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Examining the Use of Arabic in English Classes at the Primary Stage in
Hebron Government Schools, Palestine: Teachers' Perspective

Nida' Mohammad Hisham Salah
Hebron, Palestine

Dr. Mohammed Abd Hakim Farrah
English Department, Faculty of Arts
Hebron University – Palestine

Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate the extent to which Arabic was used in the primary English classroom, the attitudes of teachers toward using Arabic and their reasons behind using it. It also aimed at exploring which gender used Arabic more in the EFL classroom. In addition, it tried to present the relationship between the use of Arabic and years of English teaching experience. The results of the study which were collected through a questionnaire, classroom observations and interviews indicated that Arabic was sometimes used in the primary English classrooms by teachers. It also indicated that there were no significant differences in using Arabic in the primary EFL classroom due to gender and English teaching experience. Moreover, the findings indicated that more Arabic was used by the teachers for translating abstract words and terminologies.

Keywords: L1 and L2, EFL classroom, gender, years of experience, teachers' perspectives.

Introduction:

The use of the mother tongue has long been argued in English language teaching (ELT) and the argument over whether students' native language should be included or excluded in English language classrooms has been a controversial issue. On the one side, it is believed that teaching English monolingually will increase the learning of the language, regardless of whatever other languages the learner may know (Phillipson, 1992; Harbord, 1992; Weschler, 1997 and Cook, 2001). On the other hand, a positive contribution to English learning can be fulfilled through teaching English bilingually if L1 is used at appropriate times and for appropriate reasons (Harmer, 2001; Auerbach, 1993; Cameron, 2001; Nation, 2003; Tang, 2002; Sharma, 2006).

Much has been written about the disadvantages of using L1 in the L2 classrooms. For example, Krashen (1985) asserts that using the mother tongue in the EFL classroom prevents the students from acquiring the valuable input in the L2. Phillipson (1992) - who has postulated the monolingual fallacies - formulated two inter-related tenets: "English is best taught monolingually" and "The ideal teacher of English is a native English speaker" (1985). Cook (2001) also strongly supports the monolingual approach. So she claims that using L2 only creates successful learning, especially if the learners realize that their maximum exposure to English will develop their capabilities in the target language. In the same view, Deller and Rinvoluceri (2002) do not support the random use of the native language and warn the language teachers of the negative effects of its over-use in the EFL classroom.

Contrary to the argument that using the mother tongue will harm the progress of the L2 learning, many studies argue that its use helps the students learn the L2 more effectively. According to Celce-Murcia (1991) and Hadley (2001) students' native language usually plays an important role in most popular English language teaching methods.

Cole (1997) asserts that at the beginning and low levels, it may be helpful to use the mother tongue since the students at this stage have no knowledge about the L2. He also adds that L1 is justified to be used for different reason, e.g. it can be used to introduce the major differences between the L1 and the L2, to save a lot of guessing, to motivate students and to reduce their anxiety. Meyer (2008) indicates that the mother tongue can play a positive role rather than a negative one in L2 learning, depending on the similarity of the two languages i.e. some languages share words, "cognates", and may be have the same structure, and in this case, the advantage of using the mother tongue will be noticed. Miles (2004) also indicates that limited use of the native language can actually facilitate the learning of an L2, and does not hinder it.

Literature Review

This section focuses on the previous studies that are meant to provide background information on the use of students' first language in the L2 classroom. Firstly, it presents the status of English in Palestine. Secondly, it discusses the role of L1 in major ELT methodologies. Thirdly, it gives an insight into theoretical and practical research favoring or not favoring the use of L1. Fourthly, it deals with some studies on the amount of L1 teachers and students use in the English class. It also discusses teachers' perceptions of L1 use in the classroom and their reasons for using it. Finally, it discusses the gender of the teachers and their use of L1 in the EFL classroom.

English in the Palestinian context

The compulsory educational system in Palestine is divided into two stages: basic education which starts from 1st to 10th grade, and secondary education which covers the 11th and the 12th grades, and these two stages are applied in both governmental and private schools. English as a foreign language in Palestine is a communicative course; however, it is taught as a school subject only like other subjects in the syllabus, and it is not commonly used as a means of communication (Al-Mutawa & Kailani, 1989).

The number of weekly English lessons is three to five, and each one lasts 40 minutes; thus, it could be said that students are not exposed to sufficient English due to the limited number of English classes, and they don't have the chance to use English outside classrooms. As a result, teachers are often the only proficient speakers and input providers of English for students.

