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Students' Attitudes toward the Use of L1 in EFL Classrooms: The Case of EFL Algerian
Students

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The work presented in this MA thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original and my own work, except as acknowledged in the text. The work in this thesis has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

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Abstract

The instrumental use of the students' mother tongue in the foreign-language classroom constitutes a controversial issue among language researchers and theorists. Supporters of the monolingual policy claim that the students' mother tongue should be completely avoided in foreign-language classes, whereas opponents of this policy contend that using the mother tongue in the foreign-language classroom can have positive effects on the teaching/learning process. As the Algerian universities have adopted an English-only policy, we set out to look into the attitudes of Algerian students of English towards the use of their mother tongue (Arabic) in English classes, and to investigate the possible factors that might play a role in the conformation of their views. To this end, a questionnaire was designed and distributed to 58 students studying English at the University of Constantine 1, Algeria. A total of 46 intermediate-advanced students took part in our research study. The results showed that the students held different attitudes towards the use of Arabic in the English classroom which vary according to some specific factors, namely their English proficiency level, the purpose of the use of Arabic and the amount of its use during English classes. So, these findings may suggest that the adoption of the English-only policy at the Algerian universities should perhaps be reconsidered.

Keywords: students' attitudes, Algerian students, L1 use, L2 classroom, English-only policy, factors, Arabic.

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I. Introduction

Second/foreign language (L2) teaching constitutes a highly specialized task which requires the professional implementation of specific methods and techniques. For this particular reason, in the field of language teaching (LT) in general and in English language teaching (ELT) in particular, several studies have been conducted to investigate the efficiency of many instructional methods and techniques that might promote the teaching/learning process. One of the common teaching techniques is the incorporation of learners' mother tongue (L1) in teaching English as a second language (ESL) or as a foreign language (EFL). In this respect, there have been conflicting opinions and practices concerning whether the learners' L1 should be incorporated to or excluded from the L2 classroom because many language theorists have offered different hypotheses regarding the subject matter. On the one hand, there are those who support the L2-only policy (i.e., monolingual approach) calling for a complete exclusion of L1 from the L2 classroom so as to maximize L2 input (Krashen, 1982) and to avoid negative transfer from L1 into L2 (Cook, 2001). On the other hand, there are those who contend that the judicious and instrumental use of L1 in the L2 classroom would certainly render desired and positive outcomes (Tang, 2002; Nation, 2003). However, despite these opposing views, the widely held belief has been that L1 use is more detrimental than beneficial (Brooks-Lewis, 2009).

In the year 2004, the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research implemented the European educational system known as LMD which stands for Licence (Bachelor's degree), Master and Doctorate establishing that the teaching of English at the Algerian universities should follow the English-only policy. This new approach called for EFL Algerian teachers' and learners' avoidance of the use of the L1 (Arabic) in the EFL classroom ignoring evidence of the positive role played by the use of L1 in the L2 classroom, supported by scientific research (Atkinson, 1987; Tang, 2002; Bouangeune, 2009), as well as

the students' attitudes towards its implementation since their attitudes might interfere with the effectiveness of any technique. For example, we know that using L1 might be very useful, but what if our students believe otherwise and develop a resistance to our teaching? So, we should learn about the students' attitudes towards specific techniques because the effectiveness of these techniques might be reduced when students have a negative attitude towards them.

Despite the fact that several studies have been conducted in several contexts to look into EFL learners' perceptions of the L1 use in EFL classes, there is still scarce research regarding the attitudes of university students of English towards it in many contexts, especially in Algeria. It is worth to mention that although French is not an official language in Algeria, it is widely used in many contexts such as media, commerce, government, culture and education (from primary school) due to the French colonization of Algeria (1830-1962), so code-switching is very common, and Algerian speakers constantly use both L1 (Arabic) and L2 (French) in their daily life. In addition, there is only scant research that investigates the aspects which shape EFL learners' views of the use of L1 in the EFL classroom. On these grounds, our study aims at investigating EFL Algerian students' attitudes towards the use of their L1 (Arabic) in English classes, and to explore the possible factors that influence their perceptions. So, the study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Algerian students of English towards the use of L1 (Arabic) in EFL classes?

2. What specific factors that might be playing a role in the conformation of these attitudes?

This dissertation consists of a theoretical and an empirical part. The first part provides the theoretical background upon which the second is built and has four sections. The first discusses how the L1 use in the L2 classroom has been looked at throughout the history of

LT, so we will review some teaching methods and approaches that either favor or disfavor its use. The second section discusses the main viewpoints and arguments of some language scholars regarding the use of L1 in L2 teaching/learning process. The third section presents the possible roles of the L1 in the L2 classroom proposed by some language scholars. The final section gives an account of existing literature on the topic of students' and teachers' attitudes towards the use of L1 in EFL classes. The second part presents the empirical core of the research study and has four sections. The first section describes the methodology dealing with the participants who took part in the study and the materials used to collect the needed data for our investigation. The second and third sections deal with the presentation of the data obtained from our research tool and the systematic discussion of the results. The last section presents the conclusions drawn from our investigation.

