

Using Arabic as the Mother Tongue in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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ABSTRACT

Mother tongue largely refers not only to the language learners but also the speaker's home language. The study was conducted to find whether they are aware of the mother tongue interferences the foreign language and on which skill(s) it has the biggest effect. A questionnaire by which the participants were asked to rate the questions. The questionnaire was based on quantitative approach. A sample was selected of (13) teachers. It was chosen randomly out of the total number of the teachers who teach English in Zarqa Directorate. Results of the study showed that teachers prefer to use Arabic in teaching English at a normal level, there is no significant difference in using Arabic in English classes related to the year of experience of the teacher, but there is difference related to the gender of the teachers and type of schools.

Keywords: mother tongue, interference, foreign language, significant.

Introduction

The number of people worldwide learning English is increasing. English in Jordan is an important language to be learned. It is becoming through time a language which is used in most areas in the country. It is no wonder that English is becoming more combined into the field of education all over the world. The issue of gaining new language has increased differing and supporting ideas. While some believe that the use of mother tongue language can be really helpful in learning new language. Rababah (2003) spotlighting the importance of using the target language in teaching. In Jordan teachers use Arabic to teach difficult words and define English literature. He also states that female are more skilled than male in language learning according to scientific studies, and the relationship between female and language learning areas centuries, even if you go back you will see that foreign language was a basic element in the education of young bourgeois women.

Al-Mutawa and Kailani (2003) point out that English is becoming the first foreign language throughout the world because it is widely used in the fields of business, industry, technology, education, medicine, and various other professional fields. Therefore, there is a need for teaching English in the world as a mean of international communication.

“To use or not to use the mother tongue?” this has been one of the greatest dilemmas in the foreign language classes (Medgyes, 1999:62). Nation (2003) thinks that the first language can play an important role conveying meaning in English.

Arab pupils are dependent on the teacher and on the input that the classroom provides since English are not outside schools. They argue that it is only in the classroom setting that the learner can learn English, therefore the pupils should be able to take full part in interaction in the classroom in order to develop their communicative competence, they also stress that a teacher of English is advised not to speak to his students in the mother tongue, or translate from English into Arabic unless absolutely necessary. He has to speak English as much as possible in class. This is essential in order to improve students hearing and speaking abilities (Cameron, 2008).

1-1 Statement of the Problem:

The use of the mother tongue in a foreign language classroom is an issue which has drawn critical debates among researchers in the area of language teaching, in which some researchers support using the mother tongue, in Jordan English teachers find it so hard to depend on English only in teaching Arab students. This reveals that both learners and

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teachers learning English as a foreign is challenging to learn without using the mother tongue in the classroom. The researcher found the priority of conducting such a research in the field of English language and Arabic language relationship, in addition to the assumption that understanding the relationship, between English language and Arabic language is important in successful language teaching. The lack of studies being conducted in the field of mother language and EL relationship in Jordan was another reason for conducting such a study.

1-2 Questions of the Study:

This study aims at answering the following questions:

1. To what extent do the teachers prefer to use the mother tongue in teaching the foreign language?
2. Is there any significant difference in using Arabic in English classes related to the gender of the teacher?
3. Is there any significant difference in using Arabic in English classes related to the year of experience of the teacher?
4. Is there any significant difference in using Arabic in English classes related to the type of school (public or private)?

1-3 Significance of the Study:

This study might be important as it tackles a crucial issue in foreign language teaching, the use of the mother tongue in the classroom. It considers that by learning English language, wide doors will be opened to the non-speaking Arabic world, where they have better chances for better life. It provides awareness for both teachers and learners in relationship between English language and Arabic language. On the other hand, this study may add to research in this field of learning and teaching English as a foreign language.

2- Previous Studies:

Maqableh (2001) investigated the amount of time Jordanian teachers spend on using Arabic in teaching English and its effect on their students' achievement. The sample of the study consisted of 40 teachers; 20 male and 20 female and their students. Three instruments were used to collect the data, which were: an observation in order to measure the number of time teachers spend on using Arabic in teaching English, a test to know the effect of using Arabic in teaching English on student achievement and a questioner for both teachers and students to identify their perspectives concerning the use of Arabic in teaching English. The result of the study showed that almost all the subjects' perspectives supported the use of Arabic in teaching English. Moreover, they also showed that the use of Arabic in teaching English affected students' achievement.

