What are the teachers' reasons for employing or avoiding Arabic?
3. What are the students' reasons for employing or avoiding Arabic?
4. What are the situations in which teachers prefer to use Arabic?
5. What are the situations in which students prefer to use Arabic?

Methodology
Setting and Participants
The study was carried out in an intermediate school in Jeddah, Saudi. For selecting the school and the participants, a convenience sampling was applied. The study included three teachers and one classroom of 30 students who were taught by one of the three teachers. The reason for including other teachers was that other third intermediate classes were taught by different

teachers, and it would be helpful to investigate whether they share the same attitudes to get a clear picture of this particular context.

Research Instruments and Procedures for Data Collection

Three methods have been applied for data collection: questionnaires, interviews and class observations. The students' attitudes have been investigated through all these three methods. The SPSS 15 software was used to provide a descriptive analysis of the closed questions of the questionnaire, while the open questions of the questionnaire and the interviews were analysed qualitatively according to emerging themes (See Appendices A, B and C). Teachers' attitudes were investigated qualitatively through semi-structured interviews only due to their small number (See Appendix C). Although observation which mainly records seen behaviour might not help to reach participants' feelings (O'Leary, 2004), it was employed in this study as a compliment to gain more insights into the reasons and situations for using L1 by the students and their teacher (See Appendix D). The following sections examine the design and application of research instruments in more details.

Questionnaires: The findings from previous research have influenced the design of self-completion questionnaires for students (e.g. Kharma and Hajjaj, 1989; Dickson, 1996; Swain and Lapkin, 2000). In this type of questionnaires, as mentioned by Bryman (2004), closed questions are used more than open ones so that respondents may find them easier to complete. Moreover, closed questions allow comparability of responses (Bryman, 2004). To gain more details from the questionnaire each closed question was followed by a blank box for adding more answers.

Since the study attempted to measure attitudes, a frequency scale of five points (from always to never) was used. The benefit of this attitude scale is to facilitate quantifying data and achieving reliability (Payne and Payne, 2004). The reason for avoiding Likert scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) for this study was that it appeared to be confusing for the students during the pilot study as will be seen in the following section.

The questionnaire items were in Arabic and the reason is that the students were beginners and have studied English for three years only. Therefore, it could be difficult for them to understand and answer English questionnaires. Before distributing the questionnaires to the actual sample, the questions were first written in English and then were translated into Arabic. The Arabic translation was translated again into English to check the accuracy of the translation. For further guides on translating questionnaires, see Jenn (2006). After translation, the questionnaires were distributed to 30 students.

Interviews: After having a look at the completed questionnaires which consisted mainly of closed questions, some responses needed to be clarified, so the next step of data collection was conducting semi-structured interviews with students and teachers to elicit more explanations. Similar to the questionnaires, the interviews required the interviewees to clarify their attitudes towards employing Arabic and explain their reasons for accepting or rejecting Arabic. Because recording was not allowed in public schools for cultural reasons, the interviewees' responses were recorded in notes during and after the interviews. The interviews were conducted during my last visit to the school. Both teachers' and students' interviews consisted of open questions to find out more information that might not appear from the questionnaires.

The choice of the students for the interview was arbitrary. Based on the students' English proficiency record used by the teacher in Semester 1, the students were divided by the teacher into two groups: high proficiency students who obtained 70% or more and low proficiency students who were below this range. The third student in each list was chosen. The aim was to investigate what students from different levels think about using Arabic. The high achieving student was labelled as A, and the low achieving student was labelled as B.

Speaking of teachers' interviews, three teachers were interviewed and one of the interviewees was the teacher of the class under investigation. Since the research was a case study of an English classroom, the choice of the class teacher for the interview was necessary to provide an accurate scenario for the case.

Observation: The inclusion of class observation emerged from the fact that it might lead to new issues (Edwards and Talbot, 1999). This study employed semi-structured observations which combine both predetermined checklists and written notes (O'Leary, 2004). The advantage of this combination is that the checklists may facilitate organising observations, while written notes may lead to salient themes (O'Leary, 2004). The observation included four sequenced sessions (45 minutes each) and focused on different language skills and items (e.g. listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar).