II. Theoretical Background

In this section, we will present a historical and theoretical contextualization of our research work. First, we will present an account of how L1 has been used and looked at in several teaching approaches and methods starting with the grammar-traditional method (GTM) and ending with the post-method, eclectic approaches. Second, we will discuss the main arguments and counter arguments regarding the use of L1 in the L2 classroom stated by some scholars. Then, we will present some of the main uses of L1 in teaching L2 proposed by a number of researchers. And finally, we will review existing scholarly literature on the topic of learner's and teacher's attitudes towards the use of L1.

1. History of L1 Use in L2 Classes

Throughout the years, a considerable number of teaching methods and approaches have been developed and adopted to effectively teach various second/foreign languages

(L2s). These teaching methods and approaches enact different and often conflicting views and perceptions on the instrumental use of the L1 in the L2 classroom. In this regard, some of them have been in favor of the incorporation of L1 in the teaching/learning process, whereas others have argued against it to varying degrees.

After the sixteenth century, languages like English, French and Italian became somewhat popular after classical languages Latin and Greek, which had predominated in several academic fields up to that moment, but now had started to lose their prominence. However, until the late of the nineteenth century, modern languages were still studied and taught using the same method that had been used to teach Greek and Latin, namely the GTM. In this method, the main focus was on teaching L2 grammar rules explicitly in the learners' L1 and on translating difficult literary texts from the target language (TL) into the L1. So, the learners' L1 played a significant role in this context. More importantly, L2 learners were not expected to communicate or even to speak in the TL since the main focus was on understanding written texts. Since learners were mainly exposed to their L1 in the L2 classroom, they were unable to develop oral and communicative skills, so the teaching method started to be looked at as useless and inefficient, and eventuality lost its popularity (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

As a reaction to the limitations of the GTM, new teaching methods were developed which favored the exclusion of L1 from the L2 classroom. One of these methods was the direct method (DM) which completely banned the use of learners' L1 in L2 classes. Advocates of this method argued that L2 learners should acquire the L2 the way children acquire their L1 (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Another method which called for the avoidance of L1 in the L2 classroom was the audio-lingual method (ALM). Supporters of this method claimed that learners' L1 and L2 are two different systems that should not be mixed in the L2 environment to avoid interference from L1 hindering L2 acquisition (Cook, 2001).

From the 1970s, attention began to be given to the development of communicative skills and competences, so teachers and educationists shifted to communicative language teaching (CLT) (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). The main aim of this approach is to help learners to naturally communicate in L2, so it favors its use in the classroom as much as possible to maximize the exposure to it; however, this approach does not discourage the use of L1 during the learning/teaching process, rather, teachers are welcomed to use it as long as it brings benefits and promotes language learning in general and communication in particular (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

More recently, in the field of LT, many teachers are adopting an innovative method known as the eclectic method. This new method has emerged as a reaction to the inflexibility and shortcomings of previous teaching methods believing that relying on only a given method or approach in teaching L2s is detrimental in the long run. In this regard, the eclectic method brings into the L2 classroom various principles and practices from different methods and approaches making teaching more flexible, creative, adaptive and productive. This method takes into account learners' needs and abilities as well as the objectives of the lesson (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). On this account, the eclectic-methods approach promotes the use of learners' L1 in the L2 classroom as long as it promotes learning and assimilation.

2. Arguments and Counter Arguments of the English-Only Approach

According to Zhao and Macaro (2014), when it comes to the use of learners' L1 in L2 classes, educationists and scholars have three different viewpoints: 1) the L2 should be the only medium of instruction, 2) the L2 should be the dominant medium of instruction, and 3) the combined use of the L1 and L2 is recommended. Zhao and Macaro (2014) stated that these views have their own theoretical and empirical support, making it challenging to decide which one is preferable in particular situations.

According to Cook (2001), there are three main premises supporting the L2-only approach. The first premise is that the mechanisms underpinning adults' L2 acquisition are the same as those underlying children's L1 acquisition. In other words, adults acquire an L2 in the same way children acquire their L1, that is, without relying on any previous linguistic knowledge. However, several scholars challenged this claim. Bley-Vroman (1990) argued that children are born with a unique inborn and innate capacity to acquire L1 which does not exist in adults because this ability disappears in adulthood. Also, when children are born, their minds are like blank sheets having no knowledge of the L1, whereas adults who have learnt their L1 depend on and make use of it while learning an L2. Similarly, regardless the difficulties adults encounter while learning L2, unlike children, adults rely on their maturity and cognitive abilities to overcome learning problems. In addition, the amount of exposure children have while acquiring their L1 is much higher than that of adults while learning L2, not to mention the beneficial social factors like motivation which promote children' L1 acquisition.

