

# Teachers' and Students' Attitudes towards L1 Use in EFL Classrooms in the Contexts of Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia

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## Abstract

The role of a mother tongue (L1) in the teaching and learning of a foreign language (FL) has been the subject of much debate and controversy. This paper reports on a piece of research carried out in our own teaching environments (at universities both in Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia) and presents an analysis of the attitudes of students and teachers towards the use of learners' mother tongue (in this case Bengali and Arabic) in English language classrooms at the tertiary level where English is taught as a non-major subject. For the study, two surveys with the same questionnaires were conducted in two universities each from Bangladesh and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) with the participation of 1000 students and 30 teachers. Results suggest that a judicious and moderate use of L1 does not hinder learning; rather, it assists, aids and facilitates the teaching and learning process thus providing the teacher with an effective pedagogical tool for maximizing the learning outcomes.

**Keywords:** mother tongue (L1), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Bangladesh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)

## 1. Introduction

Throughout much of the history of research into second language acquisition (SLA), the role of learners' L1 has been a debated issue what Gabrielatos (2001) calls a 'bone of contention'. This conflicting issue whether to use L1 in EFL classes or not prevails dominantly among the teachers who teach particularly at the tertiary level.

The teachers who start their teaching right after the completion of their studies are always in a state of confusion about certain issues of English Language Teaching (ELT) in the first few experimenting years of their careers. The first and foremost issue they encounter is whether they go for English-only policy or they can take recourse to L1. Since we have the experience of teaching at the tertiary level both in Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia, we have also faced the same conflicting issue that is the status of the use of students' L1 in the EFL classroom.

The status of English in Bangladesh is far more than a foreign language but less than a second language. English is taught as a compulsory subject from primary to higher secondary levels and it is used as the medium of instruction in almost all the departments at universities. Though a great deal of emphasis is put on English from the elementary level, many students fail to achieve the target level of proficiency. Since Bengali is the mother tongue of all students, it is not unusual for them to use Bengali in English classes and to expect the teachers to use it as well in the classroom. Besides, teachers at some points, also use Bengali in the class for affective reasons and for making the lecture comprehensible to all the students.

On the other hand, the official status of English in Saudi Arabia is that of a primary foreign language. The compulsory educational system consists of three levels: the primary level, which consists of six grades; the secondary and the intermediate levels, each consisting of three grades. Students start learning English in the last year of the primary level. English, in addition to being taught in public educational establishments, is taught in all Saudi universities either as a foundation course or as a major field of study. English is used as a medium of instruction in most university departments. But the level of achievement in learning English as a foreign language is far below. This picture in Saudi Arabia has made us think about the issue of the use of learners' mother tongue once again. Here for us, the teaching context is a little bit different from Bangladesh since we do not share the same L1 with the students and we clearly feel that for the effective teaching and learning of English

we need to use the students' L1 to some extent.

Under these circumstances, we feel to share our ideas and feelings with other teachers and want to know their thoughts about and learners' attitudes towards the same issue as well. And this idea has driven us to conduct the present study in two different contexts. The areas this paper is going to investigate in more detail are whether the use of students' L1 in the classroom, either by the teacher, the students, or both, hinders the learning of a target language (TL)/foreign language (in this case English) or can facilitate it ; and if it facilitates, why, when, how, and to what extent, L1 should be used.

### *1.1 Significance of the Study*

The greater demand of English language learning for instrumental purposes and the failure of the EFL learners to achieve target level of proficiency have made us think about this research. The findings regarding the frequency, amount, reasons, occasions, and ways of L1 use in EFL classrooms will guide the practicing teachers about how to use L1 fruitfully in EFL classrooms for the effective learning outcomes. Moreover, the implications drawn from the study can be beneficial to the teacher trainers, and help the administrators and curriculum developers to understand the needs and attitudes of the students regarding the use of their L1. The teaching techniques emerged from the recommendations of the participant teachers may bring about a qualitative change in the approach towards L1 use in EFL classes. Furthermore, the study will help researchers unearth many socio-psychological aspects of EFL teaching that many researchers were not able to explore. And importantly, it will serve as a future reference for researchers on the subject of EFL teaching and learning.