The Use of the L1 in Major ELT Methodologies

The use of L1 in language teaching was one of the thorniest issues in language teaching methodology (Medgyes, 2001). Nazary (2008) asserts that, in the field of (ELT), there are three common classifications of methods which deal with the role of L1 in the EFL classroom: Traditional methods (Grammar Translation Method (GTM), Direct Method (DM), and Audiolingual Method), Alternative methods (Silent Way, Suggestopedia, Total Physical Response, and Community Language Learning) and current Communicative Methods (CLT). As shown by Mukattash (2003), only the grammar- translation method, the direct method and the communicative approach have been applied in most Arab countries.

The major purpose of the (GTM) was to help students understand their L1 better through translation and analysis of the grammar of the L2 (Hadley, 2001). As Celce-Murcia (1991) indicates, in the GTM there is little use of L2 and the instruction is given in the students' mother tongue. According to Hamdallah (1999), this method depends heavily on translating to the student's native language.

The Communicative Approach, which is one of the most popular language teaching methods today, appeared first in the 1970s and the 1980s (Hamdallah, 1999 and Hadley, 2001). It has raised the ban on using L1 in the L2 learning; however, limited L1 use is allowed in the EFL classroom (Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Celce-Murcia, 1991; Auerbach, 1993 and Hamdallah 1999). As Hadley (2001) states in the CLT "judicious use of the native language is acceptable where feasible" (p.117).

L1 use in the EFL classroom

Two arguments have emerged regarding L1 use in the EFL classes.

Arguments against Using L1 in the EFL classroom

Although the English only movement has been opposed, its supporters still determine to use English as the medium in the EFL classroom.

One common argument against L1 use is interference from the native language. Dulay, Burt & Krashen (1982) as cited in (Al-Harbi, 2010, p. 145) define the interference "as the automatic transfer, due to habit, of the surface structure of the first language onto the surface of the target language". According to Richards (1971) and Cook, (2001), interference is a major source of difficulty in the target language learning and to avoid that, the separation of L1 and L2 should be made. Harbord (1992) also supports the separation of L1 and L2, and he concedes that overusing L1 makes students believe that word for word translation is a useful technique; consequently, they will work towards transferring meaning in learning the L2.

A further argument is that using L1 might affect students' learning process negatively, since it reduces the exposure learners get to the L2 and reduces their opportunities for using the target language (Polio & Duff, 1994; Turnbull, 2001; and Deller & Rinvoluceri, 2002). Krashen and Terrell (1983) indicate that L1 use should not be included in the English classroom to increase students' exposure to the foreign language, since students acquire the target language through the same way they acquire their L1. Kharma and Hajjaj (1989) in their study of Arab learners of English in the Gulf region conclude that students should be exposed to the L2 since the aim of the FL teaching is to "approximate near-native competence" (p. 228). They also add that L1 use hinder L2 fluency, reduces motivation, and makes learners believe that L1 is useful to learn the L2.

Phillipson (1992) argues that "the more English is taught the better the results" (p.185). In agreement with the previous view, Auerbach (1993) also indicates that "the

more students are exposed to English, the more quickly they will learn; as they hear and use English, they will internalize it and begin to think in English" (p. 14). Similarly, Polio and Duff (1994) show that using L1 "prevents students from receiving input they might be exposed to in social situations outside the classroom" (p. 322).

Arguments for Using L1 in the EFL classroom

The monolingual approach has been criticized by researchers, teachers, and students, who believe that limited use of the L1 is a very natural and useful tool in the L2 classroom. Thus, many researchers have thought of ways to use L1 into the EFL teaching effectively (Auerbach, 1993; Schweers, 1999; Cook, 2001, Deller & Rinvoluceri, 2002; Tang, 2002; Mukattash, 2003 and Al-Nofaie, 2010). Atkinson (1987) strongly supports that students' mother tongue shouldn't be completely ignored in the English classes since "the use of L1 can be very effective in terms of the amount of time spent explaining" (p. 242). According to Auerbach (1993), "when the native language is used, practitioners, researchers, and learners consistently report positive results" (p. 18).

As shown by Harbord (1992), Auerbach (1993) and Deller and Rinvoluceri (2002), L1 represents a powerful source that can be used to enhance the L2 learning. In this situation, there is a considerable amount of literature which strongly suggests that the mother tongue can play a supportive and facilitating role in the EFL classroom as a valuable linguistic resource, and consequently, it should not be totally avoided (Schweers, 1999; Nation, 2003 and Butzkamm, 2003).

Mukattash (2003) holds that " the native language can be used as a teaching technique particularly in those areas where there is marked discrepancy between L1 and EFL system" (p. 224). Harmer (2001) also notes that L1 use is a quick and helpful technique in teaching the L2. It could be concluded that the principle in teaching English should be "Use English where possible and L1 where necessary" (Atkinson, 1993) as quoted in (Weschler, 1997, p. 4).