The second premise underlying the L2-only preference is that the L2 learning process should be kept completely separate from learners' L1 interference so as to avoid negative transfer from L1 into L2 (Cook 2001). Consequently, teachers should avoid the comparison of L1and L2 grammars as much as the use of translation, instead they are encouraged to use L2 to define and explain new and unknown vocabulary. Cook (2001) also maintained that this attitude towards the use of L1 indicates that advocates of the L2-only approach merely take into account the "coordinate type" of language learning neglecting the other type known as the "compound type". In this regard, Stern (1992) argued that in the 1950s, two sorts of bilingualism were proposed: coordinate and compound bilingualism. The former favors the separation of L1 and L2 and the latter favors the link between the two. On this account, two main types of learning techniques were identified: intra-lingual strategies which favor the

exclusive use of L2, and cross-lingual ones which encourage the use of learners' L1 in L2 classes. According to Stern (1992), the instrumental use of the L1 in L2 learning contexts facilitates L2 acquisition. Furthermore, contrastive studies have found that making learners aware of the similarities and differences between their L1 and L2 helps them in the learning process (Kupferberg, 1999). Cook (2001) concluded that some forms of L1 transfer could, in fact, promote L2 learning.

The final premise identified by Cook (2001) is that since the only source of L2 input for learners is the classroom, all interactions should exclusively be conducted in the L2 so as to maximize exposure. Zhao and Macaro (2014) suggested that this view of L1 exclusion in L2 classrooms may be grounded on Krashen's input hypothesis. Krashen (1992) stated that the key factor for L2 acquisition is the exposure to a great amount of L2 comprehensible input coupled with some facilitative affective factors, namely high motivation, self-confidence and low anxiety. Nonetheless, Gass (1988) contented that it is clear that input to some degree is important for L2 acquisition to take place, but what kind of input necessary is somewhat ambiguous. Gass (1988) contented that it is clear that input to some degree important for L2 acquisition to take place, but what kind of input necessary is somewhat ambiguous. She stated that for input to be assimilated, we probably have to adapt or regulate it to meet L2 learners' needs, and if so, we have to find out how to do so. She added that we should make sure whether input can only come from teachers and native speakers, or it can also emerge from follow learners. Zhao and Macaro (2014) continued stating that L2-only preference is also based on Long's interaction hypothesis. Long (1983) argued that negotiations of meaning through various forms of conversational adaptations plays a significant role in L2 acquisition. However, Ellis (1995) concluded that the effectiveness of negotiations of meaning heavily depends on the number of L2 learners and the availability of time which often limits the amount of interaction.

Because of the lack and dearth of convincing reasons and strong evidence for the exclusion of learners' L1 in the L2 classroom, many language researchers have been interested in investigating the potential roles of L1 in L2 classes, and how it can be used to facilitate the teaching/learning process (Macaro, 2001). Several practitioners and researchers have contended that learners' L1 has a positive effect on the learning environment (Schweers, 1999; Tang, 2002). Atkinson (1987) argued that L1 inclusion in the L2 classroom has a number of positive effects, particularly with learners who have a low level in L2.

3. L1 Role in L2 Classrooms

A considerable amount of research has been carried out to investigate the role played by the learners' L1 in learning an L2, and it has been found that there are several benefits of using the L1 in the L2 classroom, especially at early levels of L2 learning. Harmer (2001) maintained that the efficiency and effectiveness of L1 use largely depends on when it is used and for what specific purposes. According to Atkinson (1987) the learners' L1 can be used to elicit specific language patterns at all learning stages by asking for example the question "how do we say X in English" which is clearer and less time consuming than other techniques of eliciting like miming and visual prompting. Besides, Atkinson claims that the L1can also be used to give instructions and explain complex activities to beginners. In addition, teachers can use L1, Atkinson claims, as a tool for checking students' understanding of certain grammatical structures and semantic issues. Lastly, EFL beginners can use their L1 in pair and group work to compare their answers to grammar or comprehension tasks, and to try to explain to each other some language-related issues, therefore complementing teachers' instruction. According to Cook (2001) and Macaro (2001), the use of L1 can help teachers to explain complicated L2 grammar issues and to teach new L2 vocabulary. Holthouse (2006) proposes that the L1 can be used to check whether learners have understood what has been

said or explained to them. Also, when working with beginners and unmotivated learners, the use of L1 preserves student-teacher relationship contributing to the maintenance of a positive atmosphere and reduces the affective filters ultimately helping learners to feel more motivated, confident and permeable to learning. Hamin and Majid (2006) concludes that ESL beginners who generated ideas in their L1 before using the L2 improved their writing performance in terms of content, vocabulary, organization and language use.