## **2. Theoretical Background and Material Studied**

Many and varied methods and approaches have been put forth both in favor of and against the use of the students' L1 in the EFL classroom. Grammar Translation Method (GTM) thus allows the extensive use of L1 to explain new items and to enable comparisons to be made between FL/L2 and L1 (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 5). The Community Language Learning (CLL) approach also supports the use of L1 in FL/L2 classrooms, particularly in early stages of language learning (ibid., pp. 90-91). On the contrary, Audio-lingual Method (ALM) and Direct Method (DM) reject the use of L1 in FL/L2 classrooms and argue that FL/L2 should be taught without any translation and any reference to L1. The Natural Approach (NA) developed by Krashen and Terrell (1983) argues that except the limited L1 use only in the very initial stages of FL/L2 learning, the target language should always be used in the classroom without any translation and use of L1. The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach does not forbid L1 use in FL/L2 classroom completely. It allows the instructor and students to use the L1 judiciously where possible (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 156).

Many second language acquisition (SLA) theories have discussed the significant role of learners' L1 in learning and teaching a foreign language. The idea of 'language transfer' by Selinker (1972) thus advocates the natural occurring of L1 in FL learning programs where learners transfer elements from their mother tongue to the FL. According to Ringbom (1987), "in all the aspects of phonology, grammar and lexis, the existence of elements perceived to be similar to previously acquired knowledge can be assumed to have a facilitating effect on L2-comprehension" (Ringbom, 1987, p. 56). Ferrer (2002) in his 'contrastive analysis' argues, "the principal role of cross-linguistic referencing is akin to consciousness-raising". He further cites Rutherford's, "successful learning comes about only when what is learned can be meaningfully related to something that is already known" and recommends "a judicious use of cross-linguistic comparison techniques when doing grammar work in the English classroom" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 6). The affective filter hypothesis by Krashen (1982) claims that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. Low motivation, low self-esteem, and debilitating anxiety can combine to raise the affective filter and form a 'mental block' that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition. Hence, the use of L1 "reduces anxiety and enhances the affective environment for learning, takes into account socio-cultural factors, facilitates incorporation of learners' life, experiences and allows for learner-centered curriculum development" (Auerbach, 1993, p. 20).

As a term originally borrowed from sociolinguistics, code-switching in SLA has been traditionally looked upon as a symptom of error and lack of competence though Cook (2001) considers code-switching a pedagogical instrument in the hand of teachers, and many research findings have supported his view. One of the latest studies by Qian et al., (2009) investigated the functions of teachers' code-switching where they identified two broad categories: methodological and social. Methodological code-switching was used for L1 translation, clarification, highlighting, and efficiency in the case of lack of enough time. Instances of social code switching included the use of L1 for praise, encouragement, and disapproval of learners' behavior. Likewise, in her study, Inbar-Lourie (2010) indicated that teachers used code-switching mainly for catalyzing comprehension, coping with discipline

problems, explaining grammar, introducing new concepts, giving a sense of achievement to the child, embedding information from other subjects, and encouraging and comforting the students. Sali (2014) also showed that all the teachers employed code-switching to communicate the content of the lesson, regulate the classroom interactions, shift the focus of the lesson and build rapport with the students in general.

Most of the research studies have validated the benefits of the use of learners' L1 in EFL classrooms though a very few ones are against it. The study of Alkadasy (2008) revealed the role of Arabic as facilitating in the learning of English. In addition, students were of the view that using Arabic was one of the very few effective ways to understand English. The study concluded that teachers should be made aware that using Arabic purposively would lead to more interaction in English. Kim Anh (2010) studied the attitudes of Vietnamese university teachers towards using Vietnamese (L1) in teaching English. The findings revealed that judicious use of L1 is necessary in some situations in teaching English. In this research, all the participants supported the use of L1 in the classes. They stated that L1 was a part of their teaching method and could play a positive role in their classroom. Leeming (2011) conducted a smaller-scale study with four Japanese high school students where he argued for potential benefits of using L1 in assisting learners. He also pointed out, students' L1 use is subject to contextual factors such as their interlocutor and the classroom atmosphere.