Teachers' Attitudes towards L1 Use in the EFL Classroom

Teachers' attitudes towards L1 use have been examined in different countries with varied results (AL-Nofaie, 2010). Al-Buraiki (2008) carried out a study to investigate the Omani English teachers' attitudes in basic education school. The result showed that the teachers believed that L1 has a positive role to play in teaching the young learners. The results of Crawford's study (2004) concerning the primary level as cited in Al-Nofaie (2010) showed that 54 % had "reservations" in using L1 as the main medium of teaching. Sharma (2006) investigated the attitudes of Nepali teachers and students towards the use of the native language in the EFL classroom. All respondents preferred the occasional use of L1 in the English classes. They also reported that judicious use of mother tongue is justified because it helps students learn English better. Similarly, Kim and Petraki (2009) reported that Korean students' and teachers' indicated that L1 plays a helpful role in the language classroom, especially in the early stages.

Three studies conducted in Palestine should also be noted here. Jadallah and Fuad (2010) have also interviewed five English instructors to investigate their attitudes towards Arabic use in the EFL classrooms. All of them agreed that using Arabic in EFL teaching is acceptable since they believed that there are some reasons in which Arabic can be helpful e.g., clarifying the abstract words, making students feel more relaxed, saving the class time and checking understanding instructions.

Tushyeh (1990) as cited in Hamdallah (1999) carried out a study using a questionnaire dealt with the English language teaching situation in the West Bank and one item in the questionnaire dealt particularly with the use of Arabic in English language teaching at schools and universities in the West Bank. He distributed it to two-hundred and thirty-one English language teachers from governmental, private, and UNRWA schools. The result of the questionnaire indicated that the participants agreed with the tenet of the communicative approach which allows limited use of L1.

Qadumi (2007) investigated 80 English language teachers' attitudes toward using Arabic in the EFL classroom in Qalqilya city and the villages around. He concluded that English language teachers in Qalqilya district have positive attitudes toward using Arabic in certain situations when they feel that using Arabic is necessary.

The Amount of L1 Use in the EFL Classroom

A body of research about how much L1 is used in the EFL classroom by both teachers and students with different kinds of data, including questionnaire, interviews and observation of lessons, has been carried out in different contexts and has generated two different opinions:

On the one hand, it is argued that L2 is best learned through the exposure to the language itself (Polio & Duff, 1994; Turnbull, 2001; Deller and Rinvolutri, 2002). Krashen (1985) believes that the whole lesson should be taught in the L2 as much as possible. He also adds that learners need to be exposed to "comprehensible input" of L2 which contains structures that are a little bit beyond their current level of "competence" to acquire a second language "subconsciously". A similar belief is held by Cook (2001) who indicates that the quantity of L2 should be maximized to create an English atmosphere.

Reasons for Using L1 in the EFL Classroom

Several studies have been carried out in different countries to investigate areas in which teachers can take advantage of their students' first language (Song, 2009 & Al-Nofaie, 2010).

The notion of L1 serving as "a time-saving device" is the most frequent justification given by teachers for L1 use (Atkinson, 1987. p, 422) cited in (Harbord, 1992). Similarly, Shimizu (2006, p. 77) indicated that "time-saving" is one of the principle arguments why researchers are in favor of using L1. As Turnbull (2001) stated, "I know from my personal experience that it is tempting to use the L1 to save

time"(p.536). Auerbach (1993); Schweers (1999) and Prodromou (2000) also agree that saving time is a justified reason for using L1 especially at lower levels. According to Harbord (1992), teachers' use of L1 to save time provides opportunities for "real teacher-student communication in L2 classroom" (p.352).

Another significant reason for teachers' use of the students' mother tongue in the L2 classroom is to achieve natural communication between them and their students. Harbord (1992, p. 352) argues that "facilitating teacher-student communication", and "facilitating teacher-student rapport" are two basic objectives for the teachers' use of students' L1 in the EFL classroom. In accordance with the previous view, Auerbach (1993) indicates that achieving a good relationship between students and teachers is a desirable aim that can be fulfilled through L1 use. Nation (2003) indicates that it is easier and more communicative to use L1 in the EFL classrooms to facilitate communication between students and teachers. Additionally, Miles (2004) considers that L1 should be used in the EFL classroom in order not to create a barrier between the students and the teachers.

It is also acceptable to use L1 in the EFL classroom by teachers to convey the meaning of an unfamiliar word, to clarify abstract word, and to explain difficult concepts (Cole, 1997; Cook, 2001; Butzkamm, 2003 and Meyer, 2008). Turnbull (2001) concurs with the opinion that "it is efficient to make a quick switch to the L1 to ensure that students understand an unknown word" (p. 535). As shown by Meyer (2008), the absence of L1 when explaining the unfamiliar concepts can raise the level of anxiety among students.

