# Exploring When and Why to Use Arabic in the Saudi Arabian EFL Classroom: Viewing L1 Use as Eclectic Technique

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## Abstract

This study aims to investigate when and why to use Arabic as L1 in the Saudi Arabian EFL classroom. For this purpose, 45 classroom observations were performed for beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of students. 5 classes were chosen randomly for each level and each class was observed three times. Based on the classroom observations, structured interviews were conducted with 94 students as well as 15 teachers. Analysis of the data shows that Arabic can be used as eclectic technique in certain instances regardless of what teaching method is employed. For example, teachers sometimes used it as long as they talk in English for a long time so as to avoid as grammatical mistakes as possible. This reflects the teachers' cultural norm, namely, it is shameful to commit mistakes in front of the students. In addition, it is apparent that learners follow certain language strategies such as literal translation and substitution. Despite the use of these strategies, L2 speech produced by some learners is sometimes difficult to understand because of their bad command in English particularly at the beginning and intermediate level. Thus, the teachers or the learners resort to use Arabic forms or translation as a way to explain what wanted to be conveyed in English. Besides, Arabic is used when students are not able to express difficult L2 constructions at time they could not be disallowed to use Arabic counterparts as they are dynamic individuals. On the contrary, some advanced students insist to use specific Arabic concepts although they can translate them into English because, as they believed, such concepts miss their cultural and religious value if translated.

**Keywords:** L1 use, EFL classroom, TESOL, Teaching methods, Code- switching, Techniques eclecticism

## 1. Introduction

There are two ways to use the first language in language learning classroom. The first is through translation from the target language to the first language and vice versa. An example of this is the learners' search for L2 word or expression of L1 counterpart by using dictionary or direct translation by teachers. Secondly, the mere use of the first language forms without translation, i.e. learners or teachers resort to produce some L1 forms or ideas without translating them to the target language.

Exploring the techniques employed by different methodologies in language learning classroom determines that L1 use has been viewed and emphasized differently. In the Natural Approach, only little L1 use is encouraged via dictionary particularly when learners face very difficult L2 words and phrases. However, Community Language Learning method, Concurrent method, Dodson's Bilingual method and Grammar-Translation method have all been designed to depend mainly on L1 use in most, if not all, procedures.

In fact, ignorance of L1 use started from the fall and criticism directed to The Grammar-Translation method. Therefore, as Richards and Rogers (1985) indicate, several methods that emerge directly after it might avoid L1 use in their contents, i.e. the Oral Approach, the Audiolingual method, the Communicative Approach, the Silent way, the TPR and Suggestopedia all have not been concerned with employing L1 in language learning classroom. Nevertheless, these methods have been criticized regarding the inapplicability of other different techniques (e.g. Swan 1985, McLaughlin 1987, Estarellas 1972).

Even though all the methods are criticized, they may be partially accepted on the ground that certain technique(s) may be supportive and facilitative to learners' L2 comprehension. That is to say, the absence of L1 use according to some methods may be true if the teaching context does not require its use. It is true; on the other hand, that L1 use may be facilitative when another teaching context creates its need. Prabhu (1990, p. 166) comments that

*Different methods are best for different teaching contexts. A different form of substantiation is also heard fairly frequently, namely, that there is some truth (or value or validity) to every method-or, at any rate, to several different*

*methods-even though the methods may be conceptually incompatible. This, as we know, is an argument for eclecticism in language pedagogy-not an argument that different contexts should use different methods, but an argument that the same context should use a number of different methods, or perhaps parts of different methods.*

Such eclectic technique or techniques are recalled based on what the learners need, what their levels of proficiency and cultural norms are. Prabhu (1990, p.162), in this vein, insists that:

*If those who declare that there is no best method are asked why, the most immediate and frequent answer is likely to be 'Because it all depends', meaning that what is best depends on whom the method is for, in what circumstances, for what purpose, and so on. That there is no best method therefore means that no single method is best for everyone, as there are important variations in the teaching context that influence what is best.*

Recent studies about the possibility and reasonability of using L1 show that L1 use facilitates learning the target language (e.g. Blackledge and Creese 2010; Butzkamm 1998; Chavez 2002; Cook 2001; Wescher 1997; Xu 1993). While others as Macdonald (1993) and Krashen (1985) argue against such view. In view of the different contradicting thoughts and practices, this study attempts to investigate this issue in the Saudi Arabian EFL classroom. To achieve this, the researcher conducted classroom observations and structured interviews with English teachers and students. More clearly, 15 teachers and 94 students have been interviewed based on 45 classroom observations. Three classroom observations are carried out for each teacher and each class based on three levels of students: beginners, intermediate and advanced.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

The problem of this research arises from the controversy made about the role of L1 use. It is debatable whether L1 is beneficial and justifiable to use when it is viewed the only resort available to either teacher or learners. L1 use can be accessible in many instances in the ongoing lesson, but does it negatively or positively affect learning the target language and why? The ambiguity about L1 use may be the result of unrecognizing learners' variables such as their levels and culture, their first language and the target language they are going to learn, and who is the teacher? Is he native or non-native speaker of the target language and does he have the same mother tongue as the learners? When a real need arises to study the influence of L1 use on learning L2, such variables should be specified so as to explore, as the case in this study, the influence of Arabic use in the Saudi Arabia EFL classroom.