4. Students' and Teachers' Attitudes towards L1 Use

Several studies have been carried out to look into learners' and teachers' perceptions of the use of L1 in the L2 classroom. In Croatia, Duimovic (2007) investigated the attitudes of 100 EFL intermediate students towards the use of their L1 (Croatian) in EFL classes. In his study, Duimovic used an attitudinal questionnaire which contained various questions about the use of L1 in L2 classes. The results from the questionnaire revealed that the vast majority of the students held a positive attitude towards the teacher's implementation of the L1 in the teaching/learning process. According to the students, the teacher should use some Croatian in the L2 classroom because it is necessary to explain some grammar points, define unknown vocabulary and to enhance their comprehension of new concepts. In another study, Schweers (1999) carried out research at the University of Puerto Rico to look into students' and teachers' attitudes towards the use of L1 (Spanish) in EFL classes. In his study, the researcher used two questionnaires to gather data: a student and teacher questionnaires. The results showed that the majority of the students (88.7%) held a positive attitude towards the use of Spanish in EFL classes because it decreases anxiety, boosts their self-esteem, and it also facilitates the understanding of new vocabulary and difficult concepts. As for the teachers, they thought that Spanish should be used in EFL classes because it assists their teaching,

creates a comfortable teaching/learning environment and reduces the affective filters between them and their students.

In Greece, Prodromou (2002) conducted a study to look into the attitudes of 300 students towards the use of their L1 (Greek) in EFL classes. The main aim of the investigation was to see whether students' proficiency level in English would affect their perceptions of L1 inclusion in the L2 classroom. On this account, the participants were divided into three proficiency groups: beginner, intermediate and advanced, and for data collection he used a questionnaire. The findings showed that low-level students accepted the idea of using L1 in several situations, namely to explain grammar and the differences in the use of L1 and L2 and to check for comprehension. The study concluded that learners become less dependent on their L1 as their L2 level increases. Along the same lines, Nazary (2008) conducted a study in Iran to examine the attitudes of 85 students of English at Tehran University towards the use of L1 (Persian) in EFL classes. The participants were divided into three proficiency groups: elementary, intermediate and advanced to investigate the relationship between the students' attitudes towards the use of their L1 and their proficiency level in English. The researcher used a questionnaire as a tool to gather the students' opinions. The results showed that the majority of participants from the three groups held a negative attitude towards the use of their L1 in the L2 classroom for the sake of increasing the amount of L2 exposure in the classroom. However, a more recent study, Sa'd and Qadermazi (2015) investigated the attitudes of 60 EFL learners towards the use of their L1 (Arabic) in EFL classes. The participants had an intermediate level and were studying in an EFL institute which follows the English-only policy. The data were collected through triangulation: a questionnaire, class observations and semi-structured interview. The overall results revealed that the majority of participants held a negative attitude towards the English-only policy and reported their desire for the judicious implementation of the L1 in L2 classes.

In Saudi Arabia, Alshammary (2011) examined the attitudes of 95 college students and 13 teachers towards the use of L1 (Arabic) in EFL classes. The students had an intermediate level in English. The researchers used two questionnaires: a student and teacher questionnaires. The results from the questionnaires showed that the majority of the students (61%) and teachers (69%) held a positive attitude towards the inclusion of Arabic in EFL classes, for they believed that it had several benefits such as defining new vocabulary, explaining grammar points and clarifying complicated concepts.

III. The Empirical Study

This part is dedicated to the empirical core of the research study and is divided into four sections. The first section discusses the methodology adopted to carry out the research study and has three sub-sections. The first sub-section deals with the setting and participants who took part in the study. The second describes the materials and procedure employed to gather data to be analyzed so as to answer the research questions. The last provides a description of the questionnaire and the rationale behind its choice as a research tool for our investigation. The second section gives a detailed presentation of the obtained data along with a commentary. The third section presents a systematic discussion of the results. The last section briefly states the main conclusions drawn from the research study along with some research implications.

1. Methodology

1.1. Participants

A total of 46 L1-Arabic L2-English Algerian students from the University of Constantine 1, Algeria took part in our study: 32 subjects were female and 14 were male. The participants were on average 22 years old, with ages ranging between 20 and 25. The

participants were classified into two groups: 23 intermediate (B1, B2) and 23 advanced (C1, C2) according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The participants were randomly taken from the original number which was 58 students discarding those who did not respond to all the questions (4 subjects) and those who were beginners (A1, A2) (5 subjects) as well as few advanced students (3 subjects) in order to make the two groups equivalent in number (23 subjects). The EFL intermediate participants were first- and second-year undergraduates and the advanced ones were master's students. It is worth to mention that Algerian EFL students are required to have at least an A2 level in English to access the undergraduate studies at the university and at least a C1 level to access the master's studies. The participants were informed that their answers would only be used for academic purposes and would be kept confidential.