Motivating students by using L1 has received much interest in literature. Hamdallah (1999, p. 290), for example, emphasizes that in order to keep the learner's motivation in an "ideal circle", appropriate use of L1 in EFL classroom could be used. He adds that using L1 to motivate students encourages them to express their ideas

since it has a direct influence on the "psychological pressure". However, he concludes that when learners' ability of L2 increases, it is necessary to minimize the use of L1. Critchely (2002) indicates that with lower level learners, "teachers should use L1 when appropriate to build positive and mutually supportive relationships that will promote student motivation" (p. 3). Butzkamm (2003) asserts that students become more motivated to communicate in L2 by using L1 inside the classroom since L1 use makes them feel more comfortable.

It is also commonly agreed in the literature that L1 could be used by EFL teachers to give complex instructions to early levels (Harbord, 1992; Auerbach, 1993; Schweers, 1999 and Prodromou, 2000). In Cook's (2001); Shimizu's (2006); Nazary's (2008) and AL-Nofaie's (2010) studies, the findings revealed that a large number of teachers' favorite choice for giving complex instructions was by using the students' mother tongue. Harbord (1992) emphasized that giving class instructions by using L1 is an important point to achieve and facilitate communication between teachers and students. According to Cook (2001), managing the classroom is always fulfilled through using L1 for giving instructions.

Gender and L1 Use in the EFL Classroom

In terms of exploring the relationship between gender and L2 learning, several studies found that teacher's gender may also be an important factor that affects L1 use in EFL classroom. Qadumi (2007) indicates that female teachers strongly support the idea of avoiding the native language; he adds that female teachers are more committed to the supervisors' advice. A similar result is held by Gahin and Myhill (2001) who found that there were no statistically significant differences between the participants due to the teachers' gender in the use of the L1 in the EFL classroom.

The issue this study is going to examine in more detail is whether or not the use of the mother tongue (Arabic) in the EFL classroom by the teacher, the students, or both hinders the learning of the foreign language (English) or facilitates it.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the amount of time Arabic is used in the primary English classrooms
2. To investigate the students 'and teachers' attitudes towards using Arabic in the primary English classrooms
3. To investigate the reasons teachers use Arabic in the primary English classrooms
4. To investigate *which gender uses Arabic more* in the primary English classrooms
5. To investigate the relationship between years of English teaching experience and teachers' use of Arabic

Research Questions

1. How much Arabic is used in the primary English classroom?
2. What are the attitudes of teachers toward using Arabic in the primary English classroom?
3. What are the teachers' reasons for using Arabic in the primary English classroom?
4. *Which gender uses Arabic more* in the primary English classroom?
5. What is the relationship between years of English teaching experience and teachers' use of Arabic?

Methodology

This section describes the research design and the methodologies employed for carrying out the study. It provides detailed information about the participants, the instruments used for collecting the data and finally data analysis techniques.

Participants

They were 44 female and male Palestinian EFL teachers who teach English at the governmental primary schools in Hebron city with different years of experience.

Interviews

Six males and females were interviewed. The interviewees were as follows: a male assistant professor in the Department of English language at Hebron University, a female English teacher in a mixed school, a headmistress in a governmental school, while the others were two males and one female supervisors at the Directorate of Education in Hebron. Like the students and the teachers, all of them speak the Arabic language. All of the interviewees have more than five years of English teaching experience; therefore, they are in the category of experienced teachers. According to Nunan (1992), the opinion of the experienced teachers may be helpful and it should be taken into consideration.

Data Collection

In this study data were collected during the second semester of the academic year 2010/2011 through a questionnaire, classroom observations and interviews.

Questionnaire:

A questionnaire concerning the primary English classrooms was piloted in the second semester 2010, and was used in this study (see appendix 1).

Classroom Observations:

Two female and two male classes of English were observed to collect information about teachers' actual use of Arabic and their reasons for using it.

Interviews

The interviews were structured and each interviewee was asked seven questions based on the research questions of the study (see appendix 2). All of the questions were open-ended ones to find out more information that might not appear in the questionnaire.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the study. The findings are discussed in the light of the teachers' perceptions as detected in the questionnaire as well as their opinions as expressed in the interviews and class observation. The information collected from the interviews and class observation is used to support the quantitative data.

Reliability of the Questionnaire

The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using (Cronbach Alpha) formula, and it was measured to be (0.73) indicating a high degree of internal consistency, and therefore presenting a considerably reliable instrument.

Results related to Demographic Data:

As Table 1 showed, half of the teachers were males and the other half were females. Regarding their years of experience, around 32% of the teachers had from one to five years of experience, 25% had from six to ten years of experience and around 43% of them had more than ten years of experience. Concerning their educational qualification, all of them were BA holders except two teachers who held a diploma.