## 3. Purpose of the Study

This study aims at identifying when Arab teachers and students use Arabic in the Saudi Arabian EFL classroom. This can be accomplished based on the notion of eclecticism, namely, only English use is not really applicable to learn certain aspects or reach certain messages of L2 in specific contexts at time Arabic use presents applicable choice to facilitate L2 comprehension. Accordingly, the study also aims to explore why it is facilitative to use Arabic in the specified contexts. Atkinson (1993, p.2), in this respect, supports that "it is impossible to talk about a right balance or a perfect model for using L1, it's not that simple. L1 can be a valuable resource if it is used at appropriate times and in appropriate ways"

What method or methods employed in the classroom is not the concern. What is crucial is to observe when L1 use is employed in such a classroom either by learners or teachers. After classroom observations, the teachers and students are asked within structured interviews why they use Arabic when they do so.

An important point should be made here is the goals of the study are achieved on the ground that both the teachers and the learners share the same first language, i.e. their mother tongue is Arabic, and the target language both the learners are learning and the teachers are teaching is English.

## 4. Significance of the Study

In most EFL classrooms in Arab countries, it is discouraged to use the learners' mother tongue, i.e. Arabic. This arises from the thought that teaching English should depend on recent methods that discourage L1 use because, as believed, such methods proved to be efficient in learning English in comparison with other old methods like Grammar-Translation. Weschler (1997, p.87) stresses "whatever justification is claimed for the 'English-only' classroom is based on two fundamentally flawed arguments: first, the premature, outright rejection of the traditional Grammar-Translation method, and second, the false assumption that an 'English-only' requirement is an essential element of more modern 'communicative' methodologies."

The preference in teaching English is given to these methods because they are also popular in teaching. This popularity may be the result of their widespread use due to sequential progress in their emergence after the fall of Grammar-Translation. Richards and Rogers (1985, p.5) say that "In the mid- and late nineteenth century, opposition to the Grammar-Translation Method gradually developed in several European countries. This Reform Movement, as

it was referred to, laid the foundations for the development of new ways of teaching languages and raised controversies that have continued to the present day."

This creates a debate behind L1 use in EFL classroom. It becomes a non-conclusive issue which really raises a need to conduct empirical researches in the light of different first languages. Cook (2001, p. 403) writes "it is time to open a door that has been firmly shut in language teaching for over 100 years, namely, the systematic use of the first language (L1) in the classroom."

In addition, this study is important because it advocates L1 use through eclecticism. While methods are partially accepted because of efficiency of specific techniques in selected contexts, using L1 may be encouraged in instances where its use is beneficial and justifiable.

## 5. Methodology

The participants of the study were male students of the preparatory year program at the University of Hail, Saudi Arabia. These students were classified at the very beginning of the program in the first semester 2010/ 2011 into three levels. In the light of their results of a placement test, students who got less than 30 out of 100 were considered as beginners, more than 30 and less than 70 were intermediate, and more than 70 were advanced. Accordingly, each level was assigned certain textbook different from the others and was divided into different classes. Five classes for each level were selected randomly to achieve the purpose of the study. Teachers of these classes were non- native speakers of English, i.e. Arabs.

The methods followed to obtain as precise and relevant data as possible were direct and indirect methods. In the case of the former, classroom observations were conducted for the three different levels. 15 teachers and 230 learners were observed three times in 15 classes. Thus, 45 classroom observations were carried out for each teacher and class. The three observations of each class were conducted in relation to one teacher, i.e. each teacher was observed only in one class. Therefore, 15 classroom observations were carried out in 5 classes of beginning learners taught by 5 different teachers. The same applies to intermediate and advanced classes. Each class included 18 to 24 learners at the beginning level, 15 to 19 ones at the intermediate level, and 8 to 13 learners at the advanced level so the number of learners for each was 96, 83, and 51 learners, respectively. Performing the three observations for each class was to further specify instances where Arabic was used and identify teachers and students who used it in these instances. Thus, when to use Arabic in the Saudi Arabian EFL classroom can be answered.