We can infer from the literature that the findings of one study investigating occasions, reasons for and attitudes towards L1 use in an EFL classroom might be different from those of other studies. Consequently, the findings of one study in the review of literature cannot be generalized. But this study is different from the previous ones in many aspects. First, here the participant students belong to the tertiary level and they learn English as a non-major subject. Second, the research has been carried out in two different contexts- Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia- with an aim to raise the generalizability and acceptability of the findings. Third, in Bangladesh, English language teachers share the same mother tongue with the students while in Saudi Arabia, the participant teachers belong to different nationalities with different mother tongues and the students are from many middle-eastern countries with the same mother tongue- Arabic. Therefore, it covers a wider range of participants for which the study has got more validity and reliability. For that, the study also stands unique.

### **3. Methods and Techniques**

#### *3.1 Sampling*

Random sampling is followed in this study because, here, all the population has the same chance to be selected. Two types of samples are used for the present study: students and teachers.

#### *3.2 Subject*

A survey was conducted at the two universities in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh to assess students' and teachers' responses and thoughts about the use of L1 in English language classroom. The same survey was also conducted at the two state-run universities of Saudi Arabia: King Khalid University in Abha and Jazan University in Jizan. For the present study, 500 each tertiary level students from both Bangladesh and KSA have been randomly selected. To collect data, 30 teachers of those institutions have been interviewed through questionnaires.

#### *3.3 Instrumentation*

In the present study, two questionnaires - students' and teachers'- are used to elicit information from the respondents on different issues towards the use of learners' L1 in EFL classes. In these two questionnaires, most of the questions are similar though some are different. The present study employed a mixed method design where both qualitative and quantitative data collection are conducted simultaneously in an embedded mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2008). The first four questions were almost same for both teachers and students and used for quantitative data. Questions five and six were prepared particularly for teachers and for qualitative data.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

##### Teacher Response - 01

Should Arabic/Bengali be used in English language classroom?

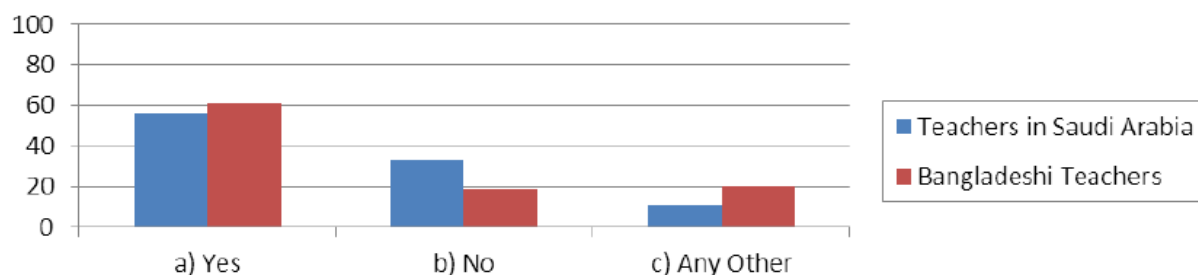


Figure 1. Use of L1 in the English class viewed by teachers

56% and 61% teachers from KSA and Bangladesh respectively believe that L1 should be used in English classes though a considerable number of teachers in KSA (33%) are against using L1 in classes. Only 19% Bangladeshi teachers think that Bengali should be avoided completely in EFL classrooms. 11% teachers in Saudi Arabia and 20% Bangladeshi teachers feel that L1 should not be used too much; rather it should be used occasionally and when necessary. But everything depends on the context and the level of the learners. Therefore, we see that the majority of the teachers in both the countries support the use of L1 unconditionally.

##### Student Response - 01

Should Arabic/Bengali be used in English language classroom?