Table (1): Demographic Data of the teachers

Variables		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	22	50.0
	Female	22	50.0
Years of English teaching experience	1-5	14	31.8
	6-10	11	25.0
	Over 10	19	43.2
Educational qualification	Diploma	2	4.5
	Bachelor's	42	95.5

Analysis of the Questionnaire

The following section presents results of the questionnaire. It aims to answer the research questions of the current study.

1. How much Arabic is used in the primary English classroom?

In order to answer the question and to know how much Arabic was used in the primary English classroom by students and teachers as perceived by teachers, means and standards deviations were calculated as seen in table (2).

Table (2): Means and standard deviations of using Arabic in the primary English classroom by both teachers and students from teachers' point of view

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
I use Arabic	3.52	0.59
My students use Arabic	2.00	0.81

The above table indicates that Arabic was sometimes used by both teachers and students in the primary English classrooms. This finding is in accordance with Schweer's (1999), Tang's (2002), Kim and Petraki's (2009) and AL-Nofaie's (2010) studies which show that L1 should be used sometimes to facilitate the processes of learning and teaching. On the other hand, the table also indicates that teachers used Arabic in the classroom more than their students.

2-What are the attitudes of the teachers toward using Arabic in the primary English classroom?

In order to answer the question and to know the attitudes of the teachers toward using Arabic in the primary English classroom, means and standards deviations were calculated as seen in table (3).

Table (3): Means and standard deviations of teachers' attitudes toward using Arabic in the primary English classroom in order according to their importance

No	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
S3	Teachers should use English as much as possible	4.52	0.82
S2	Teachers should use Arabic as little as possible	4.14	0.73
S5	Using Arabic in the EFL classroom reduces the opportunities of using English	4.11	0.81
S4	Using Arabic has a negative impact on students' learning of English	3.84	0.99
S10	The communicative approach calls for a judicious use of L1 in the EFL classroom	3.64	0.75

S6	Using Arabic facilitates both teaching and learning	3.48	0.95
S7	The amount of Arabic that teachers use depends on their educational qualification	3.34	0.81
S12	English should be taught monolingually	3.30	1.25
S9	Arabic can be used as a teaching technique to help students develop their level of proficiency	3.18	1.15
S8	Arabic is indispensable in the primary English classrooms	3.14	1.00
S1	Teachers should be allowed to use Arabic	2.98	1.05
S11	The grammar translation method focuses on L1 use with little active use of L2	2.48	1.11
	Total degree	3.51	0.27

* **S: Statement**

The above table shows that the attitude of the teachers toward using Arabic in the EFL classroom was moderate by a mean which equals to (3.51). It also shows that teachers were aware that the excessive use of Arabic may hinder learning; therefore, their use of Arabic appeared to be limited. This finding supports the belief that L2 is best learned through the exposure to the language itself (Polio & Duff, 1994; Turnbull, 2001; Deller and Rinvoluceri, 2002).

3. What are the teachers' reasons for using Arabic in the primary English classroom?

In order to answer the question and to know teachers' reasons for using Arabic in the primary English classroom as perceived by teachers, means and standards deviations were calculated as seen in table (4).

Table (4): Means and standard deviations of teachers' reasons for using Arabic in the primary EFL classroom in order according to their importance

No.	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
S15	To translate abstract words	3.98	0.88
S21	To facilitate communication with students	3.75	0.99
S13	To make students feel less stressed	3.70	0.88
S19	To check students' comprehension	3.52	1.17
S14	To give instructions	3.48	1.15
S16	To manage the class	3.20	1.17
S20	To help shy students	3.02	1.30
S18	To motivate students	2.75	1.24
S17	To save time	2.59	1.24

***S: Statement**

The table above reveals that using Arabic to translate abstract words was one of the most common uses amongst the teachers. This result is in agreement with many previous studies (e.g. Cole, 1997; Cook, 2001; Butzkamm, 2003 and Meyer, 2008) that supported L1 use to convey the meaning of an unfamiliar word and to explain difficult concepts. Using Arabic for facilitating communication with students was another reason for using it in the primary English classroom and this is in line with Auerbach's (1993) Nation's (2003) and Miles' (2004) studies.

Another important reason for teachers' use of Arabic was to make students feel less stressed. This reason is similar to Cole's (1997) and Meyer's (2008) views which support the idea that L1 can provide students with more security especially at the beginning and with low levels.

4-Which gender uses Arabic more in the primary EFL classroom?

The fourth question aimed at investigating whether male or female teachers use Arabic more. To answer this question the following hypothesis was stated, that there were no significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) in using Arabic in the primary EFL classroom due to gender. As shown in the following table (4.7), an independent t-test was used to test this hypothesis.