In the case of indirect method, based on the classes observed, structured interviews were carried out with only those teachers and students who used Arabic in the instances determined. Thus, 41 beginners, 33 intermediate learners, and 20 advanced ones as well as the whole 15 teachers were interviewed. The 94 students and the 15 teachers were asked why they used Arabic in these instances. Hence, the instances, where Arabic use was justifiable, were included in the study. By following this method, Why to use Arabic in the Saudi Arabian EFL classroom can be answered.

The classroom observations took place from September 19, 2010 to December 26, 2011 and the interviews were conducted after the third time for each classroom observation.

## 6. Review of Related Literature

In the Natural Approach, Krashen and Terrell (1983), believe that L2 learners, especially beginners, should be exposed to as much knowledge of the target language as possible, i.e. to maximize exposure to L2 input, with little use of L1. Such a use is performed through looking up meanings of difficult words or expressions in a dictionary. Other indications that stress the little use of L1 in this approach are the kinds of its procedures combined from several teaching methods (Richards and Rogers, 1986). Krashen (1985) claims that the exposure may not sometimes be considered as effective enough for learners if they are always exposed to L2 with use of L1. He argues that

*The teacher speaks a little in one language, and then translates what was said into the other language. When this happens, students listen to the message in their own language and pay no intention to the English input. In addition, the teacher does not have to attempt to make the English message more comprehensible by using gestures, realia or paraphrase, since a translation is available (p. 81).*

Moreover, in TPR, the Oral Approach, the Direct method, the Audiolingual method, the Communicative Approach, the Silent Way, and Suggestopedia, there are no mentions of any procedures that stress L1 use.

Macdonald (1993) believes that there is no need to use L1 or translation and that it is sufficient to guide learners through the use of simple words and structures of the target language to infer or reveal the meanings of phrases, abstract words, and many difficult target language expressions. He claims that teachers give learners the chance to listen to new words and linguistic constructions and hence they will be familiar with the language grammar, lexis, and phonology. In fact, this is the general view of the Monolingual Approach which advocates the mere use of L2.

In such approach, it is stressed "that the language being studied should be the mode of communication in the lesson. This idea that the L2 should be taught in L2, in order to maximize exposure, and thereby learning, is perhaps the key concepts which monolingual supporters have based their approach on" (Miles, 2004, p. 8).

On the other hand, several teaching methods are brought into consideration as far as L1 use is concerned. One of these methods is the Community Language Learning that basically depends on specific techniques for L1 use. According to Curran (1976), beginning learner starts his/her learning by using L1 and the teacher of community Language Learning has the responsibility to translate what has been performed by the learner. The learner then repeats what has been said in L2 after the teacher. In this way, the rest of learners have the chance to listen to both versions of L1 and L2 and consequently they progress their learning of L2 independent of L1.

Similarly, the New Concurrent Method, as Jacobson (1990) insists, focuses on L1 use when L2 thoughts and ideas are important. That is, when learners present recognition and correct production of L2 idea, the teacher thanks them in L1 rather than L2 to feel they are themselves. In this case, they firstly feel and taste the power of the words produced to thank them in terms of their cultural and social atmosphere and secondly they are encouraged to see themselves as real and true, not assumed, L2 learners. L1 use, thus, continuously decreases till learners become less dependent on it.

In addition, Dodson's Bilingual Method, which is designed to help English-speaking children to learn Welsh, supports L1 use but with techniques slightly different from the Community Language Learning and Concurrent Method. Dodson (1967) describes that interpretation of L2 sentences is the basic procedure. That is, the teacher reads L2 sentences aloud and interprets their meanings to the learners in L1. The learners are then asked to repeat the L2 sentences collectively and individually. Checking the learners' understanding is implied when the teacher points to real objects and pictures requiring learners to say the L2 sentences.

L1 use is basically employed in the Grammar-Translation method as a major technique. Nonetheless, no underlying principle of L2 communication is employed, i.e. learners do not make use of the target language as they do with their first language. Consequently, this greatly contributes to support the view that L1 should not be used in language learning classroom because the latter method largely failed in the methodological system (Harbord 1992; Pennycook 1994). Moreover, Community Language Learning, the New Concurrent method and Dodson's Bilingual method were all criticized from different perspectives. For example, Ulanoff and Pucci (1993, p. 4), commenting on the New Concurrent method, say that "one important criticism of this model is that with the continual translation from L1 to L2, students begin to listen selectively, tuning out the language that they least understand (usually L2)." Community Language Learning, on the other hand, is criticized by Brown (2007) who sees that such a method could not be easily applied to each group of L2 learners because of their different needs, and that the teacher may not be well-qualified enough in accordance with the method procedures. The Community Language Learning teacher is desirably required to be accurate and expert translator of both the target language and the learners' mother tongue.