This study contributed to offering an update of this controversial problem by giving messages for integrating L1 in the second language classroom to achieve goals.

Al-Absi (2006) investigated the effect of incorporation of the learners' native language in teaching English as a foreign language (Bilingual Method) on developing the lexical proficiency of first-year students in Wadi Seer vocational center in Jordan. The sample of the study consisted of sixty-four who were divided into groups: experimental group and control. A test and instructional material consisted of two units taken from Petra series (book 6) for Jordanian tenth graders were used in this study. The result of the study showed a significant effect in favor of the Bilingual (experimental group).

Mahmudi and Yazdiamirkhiz (2011) studied the quantity of L1 use in two pre-university classes in Ahvaz, Iran and found that students were opposed to overusing L1 in L2 classrooms and did not like L1 to be the dominant language of the classrooms. Teachers and also students from all proficiency levels generally had L2 as their priority to be used in L2 classrooms. The result of the study showed a significant effect in favor of the Bilingual.

Taghreed and Masri (2012) the aim of this study is to investigate how the level of proficiency in both Arabic and English shapes Emirati students' perception of their identity in the United Arab Emirates public schools. The study explores high school students' linguistic preferences and language practices to assess their impact on identity construction. Data collection methods include a students' survey, interviews with students, teachers and an administrator, and ethnographic observation. Results show that students' preferences are driven by their perceived proficiency in both languages. While students are aware of their poor proficiency in English, their relative fluency in Spoken Arabic leads them to believe that they are proficient in it. In fact, results indicate that students have poor proficiency in both Arabic

and English which has created an identity dilemma as they are unable to identify completely with either of the two languages. However, data analysis reveals that English has to a certain extent influenced students' identity because they associate it with modernity and a brighter future, which they want for themselves, while Arabic is associated with respected traditions and values. Findings also show that although students are aware that English is flourishing at the expense of their mother tongue, they still want to learn it and appreciate its culture. Finally, results indicate that the educational policy towards both languages falls short of providing these students with effective bilingual programs.

While in other EFL contexts teachers and students had a positive attitude towards using mother tongue and recognized it's possible in expanding learners' target language competence.

Yaqubi and Pourmoid (2013) claimed to discover Iranian teachers' and parents' perspectives on the use of L1 in private English language schools in and found that: (1) less experienced teachers followed parents' expectations since they were more vulnerable while experienced teachers tried to stick to their own reasons and ideas; and (2) Parents did not have a positive attitude towards L1 use in language institutes and since these schools survived on the budget provided by them and they should follow their learning.

Watcharapunyawong and Usaha, (2013) advocated that mispronunciation and grammatical errors are the most common types of interference between the mother tongue and the target language. It was also affirmed that writing has been considered as the most difficult of the four language skills. They demonstrated that L1 interference categories of each writing genre varied in terms of L1 syntactic and semantic properties.

That is, in narration, the L1 interference categories with frequency counts of more than 100 errors were verbs tense, word choice, singular/ plural form, and subject-verb agreement, respectively. In comparison, and contrast to writing, the L1 interference categories with frequency counts of more than 100 errors were singular/ plural forms, word choice, article, subject-verb agreement, sentence structure, and preposition.

Ashar & Munir, (2015) this study aimed at reporting the errors in students' writings as a result of first language interference and how the teacher attempts to reduce the interference. It is a qualitative content analysis which analyses 20 students' writings of SMAN 1 Gedangan Sidoarjo and includes classroom observation. The results of this study revealed that 20 students' writings are interfered by their first language that caused errors occur in students' writings. This study also reports that the teacher used error feedback as an attempt to reduce the interference. Observation on how the teacher attempts to reduce the interference shows that the teacher has successfully made the students reduce the errors as result of first language interference in their writings by themselves.