Table (5): Results of independent t-test for differences in using Arabic in the primary EFL classroom due to gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	d.f.	Sig.
Male	22	3.50	0.59	-0.253	42	0.802
Female	22	3.55	0.59			

The results of t- test indicates that there were no significant differences between male and female teachers in using Arabic in the primary EFL classroom ($\alpha = 0.802 > 0.05$). This result is in harmony with Gahin & Myhill's (2001) and Qadumi's (2007) findings.

5 -What is the relationship between years of English teaching experience and teachers' use of Arabic in the primary EFL classroom?

To answer this question the following hypothesis was stated, that there were no significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) in using Arabic in the primary EFL classroom due to English teaching experience. As shown in the following table (6), an independent t-test was used to test this hypothesis.

Table (6): Differences in using Arabic in the primary EFL classroom due to English teaching experience

	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.533	2	0.767	2.338	0.109
Within Groups	13.444	41	0.328		
Total	14.977	43			

The results of t-test indicates that there were no significant differences between the teachers in using Arabic in the primary EFL classroom according to English teaching experience. This finding showed a quite opposite result to Polio and Duffs' (1994) study which indicated that lack of experience is the reason why teachers use students' L1.

The researcher conducted another test to examine the means and standard of deviation as seen in table (7).

Table (7): Means and standard deviations for using Arabic in the primary English classroom due to English teaching experience.

Years of English teaching experience		I use Arabic	My students use Arabic
1-5	Mean	3.36	1.71
	N	14	14
	Std. Deviation	.633	.726
6-10	Mean	3.36	1.91
	N	11	11
	Std. Deviation	.505	.831
over 10	Mean	3.74	2.26
	N	19	19
	Std. Deviation	.562	.806
Total	Mean	3.52	2.00
	N	44	44
	Std. Deviation	.590	.807

Table (7) shows that the means of the teachers who had 6 and more years of experience are higher than the novice teachers who had five or less years of teaching

experience. This means that the more years of experience the teachers got the more tolerant they became towards using L1. However, these slight differences in the means between the novice and experienced teachers were not statistically significant at 0.05. The researcher believes that there is a need to conduct similar studies with larger group of teachers to confirm or to have better understanding for such findings.

Analysis of the Classroom Observations

As mentioned above, four English classes were observed to collect information about teachers' and students' actual use of Arabic and their reasons for using it in the primary English classrooms.

Table (8) Number of times and purposes for which Arabic language was used in the primary English classrooms by teachers

Reasons for Using Arabic	Male Teachers	Female Teachers	Total
Translating words, questions, sentences or phrases	20	6	26
Asking a question	1	-----	1
Focusing students' attention	2	1	3
Giving instructions	2	9	11
Communicating with students	2	2	4
Checking students' comprehension	1	2	3
Managing the class	5	3	8
Motivating students	2	2	4

Helping shy students to express themselves	1	2	3
Explaining complex grammar rules	3	-----	3
Introducing new topics	1	1	2
Talking about the previous lesson	1	-----	1
Total	41	28	69

This table shows that both male and female teachers used Arabic for similar reasons and with varying degrees of frequency, and this finding is consistent with Gahin & Myhills' (2001) and Qadumi's (2007) results. The table also shows the twelve reasons for which Arabic was used in the four observed lessons and the number of times each purpose was used. In terms of the reasons for the use of Arabic, translating words, questions, sentences or a phrase was the most common reason for using Arabic in the primary English classrooms followed by giving instructions. There was agreement between teachers' reasons for using Arabic in the observed lessons and the reasons given in the teachers' questionnaire.

Analysis of Interview Data

As mentioned earlier, seven open –ended questions based on the research questions were asked to six interviewees both males and females to find out more information that might not appear in the questionnaire. Their answers were analyzed to provide insight concerning the use of Arabic, reasons for using Arabic and factors may affect teachers' and students' use of Arabic in the primary English classroom.

With regard to the first question which was "Why do you think that the use of Arabic in teaching English has drawbacks in the primary English classrooms?", all of the interviewees agreed that in the primary stage, students can easily acquire and learn the foreign language; however, the overuse of Arabic in the English classroom weakens students' ability of practicing English and reduces their opportunity to be exposed to input in English. This is consistent with Polio and Duffs' (1994) view which indicates that L1 use "prevents students from receiving input they might be exposed to in social situations outside the classroom"(p. 32).