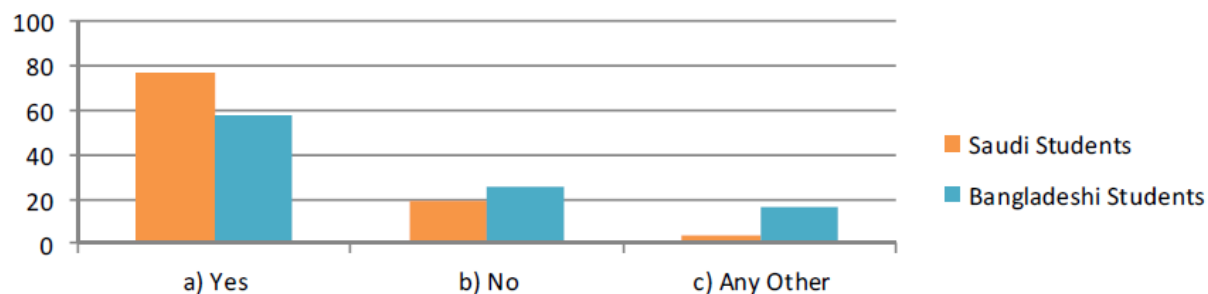


Figure 2. Use of L1 in the English class viewed by students

The bar chart (in Figure 2) shows that a good number of students- 77% from Saudi Arabia and 58% from Bangladesh- are of the view that their L1 should be used in English classes. But 19% Saudi students think negatively about using L1 while that percentage of Bangladeshi students is 26%. Only four percent Saudi students think that L1 can be used sometimes and in some situations, while 16% students from Bangladesh feel that L1 should be considered sometimes depending on the necessity of the students. Hence, we find consistency regarding the views of both teachers and students about the use of L1 in the target language classroom.

Teacher Response - 02

How often do you think Arabic/Bengali should be used in English language classroom?

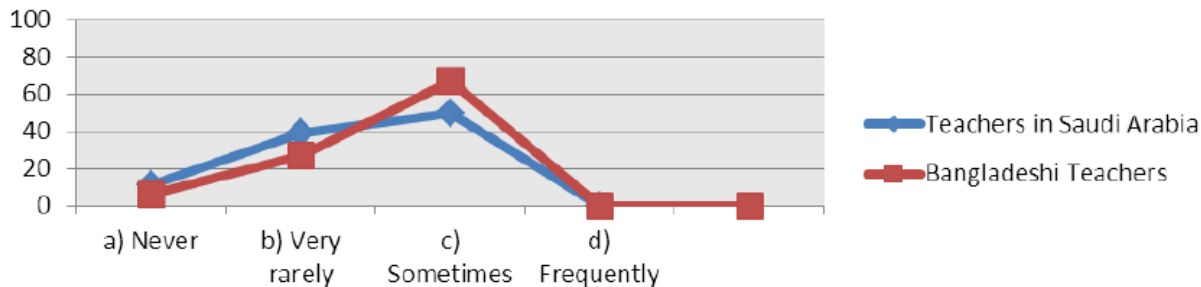


Figure 3. Frequency of L1 use viewed by teachers

The line chart (in Figure 3) shows that only six percent Bangladeshi teachers think that L1 should *never* be used in English language classroom though this percentage gets almost doubled in case of the teachers from Saudi Arabia and it is 11%. To 39% teachers from KSA, L1 can be used *very rarely* in English language classroom and it is only 27% Bangladeshi teachers who think the same. But a very good number of teachers from both the countries - 50% Saudi and 67% Bangladeshi - agree that L1 can be used *sometimes* in classroom though none from these two countries think that L1 should be used *frequently*. The findings here suggest that majority of the teachers disfavours the two extreme paradigms of L1 use - *never* and *frequently*. Rather they supported the moderate use (*sometimes*) of L1 depending on the occasion, context, level and necessity of the learners.

Student Response – 02

How much do you think Arabic/Bengali should be used in English language classroom?