Data Analysis

This study employed two approaches of data analysis: quantitative and qualitative. The closed questions of the questionnaires were analysed statistically by using the SPSS program. Descriptive statistics of data were computed, and the mode was used as a central tendency measure to find out the frequencies of using Arabic which form one of the research questions. Since the number of the participants was small (30 students), the chi-square test was applied to identify any existing relationships among the questionnaire variables (Salkind, 2008).

The qualitative approach was used for analysing the additional points that the participants stated for the closed and open ended questions in the questionnaires, the interviews and the class observations. This approach requires classifying the responses into themes as will be seen later.

Findings
1. **Does Arabic occur among teachers and students in the third intermediate level?**

The study has revealed that the participants used Arabic in English classes and this indicated that they have positive attitudes towards employing Arabic. Teachers highlighted the importance of L1 in their classes, however, their use of Arabic appeared to be limited as they were aware that the excessive use of Arabic may hinder learning English. These findings were in line with some previous studies. For example, in Kharma and Hajjaj's (1989) study, 93% of the 185 teachers used Arabic in their classrooms for different reasons. Similarly, Al-Abdan's (1993) study pointed out that not only 75% of the 451 Saudi teachers used Arabic with their students for certain cases, but also they were convinced with the benefits of this use.

Similar to the teachers' attitudes, the students' attitudes towards using Arabic in the classroom were generally positive. According to the questionnaires, 70% of the students were in favour

of their teacher's use of Arabic. However, the research tools also showed that the students avoided the over-use of Arabic, except for doing pair or group work. For instance, about 57% students, as revealed in the questionnaires, thought that using Arabic might prevent them from learning English. Moreover, they preferred to use it when there was a perceived need for this. This limited use of L1 is a sign of positive attitudes held by the students about learning L2 as claimed by Storch and Wigglesworth (2003). The following sections discuss in detail the reasons and areas in which the students use or avoid Arabic.

2. What are the teachers' reasons for employing or avoiding Arabic?

Teachers had various reasons for employing Arabic. They usually use Arabic to clarify difficult items for weak learners, so that they do not lag behind their peers. This finding was confirmed by the interviews and the observations. Another reason which was figured out from the interviews was the learners' level. The three interviewed teachers agreed that beginners need more explanation in Arabic because they have not made good progress in English yet.

The previous findings seem to be consistent with Franklin's (1990) and Dickson's (1996) studies which found that using L1 with lower level students was a crucial factor in increasing teachers' use of L1. However, Dickson (1996) suggests that increasing weak students' motivation would be a proper alternative to L1. One way of increasing learners' motivation is using interesting resources such as comic-books which may decrease teachers' use of L1 (Stephens and Crawley, 1994).

3. What are the students' reasons for using or avoiding Arabic?

From the research tools, most of the students revealed their desire to avoid the overuse of Arabic, whether from their side or the teacher's side. The main reason they provided for this avoidance was to increase their opportunities to 'practice' English. However, they did not deny, as mentioned in the questionnaires and interviews, that using Arabic could provide them with some confidence and lead to better understanding if used in certain situations which will be mentioned later. Generally speaking, the students' attitudes towards Arabic are in line with other views that consider L1 as a naturally unavoidable learning strategy (e.g. Atkinson, 1987; Harbord, 1992; Cook, 2001; Nation, 2003).

4. What are the situations in which teachers prefer to use Arabic?

The study highlighted some cases for which Arabic appeared to be a helpful option. Data from the research instruments revealed that using Arabic for teaching grammar was one of the most common uses amongst the teachers. Their reason was that students could find it difficult to understand linguistic terms in English. This result is in agreement with many existing studies. For instance, Al-Abdan's (1993) study found that many Saudi teachers (54.5%) have employed Arabic for explaining grammar while 66% of the Arabic teachers in Kharma and Hajjaj's (1989) study preferred this use.

Using Arabic for explaining the meaning of words was another area explored by the research tools. The results of this study are in accordance with earlier studies (e.g. Franklin, 1990; Al-Abdan, 1993) which have pointed to using L1 for translating new words as a common practice amongst teachers. The teachers in the present study employed Arabic systematically in the case of explaining abstract words. During the class observations, for instance, the teacher translated only abstract words, and she used pictures and drawings for concrete words.