Concerning the second question which was "Why do you think that using English only is better in the primary English classrooms?", five of the interviewees agreed that students in the primary stage have fresh memory to acquire, learn and practice the language. Consequently, students will be accustomed to using English when they hear the teacher speak English exclusively. On the other hand, one of the interviewees indicated that using English only avoids negative interference from Arabic and this is consistent with the opinion of (Richards, 1971; Harbord, 1992 and Cook, 2001) which indicates that interference from the native language is a major source of difficulty in the target language learning and to avoid that, the separation of L1 and L2 should be made.

In answering the third question which was "When do you think the use of Arabic in teaching English is helpful in the primary English classrooms?", using Arabic for giving instructions, for explaining abstract words, and for checking students' comprehension were three justified reasons for using Arabic in the EFL classrooms from the viewpoint of the interviewees. The interviewees' answers concerning these justified reasons of using Arabic in the EFL are in line with the views of Cook (2001); Shimizu (2006) and Meyer (2008).

Regarding the fourth question which was " *From your point of view, how much time* should Arabic be *used* in the primary English classrooms?, all the interviewees

replied that it is better not to use Arabic in the EFL classroom at all, or it may be used from time to time depending on some factors; for example, students' levels of English, *the grade and the educational material*. A similar belief is held by Cook (2001) who indicates that the quantity of L2 should be maximized to create an English environment, and who adds that there is a positive relationship between low levels of L2 proficiency and the use of L1 in the EFL classroom.

As to the fifth question which was "*From your experience, which gender uses Arabic more in the English classroom? Why?*", all of the interviewees confirmed that male teachers and students use Arabic more than females since it is easier for them, and because of the low level of the male students. Their view was in contrast to the results of the present study which indicated that there was no noticeable difference between males and females in using Arabic in the primary EFL classroom due to gender and which is in accordance with earlier studies (e.g. Gahin & Myhill (2001) and Qadumi (2007).

In response to the sixth question which was "Do you think that years of English teaching experience affects teachers' use of Arabic? How?", the interviewees' responses could be summarized into one sentence: the more years of English teaching experience, the more English teachers use. Their opinion is in line with Polio and Duffs' (1994) study who found that lack of experience is the reason why teachers use students' L1.

Concerning the last question which was "Do you think that students' level of proficiency affects their use of Arabic? How?", it was found that the higher the level of the students is, the less Arabic they use and vice-versa, and the results of the present study confirmed this point. This answer is in agreement with previous studies (e.g. (Weschler, 1997; Cook, 2001; Nation, 2003 and Al-Nofaie, 2010).

Discussion

This study investigated teachers' attitudes towards using Arabic in the primary English classrooms in Hebron. The researcher found that the present study is similar to Schweers' (1999), Tang's (2002), Kim & Petraki s' (2009) and AL-Nofaie's (2010) studies. All these studies including the present one showed that teachers preferred using L1 sometimes and for specific reasons.

The study also indicated that the L1 was commonly used in the EFL classroom, for a range of purposes and with varying degrees of frequency i.e. translating abstract words, was the most common reason for using Arabic. The results of this study are in accordance with earlier studies (e.g. Auerbach, 1993 and Nation, 2003).

Besides, the study revealed that relying heavily on the mother tongue in the EFL classroom will deprive the students of being exposed to English to learn more and better English. This supports the belief that using L1 might be harmful for the students' learning process since it reduces their opportunities for using the target language (Polio & Duff, 1994; Turnbull, 2001; and Deller & Rinvoluceri, 2002).

It also showed that in the primary English classrooms, the more experienced teachers did not use English more in comparison to the fresh ones. Moreover, the interviewees expressed a range of views regarding the use of Arabic in the primary EFL classrooms. They also indicated that deciding to use the L1 is not simply based on a belief about whether it is useful for language learning and teaching; however, different factors should be considered when teachers decide to use the students' L1; for instance' *the level of the students, the grade, the educational material*, and the students' age. Although they indicated that *male students and teachers use Arabic more than female ones, the result of the study showed that there was no significant difference in using L1 in the L2 classroom due to the gender* and this is in accordance with earlier studies (e.g. (1992), Gahin and Myhill (2001) and Qadumi (2007).

Conclusion

Based on the data obtained through the three instruments the following conclusions could be presented:

Regardless of gender, educational qualification and years of English teaching experience as factors which may affect using the mother tongue in the EFL classrooms, the findings of the present study indicated that the use of Arabic was an unavoidable phenomenon in the primary English classroom. This result is in line with the argument that using the students' native language is a natural fact (Harbord, 1992 and Nation, 2003).

The results also showed that there is agreement between Schweer's (1999), Tang's (2002), Kim & Petraki's (2009), Sharma's (2006) and AL-Nofaie's (2010) studies in the contexts of Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Nepali, Saudi and the present results in the Palestinian context. All these studies indicated that the participants supported limited amount of students' first language in the English classroom and agreed that using the mother tongue sometimes facilitates the processes of learning and teaching. On the other hand, the results indicated that teachers were also found to support the common argument that using students' first language reduces students' exposure to English and this finding is in line with both Krashen's (1985) and Phillipson's (1992) view of the monolingual approach to English language teaching.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the present study, the following recommendations are offered.