Laghmam (2016) this study manages one of the most contentious phenomena in English language teaching, meaning here the use of mother tongue, Arabic, in teaching English as a foreign language. The study at hand aims at examining the degree to which Arabic is used in Moroccan High School classes of English. It reflects and investigates the attitudes of high school instructors towards the use of Arabic and their reasons behind using it. It also aims at investigating which gender uses Arabic more in classes of English. Besides, this paper tries to discuss the relationship between the use of the mother tongue and years of teaching experience. The findings of this study which were accumulated through a questionnaire and classroom observations suggest that Arabic is rarely used in the high school classrooms of English by teachers. Furthermore, the results indicate that Arabic is used more by teachers in order to translate difficult words and concepts.

3- Methodology:

A quantitative approach is used in collecting and analyzing data for this study, it is a qualitative content analysis which analyses (13) teachers from both genders'.

3-1 Participants:

The sample of the study was randomly selected. It consisted of (13) teachers from both genders, with different levels of experiences. Table 1 represents a summary of the sample used in this research.

Table (1)
Details of the Sample of the Study

No.	Gender	Years of Experience	Type of School
1	Male 7	Between 1- 5	Public 8
2	Female 6	Between 6-10	Private 5
3		More than 10	
Total	13	13	13

3-2 The instrument:

For the purpose of the study, a questionnaire was designed (see Appendix A). The questionnaire was for teachers who teach English in private and public schools. It consists of 24 items that cover the important aspect. Five-point Likert scales was used for the teachers' responses on the statements, the teachers were asked to respond to the statements showing if they strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree, given 5,4,3,2 and 1 respectively.

Analysis of data was analyzed based on means T-test. The scoring system is classified to three levels, which are Low, Normal and High. The scaling system in this study starts from 24 (minimum points) and ends with 120 (maximum points). The process to calculate each width between levels is based on the following equation.

$$\text{Interval Width} = \frac{\text{Maximum point} - \text{Minimum Point}}{\text{Number of Level}}$$

Table 2, shows the scale range for the levels used in this study. Means which is between 24 and 55 is considered as Low acceptance to the use of the mother tongue in teaching English. While the means between 56 and 88 represent Normal acceptances. Finally, the means range between 89 and 120 is considered as a high acceptance of using the mother tongue in teaching English.

Table (2)
Level Classifications for the Means

Mean Range	Level Type
24 – 55	Low
56 – 88	Normal
89 – 120	High

The t-test statistic is converted to a conditional probability called a P-value. The P-value indicates the differences between two groups of data, the P-value range as following (Afifi and Azen 1979):

- When P-value > 0.1 : the observed difference is "not significant".
- When P-value ≤ 0.10: the observed difference is "marginally significant".
- When P-value ≤ 0.05: the observed difference is "significant".
- When P-value ≤ 0.05: the observed difference is "highly significant".

4- Results and Discussions :

Question One: To what extent do the teachers prefer to use the mother tongue in teaching a foreign language?

The means of each statement are shown in Table (3), results revealed that the average of means for the whole questionnaire regardless to any kind of classification was equal to (79.3). Based on the scale system that is mentioned before, normal acceptance has been recognized in the use of the mother tongue in teaching English. The highest mean was against statement number (22) which is "using Arabic in teaching English makes the listening skills very weak" and the lowest was the number "using Arabic in teaching English will improve students language skills".

Table (3)
Means for the Whole Questionnaire

Statement Number	Mean
Statement 1.	77.5
Statement 2.	96
Statement 3.	66.5
Statement 4.	99.7
Statement 5.	88.6
Statement 6.	46.2
Statement 7.	92.3
Statement 8.	55.4
Statement 9.	86.8
Statement 10.	81.2
Statement 11.	77.5
Statement 12.	88.6
Statement 13.	81.2
Statement 14.	60.9
Statement 15.	81.2
Statement 16.	88.6
Statement 17.	83.1
Statement 18.	66.5
Statement 19.	77.5
Statement 20.	84.9
Statement 21.	66.5
Statement 22.	101.5
Statement 23.	88.6
Statement 24.	66.5
Average	79.3

Based on the results of the first question, teachers support the idea of using the mother tongue in teaching English. Teachers tended to explain instructions, to explain new vocabulary items, difficult rules of grammar and to motivate their students. But they use Arabic more in explaining instructions and vocabulary items, and the main cause teachers gave for this was learners' low level of proficiency in English.