The issue of translating new words has been viewed as a positive application. For instance, Nation (2003) recommends translating L2 words into their L1 equivalents, especially when teaching beginners. This indicates that translation has been considered the most effective learning method. Amongst other areas for using Arabic, giving exam instruction was preferred by teachers to avoid confusion.

Although the present study produced results which corroborated the findings of a great deal of previous research, there were other areas which appeared to be in contradiction with them. For example, the teachers tried to avoid Arabic for greetings, giving class instructions, explaining difficult activities, checking students' comprehension, contrasting L1 and L2, allowing learners to ask questions in Arabic and doing pair or group work. The teachers' reason for avoiding Arabic in the classroom in these situations was to provide students with sufficient opportunities to practise English. It is true that students need to practise the new language as much as possible, especially in a context like Saudi Arabia, where English is rarely spoken outside the classroom. However, teachers should bear in mind that they should try to create meaningful learning environments and Arabic seems to be a helpful tool for clarifying any ambiguity or confusion that occurs during communication.

It seems that the teachers in this study are strict about using Arabic. They should bear in mind that high restrictions over the use of L1 may discourage students. In this study, the teachers' reluctance to allow students to enquire about the new language in Arabic could discourage students who may not be able to find the right words in English. The restriction about using Arabic for such a purpose might be related to the fact that teachers in Saudi public schools do not receive sufficient and clear guidance on how to use Arabic effectively and systematically in EFL classrooms, a point which was raised by Al-Abdan (1993). Neither the course books nor the teachers' guide books include any helpful tips on the issue of employing Arabic. Also, it should be taken into consideration that English course books for the intermediate level focus on grammar and do not prepare students for communication (Al-Awadh, 2000).

5. **What are the situations in which students prefer to use Arabic?**

The following table (Table 1) summarises the main findings related to this question.

Table 1: descriptive analysis of data

Questionnaire Items	Always		Often		sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
1. I prefer my teacher to use Arabic in English classes.	5	16.7	4	13.3	12	40.0	5	16.7	4	13.3
2. I feel more comfortable when I talk to my teacher in Arabic	6	20.0	7	23.3	7	23.3	3	10.0	7	23.3
4. I prefer the teacher to use Arabic if the lesson is boring	1	3.3	3	10.0	4	13.3	4	13.3	18	60.0
7. I prefer to do an activity with a partner in Arabic.	7	23.3	10	33.3	5	16.7	2	6.7	5	16.7
11. New vocabulary should be translated into Arabic.	13	43.3	6	20.0	7	23.3	4	13.3	0	0
12. Class instructions should be given in Arabic.	3	10.0	3	10.0	3	10.0	1	3.3	19	63.3
13. I feel more comfortable if exam instructions are given in Arabic.	20	66.7	3	10.0	3	10.0	1	3.3	3	10.0
14. It is necessary to explain the differences and similarities between Arabic and English in Arabic.	8	26.7	5	16.7	12	40.0	3	10.0	2	6.7

F= Frequency
P=Percentage

The above table reveals the students' positive attitudes towards Arabic in EFL classes. Besides, it pin points areas for using or avoiding Arabic. Speaking of the favourable areas for using Arabic, giving exam instructions, as revealed in the table, headed the other areas (86.7%). Regarding this point, the students and the teachers shared the same opinion on the usefulness of Arabic for giving exam instructions. This might be related to the role of Arabic in reducing stress that often happens during exams. Another case of an equal significance was using Arabic for translating new words (86.6%). This finding supports the belief that students prefer to learn new words through translation which could be a clear and quick strategy (Nation, 2003; Storch and Wigglesworth, 2003). In this study, the students preferred to get the meaning directly from the teacher or their peers without checking a bilingual dictionary which some students considered as time consuming. However, it may be better for the students to use bilingual dictionaries as they may get incorrect translations from their peers.

In addition to the previous cases in favour of using Arabic, many students preferred learning English through contrasting it with Arabic (83%). This opinion contrasted the teachers' opinions who mentioned their avoidance of contrasting English and Arabic. The possible benefits of contrastive analysis have been linked to better learning, as mentioned by Kupferberg (1999) and Ghabanchi and Vosooghi (2006). Perhaps the implementation of robust developmental programmes for our teachers would help raise awareness in this area.