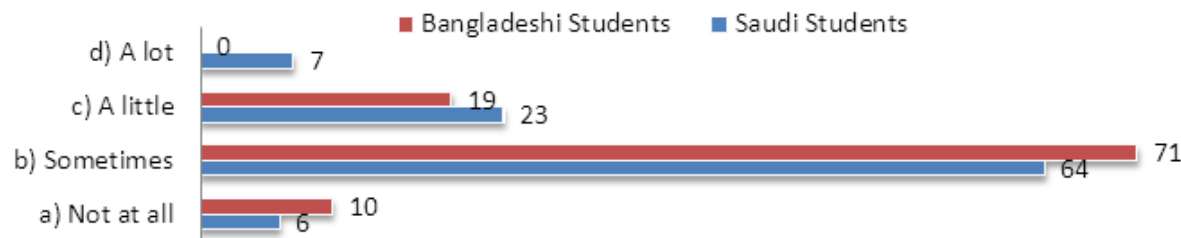


Figure 4. Amount of L1 use viewed by students

The chart (in Figure 4) shows that only few students from both Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh do not like their L1 to be used at all in English classes and it is only six and ten percent respectively. But a great percentage of students - 64% Saudi and 71% Bangladeshi - have a liking for L1 to be used *sometimes* in English class. Though 23% Saudi students prefer the use of L1 *a little*, it is only 19% in case of Bangladeshi students. Surprisingly, none of the Bangladeshi students want their L1 *a lot* and only seven percent Saudi students like *a lot*. The findings here reveal that the students are in favor of the judicious and purposeful use of the L1 and against the excessive use of it. They also have the feel that they need the optimal exposure to the target language in the class, but complete avoidance of the use of L1 may impede their learning.

## Teacher Response - 03

If you prefer the use of L1 (Arabic/Bengali) in English class, why? (You can choose more than one option.)

Table 1. Reasons for L1 use viewed by teachers

Options	Teachers in Saudi Arabia	Bangladeshi Teachers
<i>a) It aids comprehension greatly.</i>	48%	59%
<i>b) It is less time-consuming.</i>	28%	23%
<i>c) It helps students feel more comfortable and confident.</i>	56%	42%
<i>d) It helps to manage behavioral issues.</i>	22%	17%
<i>e) It helps to establish rapport with the students.</i>	24%	30%

Table 1 shows that majority of the teachers from both Bangladesh and KSA prefer the use of L1 of learners in their classes with an aim to helping students comprehend everything clearly and lucidly, and making students feel more comfortable and confident. In this regard, we can recall the input hypothesis by Krashen (1985) which implies that an important factor for acquisition of another language is comprehensible input and the affective filter hypothesis asserts that acquirers of a language will filter or block out the target language if they become tense, angry, or bored. According to Meyer (2008), comprehension of the classroom environment leads to lower affective filters. The students' L1 can assist in making the classroom a more comprehensible place and help lower affective filters.

Some teachers also use L1 of learners as it helps to establish rapport with the students, to deal with behavioral issues for classroom management, and for being less time-consuming. Mee-Ling (1996) recalls Lin's (1990) and Pennington's (1995) findings that Cantonese (L1) was used to keep discipline and draw pupil's attention in EFL classrooms.

## Student Response – 03

If you prefer the use of L1 (Arabic/Bengali) in English class, why? (You can choose more than one option.)

Table 2. Reasons for L1 use viewed by students

Options	Saudi Students	Bangladeshi Students
<i>a) It aids comprehension greatly.</i>	59%	64%
<i>b) It helps me to share my experience and knowledge with the peers/teachers.</i>	17%	19%
<i>c) It makes me feel at ease, comfortable and less stressed.</i>	47%	40%
<i>d) It helps me express myself when I do not have the appropriate English words.</i>	31%	27%

In Table 2, it is clear that most of the students from both Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh prefer L1 to be used as a facilitating tool to comprehend the lesson greatly. Many students also think that L1 use in the classroom puts them at ease, comfortable, less stressed, and helps them minimize the affective factors related to learning.

A considerable number of students use L1 when they share their own experiences and knowledge with peers and teachers. This view goes parallel with Meyer (2008) who quotes Schweers (1999) saying that in a case where the instructor is a native speaker of the L2, students can better identify with them if the instructor speaks the students' L1, thus showing that the instructor respects and values the student's mother tongue. Therefore, in the classroom teachers must be aware that to create a favorable, non-threatening, and student friendly socio-psychological environment for the EFL learners, we must respect and acknowledge the culture and the language of the learners and sometimes we should allow them to converse, discuss in group works in their own language. This table also depicts that a good number of students take recourse to L1 when they have limited vocabulary and hardly find any words to express their ideas in English.

## Teacher Response - 4

If your answer for question no. 1 is (a) or (c), when do you think it is appropriate to use Arabic/Bengali in English Class? (You can choose more than one option.)