Teachers think that they do not need much time when they translate English into Arabic while teaching English because such use makes students understand the text quickly without the need to clarify them in English. The findings of this study go in agreement with some previous studies like Maqableh, Al-Absi.

Question Two: Is there any significant difference in using Arabic in English classes related to the gender of the teacher?

Results reported in Table (4) show if there is any significant difference in using Arabic in English classes related to the gender of the teacher. Analysis showed that there is a difference in the means in using the mother tongue related to the gender of the teacher, in which the average of the means of the male is (86.7) and the female is (73.5). Based on the scale distribution, both male and female teachers, find it is normally accepted to use the Arabic language in teaching English. Moreover, the T-Test value is (0.0056) which indicates that there is a high significant difference between male and female answers to the questionnaire.

Table (4)
Means of Each Statement Based on Gender

Statement Number	Mean	
	Male	Female
Statement 1.	89.1	68
Statement 2.	85.7	84
Statement 3.	65.1	68
Statement 4.	89.1	100
Statement 5.	89.1	76
Statement 6.	61.7	32
Statement 7.	102.9	80
Statement 8.	72	32
Statement 9.	99.4	68
Statement 10.	92.6	72
Statement 11.	85.7	72
Statement 12.	102.9	76
Statement 13.	99.4	84
Statement 14.	78.9	48
Statement 15.	82.3	88
Statement 16.	92.6	84
Statement 17.	96	76
Statement 18.	78.9	80
Statement 19.	85.7	72
Statement 20.	99.4	72
Statement 21.	85.7	56
Statement 22.	96	108
Statement 23.	78.9	108
Statement 24.	72	60
Average	86.7	73.5

Moreover, the results reported that female teachers use the mother tongue less than male teachers, due to the different nature between male and female students. Female students are more discipline than male students. Female teachers tend to abide by the educational instructions of their supervisors. Laghmam (2016) study results also match the results of the current study.

Question Three: Is there any significant difference in using Arabic in English classes related to the year of experience of the teacher?

Results reported in Table (5) shows if there is any significant difference in using Arabic in English classes related to the year of experience of the teacher. Responses show that there is a difference in using the mother tongue related to the year of experience, in which the average of the means for the teachers whose experience in between 0 and 5 is (84.6), for teachers whose experience is between 6 and 10 is (89.8) and for teachers whose experience is more than 10 is (69.5). Moreover, the results show that both teachers whose experience between 0-5 and more than 10 years have normal acceptance of the use of the mother tongue in teaching English. Whilst, teachers who is an experience between 6 and 10 years have high acceptance to use the mother tongue in teaching English.

Table (5)
Means of Each Statement Based on Years of Experience

Statement Number	Mean		
	0-5	6-10	More than 10
Statement 1.	81.6	96	60
Statement 2.	105.6	90	78
Statement 3.	100.8	72	42
Statement 4.	100.8	108	102
Statement 5.	91.2	108	72
Statement 6.	67.2	36	30
Statement 7.	81.6	96	90
Statement 8.	62.4	54	42
Statement 9.	86.4	96	72
Statement 10.	96	96	54
Statement 11.	96	72	66
Statement 12.	91.2	102	78
Statement 13.	96	102	78
Statement 14.	67.2	78	48
Statement 15.	76.8	96	78
Statement 16.	72	78	108
Statement 17.	105.6	90	72
Statement 18.	81.6	78	54
Statement 19.	76.8	96	78
Statement 20.	91.2	102	66
Statement 21.	72	84	48
Statement 22.	96	114	114
Statement 23.	76.8	114	78
Statement 24.	57.6	96	60
Average	84.6	89.8	69.5

Results indicate that teachers whose experience is between 0-5 and more than 10 support the use of the mother tongue more than teachers whose experience is in the middle. Teachers with little experience used the mother tongue to help them illustrate English easily, while teachers with quite enough experience found that using the mother tongue is helpful for the students. Finally, teachers with middle experience try to use English more than the mother tongue language. This finding may be attributed to the fact that middle experience years tend to control ministerial instructions and they are a little bit aware of educational risks of the use of the Arabic language. The results were also similar to Laghmam (2016).