Another important use of Arabic was given to peer or group work (73%). There were other cases in which the students preferred the use of Arabic such as in explaining difficult activities, expressing opinions, asking questions and explaining grammar. These findings were in accordance with Cook's (2001) balanced view of allowing students to use both L1 and L2. However, in the current study, the class observations showed that the students over-used Arabic when doing an activity in pairs or groups and this appeared contradictory to the teachers' restrictions of avoiding Arabic for pair or group work. It should be noticed that the teacher's emphasis on forwarding questions to her in English only might play a crucial role in the increasing amount of Arabic spoken by students when doing activities together. Students seek help from each other excessively through Arabic; therefore, it seems that students should be allowed to ask their teachers about the new language in L1 rather than keeping them confused and hesitant. Using L1 excessively for pair or group work in L2 has been a common problem. Although the use of L1 during the conduction of a collaborative task is a natural phenomena and a recommended strategy for reducing cognitive load on students (Scott and de la Fuente, 2008), the students in the current study tended to use it excessively. Therefore, it could be useful to follow the suggestions by Willis and Willis (2007) which recommend preparing rules to be followed by students about using L1. Moreover, it could be beneficial to discuss with students their reasons for using L1 (Willis and Willis, 2007).

The above discussion revealed some purposes for which the students used Arabic; however, some areas in which the students avoided Arabic have been identified. One area in which there was overwhelming agreement from the students was avoiding Arabic for less riveting lessons. Many students (73%) agreed that boring lessons become more boring when Arabic is applied. This could be a sign that the students were motivated to learn English as they wanted their teacher to use English even with boring lessons. However, this study did not focus on the relationship between students' motivation and their use of L1, an area which needs further investigation. In addition to the above variables frequencies, the chi-square test was applied with this small sample to find out if there was any existing relationship among variables. However, there were no significant relationships among these variables.

Another area for avoiding Arabic was giving class instructions (66.6%). Many students said that these instructions were clear to them and they had become accustomed to them. Also, the class teacher explained that she usually acquaints her students with common phrases of instructions at the beginning of the year to reduce the amount of Arabic in the class. Avoiding Arabic for this case seems to be logical and acceptable since the students have already been provided with the instructions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of this study revealed that the use of Arabic was an unavoidable phenomenon. The teachers' and students' use of Arabic appeared to be   systematic, though there were a few cases in which they did not make the best use of it. The teachers were aware of the

disadvantages of the excessive use of Arabic, as their use of Arabic depended on their students' specific needs most of the time. They preferred to use it with beginners and low achieving students to help them understand the new language. Moreover, the study revealed some situations for which the teachers used Arabic. Explaining grammatical terms, introducing new vocabulary and giving exam instructions were the main areas for employing Arabic by teachers. Despite the teachers' flexibility in using Arabic in some situations, they appeared to be strict about allowing their students to ask questions in Arabic; also, they were not in favour of contrasting the two languages which, as previously mentioned, contradicted the recommendations of some studies.

Speaking of the students' application of Arabic, the majority of the students were in favour of the systematic use of Arabic, and they expressed their desire to practice the new language. In spite of their belief in the necessity of minimising Arabic, they did not ignore the feeling of comfort that Arabic can create, especially when used for certain purposes. These findings were in line with the argument that resorting to L1 is a natural phenomenon (Atkinson, 1987; Harbord, 1992; Nation, 2003; Scott and de la Fuente, 2008). The students' main uses of Arabic applied to giving exam instructions, translating words, contrasting the two languages, explaining grammar, asking questions and participating in pair work. The last two areas were in contrast to the teachers' views. In addition to the previous issues, the students were against employing Arabic when giving class instructions and explaining uninteresting lessons.

It is recommended that further studies be undertaken on larger scales to develop more understanding of teachers' and learners' attitudes towards applying Arabic in EFL classrooms in the Saudi context. Moreover, this study could encourage further research to investigate the relationship between using Arabic and motivation on one hand and between using Arabic and promoting learners' level on the other hand. These new studies could help educators and curriculum developers to publish guidelines for teachers and students on applying Arabic systematically. Also, course books should be improved to include the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and engage students in doing activities in English outside the classroom, as recommended by Al-Awadh (2000). This would reduce the amount of spoken Arabic in EFL classrooms and provide more communicative opportunities.