For other linguists and researchers, however, L1 can be used at certain times so as to fulfill specific purposes. Tang (2000), for example, claims that L1 can be used by teachers to give instructions and explain complex grammar and difficult ideas. Actually, this is a common view of the supporters of the Bilingual Approach, i.e. the one which advocates L1 use. Miles (2004, p. 10-11) states that " the Bilingual Approach might argue that to make the separation or distinction between L1 and L2, explanations in L1 are necessary, because the teaching of grammar is so complex, that without L1 use, there would be little or no comprehension on the students' part, especially at lower levels." Moreover, Blackledge and Creece (2010) further argue that 'translanguaging', i.e. shifting between L1 and L2, is created by students because they follow certain 'bilingual strategies'. For example, the students sometimes need to use some constructions of their first language when producing L2 utterances. In this way, they fulfill their purpose of conveying informational messages in L2. Likewise, Cummins (2005) proposes that Turkish learners and teachers follow certain 'bilingual strategies' but he further refers to the so called 'the interdependence hypothesis' to assert that the instructions used to learn the skills of the target language do not merely strengthen and develop these skills in the target language but also develop a conceptual and a linguistic proficiency pertinent to the first language. It is referred to as 'common underlying proficiency' in which aspects of both L1 and L2 are seen interdependent and interlocked in learning.

Furthermore, Wells (1999) clarifies that working in pairs allows beginning or intermediate learners to meaningfully use their first language to answer complex activities in a short period of time. In this Regard, Clanfield and Foord (2000, p. 2) suggest that the best type of pair work regarding speaking skill is to have three learners in each group. "This can be adapted to any oral pair work situation. It works best with interviews. Students work in groups of three (minimum). One person is the interviewer, and speaks only in English. The interviewee speaks only in L1. The interpreter works as a go-between, translating the interviewer's questions into L1 and the interviewee's answers back

into English". On the other hand, when L2 beginning or intermediate learners restrict themselves to use limited repertoire of L2 vocabularies and linguistic constructions, it may take longer to comprehend and answer the activity. In such a case, cohesion of the whole activity may be lost in the learners' minds because learners are busy in comprehending small parts of the activity, i.e. the literal meanings of certain vocabularies. Miles (2004, p. 14), in this sense, maintains that "students can use it [L1] for scaffolding (building up the basics, from which further learning can be processed) and for cooperative learning with fellow classmates. Perhaps the biggest reason for using L1 in the classroom though, is that it can save a lot of time and confusion." Blackledge and Creese (2010) add that realizing the procedures required to answer a task through L1 use, i.e. Gujarati, is considered as instructional strategy the teacher follows to give pairs of students key answer to do L2 task.

In addition, Cook (2001), Miles (2004) and Gantt and Rivera (1999) go further to describe an important issue, namely, the culture of the target language. According to them, since L2 learners are learning the target language in classroom setting, they actually do not live the language as placed or situated in its cultural and social context. In other words, L2 learners are solely engaged to learn the target language in terms of vocabularies and expressions communication in isolation of its culture. That is why learners may transfer the culture of their first language in L2 output. Cook (2001) sees that L1 use may be employed in some instances to understand what social and cultural conventions L2 expressions display. "We used it [L1] to foster a supportive network where we explained unfamiliar things to each other in a more familiar way. We used it to commiserate, complain and share frustrating or frightening experiences with a new language and culture" (Florez, 2000, p. 5).

Furthermore, other researchers conduct empirical researches about the applicability of Grammar-translation method in EFL classroom. Kim (2011), after applying such method in L2 writing classroom, reveals that L1 use helps students improve their level of writing proficiency and accuracy and realize their own writing objectively. In addition, Xu (1993) explores some advantages behind employment of Grammar-Translation method in Chinese EFL classroom. One of which is "some students, when trying to express themselves in English, are likely to produce Chinglish. Therefore, it is important to let them know how the same meaning expressed in one language can differ significantly in the other language" (p. 13). He also shows that using L1 is sometimes effective and economic. For example, when the word (**electricity)** is presented for the first time, some students face difficulty to understand its English definition, so it is both effective and economic to use the Chinese equivalent instead. This advantage is explained by Paxton (2009) in the findings of his research about translation of English terminology into African languages. He concludes that "multilingual university students, in peer learning group, code-switch from English to their primary languages in order to better understand new concepts and this could be used as an important resource for building academic registers in African languages" (p. 345).