For young learners who are not proficient enough in English, Arabic can be sometimes used as a facilitating tool. However, teachers have to find ways to modify their English input. For example, they can use visual aids such as pictures, flash cards and gestures to make their input understandable (Polio & Duff, 1994). Hence, they won't depend too much on Arabic, and students will benefit from this increased exposure to

English. Moreover, teachers have to encourage the students to speak L2 as much as possible since they are not exposed to sufficient English due to the limited number of English classes. Besides, teachers should also consider the techniques Harmer (2001, p.133) points out to help them promote L2 use which address the needs of the students, and to become more aware of their actual language use in the classroom. These techniques are: creating an English environment, choosing suitable tasks, using "persuasion and other inducements "and setting clear guidelines".

It is also recommended that the Ministry of Education should hold workshops, programs and seminars on the role of the native languages in the EFL classroom.

Educators and curriculum developers should also make reference to the students' mother tongue while preparing English language teaching materials to publish guidelines for teachers and students on applying Arabic systematically.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire

The objective of this questionnaire is to investigate teachers' attitudes towards using Arabic in the primary English classes and reasons behind using it. The questionnaire also aims at examining the extent of teachers' and students' actual classroom use of Arabic during English lessons. Your answers will be used for research purpose only.

Thank you

Part I

Please, put a tick (✓) in the appropriate box

A. Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> male	<input type="checkbox"/> female	
B. Years of English teaching experience	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6-10	<input type="checkbox"/> over 10
C. Your educational qualification	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Diploma</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Bachelor's</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Master's</i>
D. Type of school	<input type="checkbox"/> Private	<input type="checkbox"/> Governmental	<input type="checkbox"/> UNRWA

Part II

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by putting a tick (√) in the appropriate box using the scale given below:

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

1**2****3****4****5**

No	Teachers' attitudes towards using Arabic in the primary English classrooms	1	2	3	4	5
1	Teachers <i>should be allowed to use Arabic</i> .					
2	Teachers should use Arabic as little as possible					
3	Teachers should speak English as much as possible					
4	Using Arabic has a negative impact on students' learning of English.					
5	Using Arabic in the EFL classroom reduces the opportunities of using English					
6	Using Arabic facilitates both teaching and learning.					
7	The amount of Arabic that teachers use depends on their educational qualification					
8	Arabic is indispensable in the primary English classrooms					
9	Arabic can be used as a teaching technique to help students develop their level of proficiency					
10	The Communicative Approach calls for a judicious use of L1 in the EFL classroom					
11	The Grammar Translation Method focuses on L1 use					

	with little active use of L2.					
12	English should be taught monolingually					
No	Teachers' reasons for using Arabic in the primary English classrooms	1	2	3	4	5
13	To make students feel less stressed					
14	To give instructions					
15	To translate abstract words					
16	To manage the class					
17	To save time					
18	To motivate students					
19	To check students' comprehension					
20	To help shy students					
21	To facilitate communication with students					
No	Teachers' views of Students' use of Arabic in the primary English classrooms	1	2	3	4	5
22	The amount of Arabic that students need depends on their proficiency					
23	Students <i>should be allowed to use Arabic</i>					
24	Students usually rely heavily on Arabic in learning English					
25	Students should speak English as much as possible					
26	Students should use Arabic as little as possible					
27	Students use Arabic to feel less stressed					

28	Students use Arabic to translate an English word into Arabic language.					
29	Students use Arabic while doing an activity with their peers					
30	Students use Arabic to ask questions					
31	Students use Arabic to express themselves					

Part III

Please, put a tick (√) in the box which reflects your attitudes to the given statements

No	The amount of time students and teachers speak Arabic in the primary English classrooms	always	often	Some-times	rarely	never
1	I use Arabic.					
2	My students use Arabic.					

Thank you once again

Appendix 2

Interview Questions

Q1: Why do you think that the use of Arabic in teaching English has drawbacks in the primary English classrooms?

Q2: Why do you think that using English only is better in the primary English classrooms?

Q3: When do you think the use of Arabic in teaching English is helpful in the primary English classrooms?

Q4: *From your point of view, how much time* should Arabic be *used* in the primary English classrooms?

Q5: *From your experience, which gender uses* Arabic *more* in the *English* classroom? Why?

Q6: Do you think that years of English teaching experience affects teachers' use of Arabic? How?

Q7: Do you think that students' level of proficiency affects their use of Arabic? How?