Table 3. Occasions of L1 use viewed by teachers

<b>Options</b>	<b>Teachers in Saudi Arabia</b>	<b>Teachers in Bangladesh</b>
<i>a) to explain difficult concepts</i>	45%	47%
<i>b) to joke around and make fun in the class</i>	28%	14%
<i>c) to check for comprehension</i>	22%	19%
<i>d) to explain complex grammar points</i>	45%	39%
<i>e) to give instructions</i>	17%	17%
<i>f) to carry out small group work</i>	11%	9%
<i>g) to define new and abstract vocabulary items</i>	39%	41%
<i>h) to compare and contrast between L1 and TL while teaching different features of TL</i>	18%	21%

This table (Table 3) shows that majority of the teachers from both Bangladesh and KSA prefer using L1 in their classes when they need to explain difficult concepts and complex grammar points. A great percentage of teachers take recourse to L1 while explaining abstract vocabulary items. This view goes with the idea of ‘transfer’ in the Interlanguage theory where ‘positive transfer’ is very obvious in L2 vocabulary learning.

The above table also reveals that L1 is often used when the teachers want to check whether students have understood the lesson or not. A good number of teachers use it to joke around and to give instructions. In this regard, Jeremy Harmer (2007) rightly mentions, “once we have given instructions for an activity, for example, we can ask students to repeat the instructions back to us in the L1 – and this will tell us whether they have understood what they have to do” (Harmer, 2007, p. 39). Jim Scrivener (2009) also shares the same view and points out that “when learners read an article or short story, sometimes ask them to summarize it orally in L1. This can reveal interesting insights about what learners have understood or misunderstood” (Scrivener, 2009, p. 309).

The table also sheds some light on the teachers’ inclination to L1 use in making comparison and contrast between L1 and FL/TL while teaching different features of FL/TL. According to Harmer (2007) when teaching pronunciation, it is often useful if students can find an equivalent sound in the L1 for the English one they are trying to produce. We may want to explain to them how English has two different sounds where the L1 does not make such a distinction (e.g. /b/ and /v/ for Spanish speakers, /l/ and /r/ for Japanese speakers).

## Student Response - 04

If your answer for question no. 1 is (a) or (c), when do you want your teacher to use or to allow you to use Arabic/Bengali in English Class? (You can choose more than one option.)

Table 4. Occasions of L1 use viewed by students

<b>Options</b>	<b>Saudi Students</b>	<b>Bangladeshi Students</b>
<i>a) to comprehend difficult concepts</i>	48%	60%
<i>b) to ask peers/teachers for clarification</i>	23%	15%
<i>c) to understand complex grammar points</i>	28%	28%
<i>d) to understand instructions</i>	18%	16%
<i>e) to understand/remember new vocabulary items (e.g. some abstract words)</i>	29%	26%
<i>f) to communicate with and help each other in group work</i>	17%	14%

It is clear in Table 4 that students from both Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh prefer the use of L1 mostly to understand the difficult concepts and new vocabulary items better. A good number of students prefer it because they want to understand the instructions completely. Some students prefer L1 to be used for communication purpose among peers or with teachers for clarification and for helping each other in group work.

#### Teacher Response - 5

If your answer for question no. 1 is (a) or (c), please explain how Arabic/Bengali can be used fruitfully to facilitate the teaching and learning of English language.