On the other hand, Taha (2008) focuses his research on code-switching between Arabic and English in university classroom. After conducting 28 classroom observations, Taha reveals that teachers code-switch consciously and subconsciously and thus several communicative functions take place, i.e. topic change, effective classroom interaction, solidarity and determining the level of formality and informality of certain situations. Code-switching is also investigated by Shin (2000). After examining the language of 12 Korean-English bilingual children, Shin challenges the view that code-switching is evidence of linguistic deficit in bilingual speakers' output. He found out that "the bilingual children were found to strategically employ language alternation to structure their discourse, to negotiate the language for the interaction and to accommodate other participants' language competencies and preference" (p. 24). likewise, Yusuf (2009), after investigating code-switching occurred in a university lecturer's talk with a classroom of 114 students, explores that the lecturer code-switches from Malay to English to make emphasis, draw students' attention to certain idea or point and provide as accurate description as possible about some English concepts.

## 7. Discussion and Findings

In the light of Krashen's (1982) clear- cut distinction between learning and acquisition, it can be proposed that learning a target language, based on the notion of eclecticism, should be carried out with suitable techniques. These techniques should not necessarily reflect the way or the strategies followed in acquisition. This may initially justify L1 use in EFL classroom. Larrea (2002, p. 2) stresses that "If using L1 is a central feature in learning a second language why has it been systematically ignored?" That is to say, "the L1 is a resource of knowledge which learners will use both consciously and subconsciously to help them sift the L2 data in the input and to perform as best as they can in the L2" (Ellis, 1985, p. 40).

However, it was observed that 22 beginners and 11 intermediate learners, used to translate literally some L1 ideas into L2 as responses to the teachers' questions. Because those learners did not have good command of English, they found it communicative to resort to translating literally.

Because Arabic does not have verb to be, i.e. copula be, in sentences like a∫∫abu jami:lun (*the guy is handsome*) and Ɂalfatatu jami:latun (*the girl is beautiful*), such students made literal translation from Arabic as *the guy handsome* and *the girl beautiful*. Swan (1985, p. 86), in this sense, claimed

*When we set out to learn a new language, we automatically assumed (until we have evidence to the contrary) that meanings and structures are going to be broadly similar to those in our language.....This strategy does not always work, of course.....it makes possible for us to learn a new language without at the same time returning to infancy and learning to categorize the world all over again.*

The latter ungrammatical sentences could be understood in English. That is, the teacher knew that the students meant (*the guy is handsome)* and (*the girl is beautiful)*, but could not understand other literally translated sentences. For example, when a student said (*her heart was cut into pieces)*, it was not easy to understand in terms of its function as uttered outside a context. In such a case, when that student was allowed to use Arabic **taqatta9a qalb Ɂelmar?ah men ∫eddat alħuzn** to express what he was attempting to say in English, both the teacher and other students realized what he meant. Consequently, the teacher translated the Arabic sentence into (*a woman was very sad* or *a woman was sad deep down)*. It might be beneficial here to use Arabic to reach what wanted from the misunderstood sentence. Students might be also adapted with how similar sentences could be generated.

Other examples were (*my father gave me a present made me happy)*, (*Ahmad hit a woman with an umbrella)*, (*every Muslim should order for good things)*. The student in the first example attempted to convey that receiving the present from his father made him happy rather than the present itself. In the second example, the student wanted to say that he hit the woman by using the umbrella, i.e. the woman did not hold the umbrella, whereas in the third example the student tried to reach the meaning that every Muslim should make as favors as possible, not to order something.

Literal translation is a common strategy used by L2 learners to internalize rules and knowledge of the target language (Ellis, 1985). It was not necessary, for learner, to overtly produce the mother tongue counterpart of what he expressed in the target language, but when new L2 translated sentences were not understood in classroom, it might be efficient to use Arabic so as to know what the learner meant. An important point that should be emphasized here is that, even though the teachers paraphrased in English what the students translated literally, students were not able to confirm whether or not they meant the paraphrased sentences. This is because of their bad commands in English. For instance, as far as the latter examples were concerned, when the student said the first example, the teacher asked what did make him feel happy; the action of taking a present from his father or the present itself? The student did not choose one. The same applied to the third sentence.