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Appendix A

Students' questionnaire

(English version)

Dear student

The aim of this study is to investigate your attitudes and reasons towards using Arabic in English classes by both your teacher and you. I would be grateful if you answer the following questions as your answers will help teachers and educators to understand your needs and overcome any difficulties you may have with English.

Section A:

Please circle ONE answer which best reflects your attitude to the given statement. You can add further comments about the statements in the boxes

1. I prefer my teacher to use Arabic in English classes.

   a. always
   b. often
   c. sometimes
   d. rarely
   e. never

2. I feel more comfortable when I talk to my teacher in Arabic.

   a. always
   b. often
   c. sometimes
   d. rarely
   e. never

3. I can understand the lesson much better if my teacher uses Arabic.

    a. always
    b. often
    c. sometimes
    d. rarely
    e. never

4. I prefer the teacher to use Arabic if the lesson is boring.

    a. always
    b. often
    c. sometimes
    d. rarely
    e. never

5. Arabic can help me to express my feelings and ideas that I cannot explain in English.

    a. always
    b. often
    c. sometimes
    d. rarely
    e. never

6. I prefer to ask my teacher questions in Arabic.

    a. always
    b. often
    c. sometimes
    d. rarely
    e. never

7. I prefer to do an activity with a partner in Arabic.

    a. always
    b. often
    c. sometimes
    d. rarely
    e. never

8. I understand new vocabulary only when I use a bilingual dictionary.

    a. always
    b. often
    c. sometimes
    d. rarely
    e. never

9. The teacher should clarify difficult activities in Arabic.

    a. always
    b. often
    c. sometimes
    d. rarely
    e. never

10. English grammar should be explained in Arabic.

    a. always
    b. often
    c. sometimes
    d. rarely
    e. rarely

11. New vocabulary should be translated into Arabic.

    a. always
    b. often
    c. sometimes
    d. rarely
    e. never

12. Class instructions should be given in Arabic.

    a. always
    b. often
    c. sometimes
    d. rarely
    e. never

13. I feel more comfortable if exam instructions are given in Arabic.

    a. always
    b. often
    c. sometimes
    d. rarely
    e. never

14. It is necessary to explain the differences and similarities between Arabic and English in Arabic.

    a. always
    b. often
    c. sometimes
    d. rarely
    e. never

15. Using Arabic prevents me from learning English.

    a. always
    b. often
    c. sometimes
    d. rarely
    e. never

16. What do you think of your level in English?

    a. excellent
    b. good
    c. satisfactory
    d. poor

Section B:

1. Please write down the reasons that encourage you to use Arabic in English classes.

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2. Write the reasons that encourage you to avoid using Arabic in English classes.

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Thanks for your cooperation

Appendix B

Students' questionnaire

(Arabic version)

عزيزتي الطالبة
إن الهدف من هذا الاستفتاء هو معرفة موقفك تجاه استخدام اللغة العربية كوسيلة لتعلم اللغة الانجليزية
والأسباب الكامنة وراء هذا الموقف. آمل الإجابة على جميع الأسئلة حيث إن مشاركتك ستساعد
المعلمات والتربويات على فهم احتياجاتك والمشاكل التي قد تواجهك أثناء تعلم اللغة الانجليزية.

أولا: ضعي دائرة حول الإجابة المختارة، يمكنك إضافة أي تعليق في المساحة المعطاة.

1. أفضل أن تستخدم المعلمة اللغة العربية في حصص اللغة الانجليزية.

- دائما
- غالبا
- أحيانا
- نادرا
- لا

2. اشعر بارتياح أكثر عندما أتحدث مع معلمتي باللغة العربية.

- دائما
- غالبا
- أحيانا
- نادرا
- لا

3. استطيع فهم دروس اللغة الانجليزية بشكل أفضل عندما تستخدم معلمتي اللغة العربية أثناء الشرح.

- دائما
- غالبا
- أحيانا
- نادرا
- لا

4. أفضل أن تستخدم المعلمة اللغة العربية إذا كان الدرس مملا.