1.2. Materials and Procedure for Data Collection

In order to answer the research questions of our study, an online questionnaire was designed on Google Forms to gather data. The questionnaire was based on the existing questionnaires of previous research studies on students' and teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of L1 in the L2 classroom (Gaebler, 2014; Duimovic, 2007) with some modifications and adaptations to fit the main aims of our study (see Appendix A). The questionnaire was distributed to the students online.

1.3. The Questionnaire

In this study, we used a questionnaire as a research tool for some good reasons. According to Bloch (2011), the use of questionnaires in surveys has distinct advantages over face-to-face interviews because they can be distributed online or handed directly to the participants, they are less time-consuming , they can be used with a big number of

participants and they increase the reliability and validity of the answers, especially when the research topics are personal and sensitive because the absence of the interviewer gives greater privacy and anonymity to the participants (p. 184).

Our questionnaire has two sections. The first is intended to gather background information on the participants including their gender, age and English proficiency level. The second section is intended to gather information about the participants' attitudes towards teachers' and students' use of L1 in EFL classes, so the participants were asked to answer 9 multiple-choice questions. In fact, we opted for close-ended questions because as it stated by Bryman (2004), these questions are used more than open-ended ones because they improve the consistency of answers and the respondents may find them quicker and easier to answer. Also, this type of questions allows the comparison between the respondents' answers. To increase the reliability of the collected data, the respondents were allowed to choose more than one option and to freely add additional answers to some questions when it is necessary.

The rationale behind the designing of our questionnaire was especially to access the experience of those students who, contrary to what the Ministry has established as normative, believe in the use of the L1 in the English classroom. So, in order to explore and cover a wide range of the main dimensions of the problem, we deployed a wh-strategy which is convenient to our research aims. For instance, the participants were asked whether they were in favor of or against the use of L1 (Arabic) in EFL classes to see their perceptions of the Ministry's implementation of the English-only policy. Also, they were asked how often and for what purposes they think EFL teachers and students should use the L1 in the EFL classroom. In addition, they were asked about the possible effects of the use of the L1 in the EFL classroom.

2. Results

Concerning question 1 (Should Arabic be used in English classes?), our results show that 91.30 % of intermediate students answered with 'yes' and only 8.70 % answered with 'no' which indicates that the vast majority held a positive attitude towards the use of Arabic in the EFL classroom. However, when it comes to advanced students, we can see that only 26.08 % answered with 'yes' and 73.92 % answered with 'no' which indicates that many advanced students somewhat held a negative attitude towards the inclusion of Arabic in EFL classes (see Table1).

Table 1

Students' Answers to Question 1

	Intermediate		Advanced	
	#Ans.	%	#Ans.	%
Yes	21	91.3	6	26.08
No	2	8.7	17	73.92

Note. #Ans = Students choosing the option. % = percentage (100 = 23).

As for question 2 (How often should your professor use Arabic in English classes?), our results show that many intermediate students (56.52 %) believed that teachers should sometimes use Arabic in English classes, and 21.73 % thought that teachers should frequently use it. The minority of intermediate students believed that teachers should rarely use Arabic (8.70 %) or never use it (8.70 %). However, many Advanced students (78.26 %) thought that teachers should never use Arabic, and some of them believed that rare and sometimes use of Arabic is acceptable (13.04 % and 8.70 respectively) (see Table2).

Table 2

Students' Answers to Question 2

	Intermediate		Advanced	
	#Ans.	%	#Ans.	%
Never	2	8.7	18	78.26
Rarely	2	8.7	3	13.04
Sometimes	14	56.52	2	8.7
Frequently	5	21.73	0	0

Students' responses to question 3 (When do you think it is suitable for your professor to use Arabic in English classes?) show that the majority of intermediate students believed that teachers should use Arabic in the English classroom to define unknown vocabulary (95.65 %), to explain difficult ideas (91.30 %) and to explain grammar points (82.60 %), and only few believed that teachers should use Arabic to give instructions and to propose new learning strategies (30. 34 % and 21. 73 % respectively). In the 'other' option, 4.34 % of intermediate students believed that teachers can use Arabic when "asking difficult questions and chatting with students in breaks". As for advanced students, though many of them (69.56 %) thought that teachers should never use Arabic, they are some who felt that teachers can use Arabic to explain new vocabulary and difficult concepts (30.34 % and 17.39 % respectively). Also, in the option "other", 4.34 % stated that teachers can use Arabic "when telling jokes and having fun with them" (see Table 3).