Moreover, it was noticed that 8 intermediate learners and 13 beginners who used to translate literally code- switched between Arabic and English, i.e. they sometimes produced a few Arabic words in English sentences. When students were asked why they did so, they replied that they did not know the English equivalents for those words or they sometimes felt that some words in English did not exactly express the same meanings which Arabic counterparts had. A suitable example here was when a student was asked to prepare a talk about a trip he did, the student did so till he reached the sentence *I played* and said the sport of figure skating in Arabic **Ɂattazalluj**. The teacher then said in English *you mean figure skating?* The student replied *yes, I played figure skating*. Based on this type of example, "the mother tongue does not take over but is a necessary conversational lubricant. Even if it was possible to banish it from the classroom, it could never be banished from the pupils' minds. Used properly and systematically, but on the whole quite sparingly and unobtrusively, it is clearly not a last resort, but a natural short-cut". (Butzkamm, 1998, p. 95). Other similar examples were (*looking at another's paper during exam is an example of* [pause] **Ɂalɣu∫**), (*and he got a* [pause] *I want to say* **Ɂibti9aθ**), (*he got also* [pause] *what is the meaning of* **mu9addal** *in English*), and (*there are 22 players in the* [pause] *what is mal9ab, please*) The Arabic words in such sentences were said to mean plagiarism, a scholarship, average, and stadium, respectively.

In the case of the students who sometimes felt that some Arabic words did not have their English equivalents, a notice made about intermediate student should be explained here. That is, in Islam, when Muslim intends to pray, he or she must perform ablution which is an obligatory rule in the Muslim's religious culture. Such a behavior occurs before performing pray, that is, he or she washes his or her hands, face, etc, using water and then performs the pray. But when water is not found, Muslim is excused to have ablution with some soil, that is, Muslim strikes both hands slightly on clean soil then shakes the hands off and wipes his or her face with them. In the latter case, no English equivalent is exactly found to express the meaning of ablution with soil due to differences in cultures between the both languages and that is why some student used the Arabic expression in the sentence *if Muslim does not find water to have ablution, he can perform* **Attayamum. Attayamum** here which is Arabic word presents the process of ablution with clean soil as discussed. Other examples were (*when it does not rain for a long time, Muslims can do* s̲a̲l̲at **Ɂal?stisqa:?**), (*if I were Ahmad, I would have* s̲a̲l̲at **Ɂalistixarah),** and **(***that widow could not marry*

*immed¹ately after her husband's death. she had to wait till* [pause] ʔl9uddeh finished). However, **sa̱la̱t ʔalʔ stisqa:ʔ** was said to mean a pray to God to request rains, **sa̱la̱t ʔalistixarah** was uttered to mean a pray to God to request capability to follow an activity or not, and **ʔl9uddeh** refers to the period of time a widow Muslim must spend before remarrying. 4 intermediate students and 5 beginners claimed that they did not find equivalents to such expressions in the dictionary and that is why they used the Arabic ones. Importantly, this was evident that the students were not aware how to translate cultural expressions.

On the other hand, it was observed that 12 advanced learners code- switched to Arabic when they were not satisfied by cultural meanings of some English words which stand in contrast to the students' cultural virtue and do not exist in their culture. As a result, students preferred to use the Arabic words to their English counterparts. For example, when some student was asked to introduce condolence to his friend in a role play, he insisted to use Arabic expressions that reflect Muslim's religious culture, **9aÐÐama ʔallahu ʔajrakum** which can be translated as ***May God bless you*** instead of saying familiar English sentences like ***I am sorry that your father died*** or ***I am sorry to hear this***. The student was encouraged to say one of the latter sentences but he refused claiming that he is Muslim, not Christian. Actually, this recalled what stated by Ellis (1985, p.252); "the learner experiences disorientation, stress, fear, etc. as a result of differences between his or her own culture and that of the target language community". Thus, he was still not adapted to the new culture of the target language 'Brown, 1980). Other examples were uttered in similar situations; (**ħajjun mabru:r wa sa9iyun maʃku:r)**, (**ʔinshaʔalloh**), and (**bismella:h ʔrraħma:n ʔrraħi:m**). These sentences can be translated as ***blessed pilgrimage*** said to a pilgrim after doing it, ***may God permit doing or making it*** said when Muslim hopes something to occur and ***in the name of God, the most compassionate, the most merciful*** said by Muslim before initiating to do any activity, i.e. eating. In essence, it is worthy to say here

*Today, most of L2 students around the world live in a monolingual and mono-cultural environment. Consequently, they become culture-bound individuals who tend to make premature and inappropriate value judgments about their as well as others' cultural characteristics. This can lead them to consider others whose language they may be trying to learn as very peculiar and even ill-mannered, which, in turn, plays a demotivating role in their language learning process. (Genc and Bada, 2005 p.75)*

In fact, this was performed by advanced learners rather than intermediate and beginning ones. Teachers of advanced learners claimed that such learners had very good level and command of English which in turn attracted their attention to such cultural differences.