Question Four: Is there any significant difference in using Arabic in English classes related to the type of school (public or private)?

Results reported in Table (6) show if there is any significant difference in using Arabic in English classes related to the type of school (public or private). Responses show that there is a difference in using the mother tongue related to the type of school, in which the average of means for public schools is (84) and private schools is (74.6). However, both types of schools have a normal acceptance to use the mother tongue in teaching English. The T-Test value is (0.01446) which indicates that there is a significant difference between public and private schools answers the questionnaire.

Table (6)
Means of Each Statement Based on Type of School

Statement Number	Mean	
	Public	Private
Statement 1.	84	72
Statement 2.	99	81.6
Statement 3.	90	76.8
Statement 4.	105	100.8
Statement 5.	93	86.4
Statement 6.	57	33.6
Statement 7.	96	86.4
Statement 8.	66	38.4
Statement 9.	96	81.6
Statement 10.	93	67.2
Statement 11.	93	57.6
Statement 12.	99	76.8
Statement 13.	102	76.8
Statement 14.	72	67.2
Statement 15.	72	105.6
Statement 16.	81	96
Statement 17.	102	62.4
Statement 18.	75	57.6
Statement 19.	84	72
Statement 20.	93	76.8
Statement 21.	84	48
Statement 22.	96	115.2
Statement 23.	84	96
Statement 24.	72	57.6
Average	87	74.6

For the type of schools, results indicate that public schools use the mother tongue more than the private ones. Many reasons behind these findings at public schools: The numbers of students in classrooms, the students' do not have direct access to the English language, poor acquisition environment, and without experience the language in real life. The cost of private schools can be much higher in more competitive places and the kind of technology they have to offer students to learn in private schools also have longer days to cover the same curriculum standards as public schools, and want to offer a wide variety of courses. The findings were also similar to Taghreed, Masri (2012).

5- Conclusions and Recommendations:

Results of this study showed that teachers prefer to use Arabic in teaching English. There is no significant different in using Arabic in English classes related to the years of experience of the teacher, but there is a difference related to the gender of the teachers and type of schools. Data obtained indicated that teachers use Arabic in teaching English to save a lot of effort and explain new vocabulary items, but they believed that it degrades the teaching level. However, male teachers support the using of the mother tongue more than the female teachers.

Using the mother tongue is useful for the students but teachers have to pay more attention when to use Arabic so the students can benefit from English classes and improve their English language skills. On the bases of the results of this

study, the researcher suggests a number of points to be taken into consideration:

- The Ministry of Education should pay more attention to this point, and have to aware teachers about it.
- Teachers must work hard to develop the English language of the students by using the mother tongue only when it is absolutely necessary.

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استخدام اللغة العربية كلغة أم في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية

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ملخص

لا تعدّ اللغة الأم بصورة عامة هي لغة المتعلمين فحسب وإنما تعدّ أيضاً لغة المتكلم البيئية. ومن هذا المبدأ تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى تسليط الضوء على مدى إدراك ووعي المعلمين لأهمية التداخلات اللغوية الحاصلة بين اللغة الأم واللغة الأجنبية وإلى المهارات اللغوية ذات التأثير الأكبر. فقد تم توزيع استبانة الدراسة - القائمة على أساس المنهج الكمي المعتمد في إجراء مثل هذه الدراسات - على عينة مختاره مكونة من 13 مدرساً تم انتقاءهم عشوائياً من مجموع مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية في محافظة الزرقاء. لقد أظهرت نتائج الدراسة بأن المدرسين يفضلون استخدام اللغة العربية في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في المستوى الطبيعي. ولم يكن هناك اختلاف جوهري في استخدام اللغة العربية في تدريس الطلبة اللغة الإنجليزية فيما يتعلق بسنوات الخبرة لدى المدرسين إلا أن ثمة اختلاف واضح قد ظهر فيما يتعلق بجنس المدرس ونوع المدرسة التي يدرس فيها.

الكلمات الدالة: اللغة الأم، التحويل، اللغة الأجنبية، خصائص.

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