Table 3

Students' Answers to Question 3

	Intermediate		Advanced	
	#Ans.	%	#Ans.	%
Explain new words	23	95.65	7	30.43
Explain grammar points	19	82.60	0	0
Explain difficult concepts	21	91.3	4	17.39
Give instructions	7	30.43	0	0
Propose learning strategies	5	21.73	0	0
Professors should never use L1	0	0	16	69.56
Other: Asking difficult questions	1	4.34	0	0
Telling Jokes	0	0	1	4.34
Casual chatting with students	1	4.34	0	0

Regarding students' views of how often they should use Arabic in English classes (question 4), the responses show that many intermediate students (52%) thought that students should rarely use Arabic in the English classroom while 43.66 % of them favored 'sometimes' use, and only 4.34 % of them believed that students should never use Arabic in

English classes. As for advanced students, although many of them (60.86%) felt that students should never use Arabic in English classes, they are some who supported 'rare' use (30.43%) and 'sometimes' use (8.7%) (see Table 4).

Table 4

Students' Answers to Question 4

	Intermediate		Advanced	
	#Ans.	%	#Ans.	%
Never	1	4.34	14	60.86
Rarely	13	52	7	30.43
Sometimes	9	43.66	2	8.7
Frequently	0	0	0	0

As for question 5 (When do you think it is appropriate for students to use Arabic in English classes?), the results show that many the intermediate students believed that students can use Arabic in the English classroom for various purposes: do pair/group works (86.95 %), explain lesson-related points for classmates (78.26 %) and to chat with each other (56.52 %). Also, 47. 82 % believed that students can use Arabic to speak with the teacher and 13.04 % thought that it can be use to take notes, whereas the minority (4.34 %) felt that students should not use Arabic. However, many advanced students (60.86%) did not favor the idea of students using Arabic, and some believed that students can use Arabic to do pair/group works (30.43 %), to explain lesson points to peers (26.08 %) and to talk with classmates and the teacher (17.39 % and 8.7 % respectively). Also, in the option 'other', 4.34 % of advanced students stated that students can also use Arabic "to ask the teacher about the English translation of an Arabic idiomatic expression or proverb" (see Table 5).

Table 5

Students' Answers to Question 5

	Intermediate		Advanced	
	#Ans.	%	#Ans.	%
Explain points for a classmate	23	95.65	7	30.43
Chat with classmates	19	82.60	0	0
Do pair/group works	21	91.3	4	17.39

Take notes	7	30.43	0	0
Talk to the teacher	5	21.73	2	8.7
Students should not use Arabic	0	0	16	69.56
Other: Stating an Arabic idiom/prov	0	0	1	4.34

Concerning question 6 (Do you think the use of Arabic in the classroom helps you learn English?), the results show that many intermediate students (39.13 %) saw that the use of Arabic in the English classroom helps them fairly much, and 30.45 % believed that it helps them a lot. Also, 26.08 % of them felt that the use of Arabic helps them a little, and only the minority (4.34 %) believed that the use of Arabic is not helpful at all in learning English. However, the majority of advanced students (83.60 %) held the belief that the use of Arabic is not helpful at all in learning English, and only 17.40 % of them believed that it helps them a little (see Table 6).

Table 6

Students' Answers to Question 6

	Intermediate		Advanced	
	#Ans.	%	#Ans.	%
Not at all	1	4.34	19	82.60
A little	6	26.08	4	17.40
Fairly much	9	39.13	0	0
A lot	7	30.45	0	0

Students' responses to question 7 (If you think that the use of Arabic in the English classroom is beneficial, why?) show that the vast majority of intermediate students held the belief that the use of Arabic helps them in learning English in various ways. 95.65 % of them thought that the use of Arabic helps them in understanding vocabulary, 91.30 % believed that it helps them in understanding difficult concepts, 65.21 % felt that it makes them feel comfortable and less anxious and 34.78 % saw that it preserves their relationship with the teacher. In the option 'other', 8.70 % of intermediate students believed that the use of Arabic helps them to express themselves and to participate in the classroom. As for advanced

students, some of them (17. 39%) believed that using Arabic helps them in understanding

vocabulary and difficult concepts (see Table 7).

Table 7

Students' Answers to Question 7

	Intermediate		Advanced	
	#Ans.	%	#Ans.	%
Define new vocabulary	22	95.65	4	17.39
Understand difficult concepts	21	91.3	4	17.39
Reduce anxiety	15	65.21	0	0
Maintain student-teacher relationship	8	34.78	0	0
Other:				
Promote participation/self-expression	2	8.7	0	0

With regard to question 8, (Do you think the use of Arabic in English classes prevents

you from learning English?), the results show that the majority of intermediate students

(60.86 %) held the belief that the use of Arabic in the English classroom is not detrimental at

all, and only 21.73 % believed that its use hinders their learning a little. However, 13.34 %

saw that the use of Arabic in English classes prevents their progress fairly much and 4.34 %

believed that it harms them a lot. As for advanced students, 73.91 % believed that the use of

Arabic prevents them from learning English a lot, 8.70 % felt that it harms them fairly much

and others (13.04 %) saw that it harms them a little. However, only 4.70 % believed that the

use of Arabic does not prevent them from learning English (see Table 8).