- دائما
- غالبا
- أحيانا
- نادرا
- لا

5. اللغة العربية تساعدني على التعبير عن آرائي ومشاعري عندما لا استطيع التعبير عنهم باللغة الانجليزية.

- دائما
- غالبا
- أحيانا
- نادرا
- لا

6. أفضل أن أوجه أسئلتي للمعلمة باللغة العربية.

- دائما
- غالبا
- أحيانا
- نادرا
- لا

7. أفضل أن أقوم بأداء التمارين مع زميلتي في الصف باللغة العربية.

- دائما
- غالبا
- أحيانا
- نادرا
- لا

8. أستطيع فهم معاني الكلمات الجديدة فقط عند استخدام قاموس مترجم.

- دائما
- غالبا

- أحيانا
-. نادرا
- لا

9. على المعلمة أن توضح التمارين الصعبة باللغة العربية .

- دائما
- غالبا
- أحيانا
-. نادرا
- لا

10. يجب شرح قواعد اللغة الانجليزية باللغة العربية.

- دائما
- غالبا
- أحيانا
-. نادرا
- لا

11. يجب ترجمة الكلمات الانجليزية الجديدة إلى اللغة العربية.

- دائما
- غالبا
- أحيانا
-. نادرا
- لا

12. يجب إعطاء تعليمات الفصل باللغة العربية.
- دائما
- غالبا
- أحيانا
-. نادرا
- لا

13. أشعر بالارتياح عندما تترجم تعليمات الاختبار إلى اللغة العربية.

- دائما
- غالبا
- أحيانا
- نادرا
- لا

14. على المعلمة أن تستخدم اللغة العربية لتوضيح أوجه الشبه والاختلاف بين اللغة العربية والانجليزية.

- دائما
- غالبا
- أحيانا
- نادرا
- لا

15. استخدام اللغة العربية يعيقني من تعلم اللغة الانجليزية.

- دائما
- غالبا
- أحيانا
- نادرا
- لا

16. ماهو تقييمك لمستواك في اللغة الانجليزية؟

- ممتاز
- جيد
- مقبول
- ضعيف

ثانيا: الرجاء ذكر الأسباب التي تدفعك إلى استخدام اللغة العربية أثناء حصص اللغة الانجليزية.

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ثالثا: اذكري الأسباب التي تشجعك على تجنب اللغة العربية أثناء تعلم اللغة الانجليزية.

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شكرا على تعاونك

Appendix C

Interviews

A. Teachers' interview

1. Many language educators think that the mother tongue should be excluded from EFL classes. Do you agree?

2. Do you use Arabic in your classes? If so for what purposes?

3. Do you think that your students' level affect the amount of Arabic used in the classroom?

4. Do you think that using Arabic is a sign of less creative teaching?

5. Do you allow your students to use Arabic? Why/why not?

B. Students' interview (English version)

1. Do you feel motivated to learn English?

2. Does your teacher use Arabic in English classroom?

3. Do you think that Arabic helps you to learn English?

4. When do you prefer your teacher to use Arabic?

5. When do you use Arabic in English classes?

C. Students' interview (Arabic version)

1) هل تشعرين بالحماس لتعلم اللغة الانجليزية؟

2) هل تستخدم معلمتك اللغة العربية اثناء حصص اللغة الانجليزية؟

3) هل تعتقدين بأن استخدام اللغة العربية يساعدك في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية؟

4) متى تفضلين ان تستخدم معلمتك اللغة العربية؟

5) متى تستخدمين اللغة العربية أثناء حصص اللغة الانجليزية؟

Appendix D

Observation checklist

Observation checklist 1: The teacher's use of Arabic

Pre stage	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4
greeting				
Chatting		√		√
Checking homework				
Class instructions				
Warm-up questions				
In stage				
Translating words		√	√	√
Explaining grammar	√			
Translating sentences				
Clarifying activities				
Referring to bilingual dictionaries				
Checking comprehension				
Answering questions		√		

Post stage				
Checking comprehension				
Assigning homework				

Observation checklist 2: The students' use of Arabic

Pre stage				
Greeting				
Chatting		√		
Doing homework				
In stage				
Asking questions		√		
Working with peers	√	√	√	√
Using bilingual dictionaries				
Showing understanding				
Responding to teacher's questions		√		√
Post stage				
asking questions				