Furthermore, 17 beginners and 5 intermediate learners wondered from some polysemes, that is, why one word can be associated with two distinct meanings. This actually resulted in misunderstanding of some sentences which were not possible to clarify except in Arabic. For instance, when the word *school* was presented to mean a college in ***you need to join some school so as to obtain a bachelor degree***, a few students were surprised why it was used in that context, i.e. how one can get bachelor by simply joining high school. Others thought that one could obtain a bachelor degree just by finishing classes at a secondary school. The teacher clarified in English that *school* in English may mean the place where they attend classes before their university education or it may mean a college. Nonetheless, those students were still unable to comprehend the sentence due to their bad commands. The teacher was thus obliged to use Arabic. As far as Arabic was allowed, the students claimed that Arabic does not contain single words of different meanings and it is strange to find it in English accordingly. Most likely, Arabic was used to explain that *head* in ***my head complained to him*** meant the manager, not that part of body and *bank* in ***Ahmad takes them to the other bank*** meant the other side of a river, not that place for saving money.

Besides, 19 beginners, 6 intermediate students, and 3 advanced ones were not able to use some constructions appropriately, that is, they used English words that were not appropriate in specific contexts although they had similar meanings to appropriate ones. An example was that one student said the following sentence commenting on a picture presented in the book ***the manager is calling every worker to make emergent meeting***. The word ***emergent*** was inappropriate to be used with the word ***meeting***. When the teacher asked the student in English to say ***urgent meeting*** instead of ***emergent meeting***, the student was curious to know why he should do so although the both words have the same meaning in common. The teacher explained the contexts in which each word, i.e. emergent and urgent, should be properly used, but, due the student's inability to understand what the teacher said in English, the teacher used Arabic to explain the difference. In fact, what was performed by the student is regarded as L2- based strategy of substitution (Faerch & Kasper, 1984). That is, the student substituted one word with another. He did so because he still did not recognize what appropriate word was to use. What was more crucial was that, the student understood well when to use the both words when the teacher used Arabic rather than English. Examples similar to the previous situation were ***beautiful guy, repeat the idea again, her feelings may be translated on her face,*** and ***she is handsome.***

Furthermore, despite the advanced students were almost in the same level and command of English, 12 of them did not have the ability to produce a sentence or a construction of specific L2 rules. For example, when a student was asked a question in order to have an answer like *the pictures are presented more separate than they really are*, he said in Arabic **quddimat ʔaṣṣuwar mafṣulah ʔakɵar mimma hiyyah 9ale:h**. Likely, instead of saying *these sights are famous for more than their spectacular beauty* another advanced student said its equivalent in Arabic **haðihi ʔ almanaðer maʃhu:roh liʔasbab ʔakɵar men ʔannaha jami:lah jeddan**. The students claimed that they did not know how to produce such sentences even though they understood their English counterparts said by the teachers, i.e. the students answered yes when the teacher asked whether or not they meant the previous English sentences. It might be believed that these students had the L2 rule of such sentences as intake. Importantly, in 4 advanced teachers' points of view, disallowing students to communicate in English because of this issue was impossible because they had very good command of English and discouraging them to participate in classroom might make them feel unmotivated and that they were rejected as participants and individuals in the classroom. It might be, therefore; better to allow them use Arabic. In this regard, Ellis (1985, p.159) stated that

*Even input is understood, it may not be processed by the learner's internal mechanisms. That is what Krashen meant when he stated that comprehensible input is not a sufficient condition for SLA. It is only when input becomes intake that SLA takes place. Input is the L2 data which the learner hears; intake is that portion of the L2 which is assimilated and fed into the interlanguage system.*

Moreover, 2 intermediate teachers and 3 advanced ones preferred not to use English in long talk when explaining an idea or a difficult point in the target language. They complained that they were not able to make all L2 uttered constructions grammatical when they were involved to convey their meanings. Despite they could differentiate what is grammatical from ungrammatical in tasks as short questions-answers pairs, they used little Arabic in long talk to avoid grammatical mistakes such as; *it is more better to…, it is more cleaner than …, I did not caught that, they did not answer the questions. Do they?, they were in the university, Salma was at home but she did not answer when we called it.*

It was clear that they almost had mistakes of overgeneralization, but they were quite certain that they knew the grammatical counterparts. This was evident when they grammatically produce them in other teaching situations. Their problem arose when they were not able to control their production as long as they kept talking for long time (krashen & Terrell, 1983). This might be in accordance with what was claimed by Krashen (1982, p. 112), namely, "the use of the conscious grammar is limited. Not everyone monitors. Those who do only monitor some of the time and use the Monitor for only a sub-part of the grammar...the effect of self-correction on accuracy is modest. Second language performers can typically self-correct only a small percentage of their errors, even when deliberately focused on form...and even when we only consider the easiest aspects of grammar".