Table 5. How to use L1 fruitfully in EFL classroom

Teachers from Saudi Arabia	Teachers from Bangladesh
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Omission of the subject of a sentence in English language among the Arab learners is an influence of Arabic syntax. Therefore, with the help of Arabic a teacher can compare the syntax of L1 and L2, which eventually helps learners overcome this problem.</li> <li>• Arabic meanings of some key words related to their lessons can be given to make their lessons clear to them. Some instructions can be given in Arabic to make the class more interactive.</li> <li>• Especially with beginners, L1 can be used sometimes to convey the message when it is difficult for learners to understand the gestures and signs used by the teacher. Sometimes students like to give the Arabic meaning of words that are newly explained to them just to confirm that they got the correct meaning.</li> <li>• If needed, Arabic can be used in the classroom in order to explain some difficult grammatical structures or rules.</li> <li>• First, vocabulary should be made clear in Arabic. Second, some difficult and complex sentences can be translated. Moreover, translating some instructions and questions can be helpful in some cases.</li> <li>• If Arabic is used in parallel with English, it will help students to understand better the lesson. They feel more comfortable using their mother tongue. They don't feel that they are in a strange environment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A teacher can use Bengali in English class fruitfully to:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. explain difficult places/issues that would save time,</li> <li>2. explain exam/quiz/assignment instruction,</li> <li>3. Show the relationship/differences between English/Bangla expression, sentence construction, cultural variation etc.</li> </ol> </li> <li>• In my case, I always feel that language teachers should mix and switch between the target language and learners' native language to make the discussion lively, enjoyable as well as effective. Of course, the teacher has to be alert to be able to find out when and to what extent Bengali could be used.</li> <li>• A teacher should at first deliver lecture in English and later he should switch to Bengali for making students understand the same lecture. If students have high proficiency level of English, the rate of using Bengali should be decreased and in the course of time, there should be no use of Bengali in the class.</li> <li>• Language teachers can use Bengali in English classrooms for explaining any grammatical item or teaching vocabulary to make the item or the new vocabulary more comprehensible to the learners.</li> <li>• In order to explain complex grammar topics, Bengali helps a lot as it lessens the anxiety level of the students. Moreover, use of Bengali in the English language classroom makes the lesson go smooth, especially in a class of students having mixed level of language competence.</li> </ul>



## Teacher Response - 6

Please give two suggestions or comments regarding the use (or the avoidance) of L1 (Arabic/Bengali) in the English class.

Table 6. Suggestions given by teachers

Teachers from Saudi Arabia	Teachers from Bangladesh
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explanation of abstract lexical items often requires the teacher to depend on Arabic, as dictionary definitions or examples may not always suffice. Arabic can also simplify the explanation of complex grammar points. However, avoiding L1 (Arabic) in an English class is always a better idea, as it helps learners infer or guess meanings from context.</li> <li>• Minimal use of Arabic (for the beginners) might be conducted in the EFL classes as a scaffolding tool.</li> <li>• Native teachers (Saudi) should avoid the frequent use of Arabic in their classes.</li> <li>• In case of using Arabic language, the teacher should be aware that too much use of Arabic could affect English class negatively as it reduces the scope of learning new vocabulary, grammatical rules etc.</li> <li>• We should not encourage frequent use of Arabic in the classroom. Arabic should be used for comprehension only, not to make them dependent on translation method.</li> <li>• Arabic language should be used very rarely in the English language class.</li> <li>• Teachers should motivate the students to use (speak/write) English in different situations.</li> <li>• Students should be encouraged to express their feelings and participate in classroom discussion. Though they speak more Arabic in the beginning, they will have more scopes to speak and learn English in the end.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A monolingual English class is unrealistic and bound to fail. It is unrealistic because, from my experience, it does not work. It works much better when some Bengali is used because certain concepts can be made clearer in learners' native language. In other words, comprehension is facilitated by the use of Bengali.</li> <li>• Usage of L1/L2 mostly depends on who is learning, who is teaching, time limit vs. content size, etc.</li> <li>• Bengali can be used in an English class only for some specific purposes.</li> <li>• Students should be reminded that they should try to use English mostly in the class and avoid Bengali.</li> <li>• Give students confidence and motivation by saying that they must try to speak in English not only in class but also everywhere, but for difficult concepts they can switch to Bengali in class.</li> <li>• If content is important to teach within a limited amount of time, Bengali can be used.</li> <li>• Language teachers can use Bengali when they feel it is useful.</li> <li>• They should avoid using it always in language classrooms.</li> <li>• Teachers should consider students' proficiency levels, learning styles, capabilities, needs and purposes of learning the target language while deciding to use L1.</li> </ul>

### 5. Implications Drawn from the Study

In order to aid and facilitate the EFL teaching/learning process with the help of first language, there are certain implications for the teachers, which can be drawn from the current research study.

❖ The use of L1 is justified when the comprehension of the lesson (e.g. difficult concepts) or some items (e.g. complex grammar points) of TL is more important than the exposure to TL itself. For instance, some Arab students frequently omit verb *to be* and auxiliary *do* in making English sentences since verb *to be* and auxiliary *do* do not have any place in Arabic sentences. These differences result in errors such as *I student, Where you go?* etc. Therefore, with the help of Arabic a teacher can explain these types of grammatical rule clearly to the learners and help them to overcome their mistakes.