Table 8

Students' Answers to Question 8

	Intermediate		Advanced	
	#Ans.	%	#Ans.	%
Not at all	14	60.86	1	4.34
A little	5	21.73	3	13.04
Fairly much	3	13.04	2	8.7
A lot	1	4.34	17	73.91

In relation to question 9 (If you believe that the use of Arabic in English classes is

detrimental, why?), the results show that some intermediate students thought that using

Arabic in the English classroom is detrimental because of some reasons: it decreases their fluency in English (21.73 %), prevents them from thinking in English (17.39 %), it reduces their exposure to English and makes them feel unmotivated (13.04 %). However, the vast majority of advanced students felt that it prevents them from learning English: 95.65 % believed that it is detrimental because it negatively affects their fluency in English, 86.95 % felt that it makes them bored, whereas 82.60 % and 73.91 % of them saw that using Arabic prevents them from thinking in English and reduces their English exposure respectively. In the option 'other', 8.70% of advanced students felt that using Arabic excessively in the English classroom is a waste of time (see Table 9).

Table 9

Students' Answers to Question 9

	Intermediate		Advanced	
	#Ans.	%	#Ans.	%
Prevents thinking in English	4	17.39	19	82.6
Reduces exposure to English	3	13.04	17	73.91
Harms my fluency in English	5	21.73	22	95.65
Makes me unmotivated and bored	3	13.04	20	86.95
Other: Waste of time	0	0	2	8.7

3. Discussion

The results from the questionnaire show that the intermediate students held a more positive attitude towards the use of Arabic in English classes than the advanced ones (91.3% > 26.08%). This might be because unlike advanced students, intermediate students still find it difficult to not depend on their L1 while learning English as their level is not that high to completely avoid it. This indicates that students' proficiency level is one important factor which plays a great role in the conformation of students' attitudes towards the use of the L1 in the L2 classroom. This result confirms the findings of some research studies mentioned above, namely Duimovic (2007); Sa'd and Qadermazi (2015) and Alshammary (2011). So, when learning an L2, it is sometimes hard to totally neglect and avoid the use of L1,

especially when the learners are not completely in command of the L2 like beginners and intermediate students. Surprisingly, even some advanced students (26.08%) expressed their need of the use of the L1 in the EFL classroom which implies that there might be some situations in which the instrumental use of the L1 is sometimes indispensable even for those who have an advanced level in L2. This might be explained by the fact that though the students are L2 advanced users, they are still L2 learners and not native speakers.

If we compare between the intermediate and advanced students regarding the teacher's use of Arabic, we find that many intermediate students believed that teachers' moderate use of Arabic (65.22% = sometimes: 56.52% + rarely: 8.7%) serves several purposes as it mainly helps them in understanding vocabulary, concepts, grammar points and instructions; however, some advanced students reported that teachers' moderate use of Arabic (21.74% = sometimes: 8.7% and rarely: 13.04%) can only serve to explain unknown vocabulary and difficult concepts. This indicates that teachers' instrumental use of the L1 in the L2 classroom serves different purposes depending on the level and need of students in the sense that intermediate students need it a lot as they lack some basic L2 knowledge such as grammar, whereas advanced students need it mainly for communicative purposes because they might consider that spending too much time in explaining vocabulary could be detrimental. This might be justified by the fact that vocabulary explanation in L2 tends to break the communicative flow ("Bustard? What is a bustard?") in overarching activities, that is, it might be perceived as an unwanted interruption of a given communicative task, and therefore, some of them believed that little translation (when one is readily available; eg., a bustard is an "alhubaraa") might assist in keeping the otherwise all-English experience going. This result indicates that a little L1 might even assist us in ensuring a flowing and satisfactory 'otherwise-all-English experience'. Another point which confirms that students' attitudes towards the use of Arabic in the English classroom depends on the purpose of its use is that

even many of the advanced students are not in favor of the L1 use in the English classroom, some of them (7 out of 23= 30.43%) still believe that they need it in some situations. They reported that they mainly use it to explain some lesson-related points (30.43%) to classmates and to do group works (17.39%) rather than using it to chat with classmates (0%). This indicates that their positive attitude towards the use of Arabic is due to the fact that they use it as a facilitative and a time-saving tool.