In contrast, making grammatical mistakes by the teachers was not a barrier to prevent communicating in English. Teachers' talks were understood by students even though they included mistakes. What was crucial here, as explained by them, they avoided making mistakes because of their cultural convention, that is, it is taboo to make mistakes in front of one's students. Teacher, in the Arab world, is viewed as culturally and socially aware and consequently committed to the traditions of the community and he is ideal to be followed by his students in terms of positive behaviors. He is considered a guide to his students and should not therefore make mistakes. Otherwise, he would feel ashamed.

## 8. Conclusion

Since English is learned in EFL classroom setting, teachers cannot suppose that EFL learners know everything in the target language. Even though learners have difficulty to realize and explore meaning of an expression, a word, a phrase, or a new construction in the target language, teachers can use some techniques other than L1 use to make students familiar with their meanings. But, as said frequently, every rule has its exceptions. Using L1 or translation from L1 into L2 or vice versa, may be more beneficial than others as eclectic technique particularly when certain teaching contexts strictly require its use.

In this study, for example, L1 may be used when meanings of literally translated sentences are not understood by the teachers or the learners due to bad commands of the learners. Also, using L1 may be necessary when students use inappropriate words in new L2 constructions. Clarification why appropriate words should be used instead of inappropriate ones is not possible in English if the students' level of English is bad. In addition, when a cultural concept does not have exact equivalent in English, some students code- switched to that concept in Arabic. Similarly, Arabic is used when students are not able to express difficult L2 constructions at time they cannot be disallowed to use Arabic counterparts as they are active individuals. On the contrary, students sometimes insist to use specific Arabic concepts although they can translate them into English because, as they believed, such concepts miss their cultural and

religious value if translated. Arabic use may sometimes be feasible to teachers to avoid feeling ashamed in front of students because of their Arab culture.

However, choosing to use L1 in instances as the ones presented above may reflect a highly effective procedure which can be used with sets of other procedures to achieve successful way of learning English in the Saudi Arabian EFL classroom. When Arabic use occurs in its proper contexts, effective interaction between the content of the materials, the learners and the teachers exists. Larrea (2002, p. 2) concludes that "even though English should be the main language in the classroom both as the language of instruction and communication they all seem to agree that occasional use of L1 may be beneficial".

Having recognized the nature of the previous instances, it might be advocated that EFL teachers may be better than English native- speaking teachers. In such a case, both of them exchange the same culture and social beliefs and the teacher has the task to use Arabic, when necessary, to fulfill the learners' missed culture in English. When they translate some point from L2 to L1, they actually attributed cultural reality, i.e. cultural identity, to this L2 point. In contrast, teachers who do not speak the learners' first language may sometimes have no idea about the learners' culture and thus they are unable to express the cultural meanings of certain L2 words because they miss the culture of the learners' mother tongue. In this vein, Miles (2004, p. 12) argues "non-native teachers are possibly better teachers as they themselves have gone through the process of learning an L2 (usually the L2 they are now teaching), thereby acquiring for themselves, an insider's perspective on learning the language".

It is recommended, however, to conduct similar studies to verify such instances. Besides, it is recommended to conduct other empirical studies concerning combinations of different first and foreign languages regarding native and non- native English teachers.

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**Appendix**

**Symbols of Arabic consonants and their Descriptions based on (IPA):**

b     voiced bilabial stop.

t     voiceless dental stop.

d     voiced dental stop.

t̲     voiceless emphatic dental stop.

k     voiceless velar stop.

g     voiced velar stop.

q     voiceless uvular stop.

f     voiceless labiodental fricative.

θ     voiceless interdental fricative.

ð     voiced interdental fricative.

Đ     voiced emphatic interdental fricative.

j     voiced interdental fricative.

s     voiceless dental fricative.

z     voiced dental fricative.

ʃ     voiceless alveopalatal fricative.

s̲     voiceless emphatic alveolar fricative.

γ     voiced velar fricative.

x     voiceless velar fricative.

ħ     voiceless pharyngeal fricative.

9     voiced pharyngeal fricative.

m     voiced bilabial nasal stop.

n     voiced alveolar nasal stop.

l     voiced alveolar lateral.

Ḻ     voiced emphatic alveolar lateral.

r     voiced alveolar liquid.

ʰ     voiceless glottal fricative.

ʔ     voiceless glottal stop

y     voiced palatal glide.

w     voiced labiovelar glide.

**Symbols of Arabic vowels and their Descriptions:**

i   high front unrounded lax.         o   mid back rounded lax.

i:   high front unrounded tense.        o:   mid back rounded tense.

e   mid front unrounded lax.          a   low central unrounded lax.

e:   mid front unrounded tense         a:   low central unrounded tense.

u   high back rounded lax.

u:   high back rounded tense.