❖ L1 can be used as an effective pedagogical tool to make comparisons and contrasts between L1 and TL while teaching different features of TL to the students. Thus L1 can be a useful resource for 'positive transfer' when the teacher identifies similar components between L1 and TL. For example, some Bengali EFL learners pronounce Bengali bilabial plosive /p<sup>h</sup>/ like English labio-dental fricative /f/. However, the bilabial English plosive /p/ has an equivalent allophone [p<sup>h</sup>] when it is aspirated in the initial position of a word. This

identification can help the Bengali EFL learners to overcome their confusion between /p<sup>h</sup>/ and /f/ and to pronounce the English allophone [p<sup>h</sup>]. In the same way, teachers can also mention students' L1 by 'contrastive analysis' to prevent their 'negative transfer' and to give feedback on their mistakes on pronunciation, syntax and many other grammar points of TL. For instance, adjectives in Arabic follow the noun they qualify whereas the construction of an English noun phrase is vice-versa.

Arabic	<u>Madinat (city)</u>		<u>Jameela (beautiful)</u>
	noun	+	adjective
English	<u>beautiful</u>		<u>city</u>
	adjective	+	noun

This leads many Arab students to making word order mistakes in written or spoken English as when they say 'a city beautiful' (madinat jameela) instead of 'a beautiful city'.

- ❖ A teacher should first try to convey the meaning of new and abstract lexical items, and explain difficult concepts through action and demonstration. If he fails to communicate the meaning or make the students comprehend, he can use learners' L1 since comprehension is the prime importance of any lesson. Moreover, the use of L1 is recommended if the teacher has to cover vast content within a limited amount of time.
- ❖ The proficiency level of learners is an important issue to be considered in language teaching and learning. Some participant teachers opined that moderate use of L1 should be allowed for the less proficient learners to make the class interactive and to ensure student participation and comprehension. Initially, many learners may lack in enough and appropriate vocabulary items and expressions to convey themselves, participate in the classroom discussions or ask their teachers for clarification. In those cases, L1 can play the role of a scaffolding tool for them and the switch between L1 and TL/FL can create an effective learner-centered classroom. However, gradually L1 should be replaced by the target language once the learners achieve an advanced level of proficiency.
- ❖ From an affective perspective, language learning for many learners is full of anxiety and stress. Hence, the teacher can give students confidence and motivation by saying that they must try to use the target language, but for difficult concepts they can switch to L1 in the class. There should also be flexibility of L1 use in group work, checking for comprehension, asking questions and for other communication purposes.
- ❖ L1 is justified to be used particularly when the teacher needs to build rapport with the students so that they feel less alienated and more connected, and at the same time to compromise or negotiate disciplinary and other management circumstances. In the classroom, noise and indiscipline may occur when pupils are unclear of what to do, when the task is too easy or too difficult, or when the class size is big. In these cases, the teacher needs L1 for its immediate effect in order to minimize the noise or indiscipline during the task.
- ❖ The use of L1 must be moderate and judicious in EFL classes. The teacher should not use it always so that the students become dependent on their L1 instead of practicing the TL. It is important that the major medium of instruction must be the target language and the learners should be given as much exposure as possible to the target language input during limited class time. The students ought to be made familiar with the target language with its pronunciation, structural, socio-cultural and semantic contents to learn clearly and appropriately different contours of the target language. Therefore, the teacher has to be alert not to use the L1 very frequently.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study has revealed the frequency, amount, reasons, occasions, and ways of L1 use in EFL classrooms. In this study, some teachers both in Saudi Arabia and in Bangladesh consider the role played by L1 in the EFL classes as supportive and facilitating, and if L1 is not properly used, it may hinder learning of a foreign language. They are of the view that the use of the FL should be maximized whenever possible and the primary role of L1 is to supply scaffolding to lower affective filters by making the FL and the classroom environment comprehensible. The chief medium of communication has to remain, no doubt, English only. As with any other classroom technique, the use of the mother tongue is only a means to the end of improving learners' foreign language proficiency. Based on our findings, we therefore, advocate here for the principled, guided, and purposeful use of L1 since the unguided use and the randomized practice of the students' L1 may impede the achievement of expected outcomes in foreign language teaching and learning.

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