Another interesting point is that though many of the intermediate students think that the use of Arabic serves different purposes which can be clearly seen through their responses which were mainly in favor of the use of Arabic, some of them (9 out of 23 = 39.14%) see that its use can be detrimental to varying degrees in the sense that they believe that it can chiefly reduce the amount of exposure to English, decrease their fluency and prevent them from thinking in English. These intermediate students' negative attitude towards the use of Arabic in the English classroom might be because they believe that the amount of the instrumental use of Arabic should be controlled and moderated so as to get positive and desired learning outcomes. This can be also confirmed by the fact that none of intermediate students (0 out of 23 = 0%) reported that students should *frequently* use Arabic in English classes. This indicates that the amount of the use of the L1 in English classes is another factor that plays a role in the conformation of students' attitudes towards the use of L1.

4. Conclusion

The present study aimed at investigating EFL Algerian students' attitudes towards the use of their L1 (Arabic) in English classes, and to explore the possible factors that might play a role in the conformation of their perceptions. After the systematic analysis of the data gathered by the questionnaire, it is concluded that the Algerian students hold different attitudes towards the use of Arabic in the EFL classroom, and their views are influenced by

three main factors. It is found that the students' proficient level in English is an important factor in the sense that the intermediate students hold a more positive attitude than advanced students. Also, it is found that the students may hold a positive or negative attitude towards the inclusion of Arabic depending on the purpose and the amount of its use in the EFL classroom because various students need it for different purposes and degrees. These conclusions suggest that some modifications and alterations concerning the Ministry' s implementation of the English-only policy in Algeria should be reconsidered so as to enhance the teaching practices and promote the learning outcomes at the Algerian universities. It should be stated that triangulation of data gathering could have added to the reliability and validity of the results of the research study, but for some good reasons like time constraints, only one data collection instrument was used; so for further research, the use of triangulated data is recommended for looking into students' attitudes towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes. In addition, further research can be conducted to investigate other possible factors that might influence the students' perceptions of L1 use in the English classroom such as psychological and social factors.

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Appendix A

Student Questionnaire

Dear students,

This survey is designed to collect information for a research study, and its aim is to investigate your views and attitudes towards the use of your mother tongue (Arabic) in English classes. So, please answer honestly the following questions by selecting the appropriate response(s) and/or by making a full statement whenever required. The questionnaires will be anonymous, and your answers will be kept confidential. Thank you very much for your collaboration.

Good Luck

Part I: Background Information

This section is intended to gather some personal information.

1. What is your gender?

   a. Male   ☐

   b. Female   ☐

2. How old are you?

   ……. years old.

3. What is your English proficiency level?

   a. Beginner (A1/A2)   ☐

   b. Intermediate (B1/B2)   ☐

   c. Advanced (C1/C2)   ☐

Part II: Students' Attitudes towards the Use of the Mother Tongue (Arabic) in English Classes.

This section is intended to gather information about your attitudes towards the use of your mother tongue (Arabic) in English classes.

1. Should Arabic be used in English classes?

a. Yes ☐

b. No ☐

2. How often should your professor use Arabic in English classes?

a. Never ☐

b. Rarely ☐

c. Sometimes ☐

d. Frequently ☐

3. When do you think it is suitable for your professor to use Arabic in English classes? (you can choose more than one response).

a. To explain new words and phrases ☐

b. To explain complicated grammar points ☐

c. To explain difficult ideas and concepts ☐

d. To give instructions ☐

e. To propose useful learning strategies ☐

f. The professor should never use Arabic ☐

g. Other, please specify

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

4. How often should students use Arabic in English classes?

a. Never ☐

b. Rarely ☐

c. Sometimes ☐

d. Frequently ☐

5. When do you think it is appropriate for students to use Arabic in English classes? (you can choose more than one response)

a. To explain a point in a lesson for a classmate ☐

b. To chat with a classmate about casual topics ☐

c. To do pair/group works ☐

d. To take notes ☐

e. To talk to the teacher ☐

f. Students should not use Arabic ☐

g. Other, please specify

 ....

6. Do you think the use of Arabic in the classroom helps you learn English?

a. Not at all ☐

b. A little ☐

c. Fairly much ☐

d. A lot ☐

7. If you think that the use of Arabic in the English classroom is beneficial, why? (you can choose more than one)

a. It helps me to understand new vocabulary easily ☐

b. It helps me to understand difficult concepts and ideas ☐

c. It makes me comfortable and less stressed ☐

d. It enhances my relationship with the teacher ☐

e. Other, please specify

………………………………………………………………………………………..

8. Do you think the use of Arabic in English classes prevents you from learning English?

a. Not at all ☐

b. A little ☐

c. Fairly much ☐

d. A lot ☐

9. If you believe that the use of Arabic in English classes is harmful, why? (you can choose more than one response)

a. It prevents me from thinking in English ☐

b. It reduces my exposure to English ☐

c. It harms my fluency in English ☐

d. It makes me unmotivated and bored ☐

e. Other, please specify

………………………………………………………………………………………………..