

Investigating the Needs and Drawbacks of L1 in L2 Education: Students' Perception

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Abstract

This paper aims at exploring the EFL Students' Perspective of the Use of the Arabic (L1) in English language (L2) learning. The relevant literature reviewed concerning the development of some fundamental issues in L1 usage shows that this technique plays a vital role in breaking the language barriers, promoting better communication, and contributing to linguistic competence. The statistical analysis and evaluation of the responses of the questionnaire exhibited that the need for (L1) in L2 was rated higher. The students claimed that their mother tongue is effective since it increases their awareness of similarities and differences between (L1) and (L2) and helps in explaining the difficult areas in the foreign language. Likewise, they confessed that L1 has drawbacks. It could be said that (L1) is a helpful technique in (L2) learning process, but it should be handled with care.

Keywords: Arabic, Drawback, L1; L2; Learning, Needs, Perception

1. Introduction

Learning a foreign language (FL) is a thorny process, since it is unlike the second language (L2) which has the chance for intensive exposure and everyday use. Despite its complex system and unique characteristics, the one masters his mother tongue spontaneously and effortlessly. However, it is not easy to learn another language in an unsupportive environment, and one has to offer many years to learn a foreign language; however, some talented individuals are capable to become skilled in more than one language, but this is an exception. Every language is a complex phenomenon; therefore, it is not easy to learn a foreign language without an in-depth effort and continuous persistent determination. So far, English as a second (L2) or foreign language is used by speakers of other languages for different communication purposes. Consequently, there is an international orientation to learn English language either as a second language, where it is used as lingua franca in multilingual communities as in the case of Nigeria and India or as a foreign language as in the Arab world. Thus, in the case of the Arab world, the way is very prickly for both the instructor and the learner, because its learned in monolingual community. In the case of English as a second language (ESL) there is an extensive use of English language outside the classroom in many situations, but in the case of English as foreign language (FL) there is no necessity for the use of English language outside the classroom – it is restricted in time and place. The dilemma of English language pedagogy in an on supportive environment urges both the teacher and the learner to exploit L1 in the educational process despite its drawbacks. Some educationalists consider it as an evitable educational technique that they ought to adopt and combine it with other more innovative ones to help students to cope with the absence of natural or extensive exposure.

The argument whether to use the learners' mother tongue (L1) or the foreign language only in the L2 education has not been determined yet. Therefore, this study is intended to elicit the students' viewpoints of the use (L1) in (L2) education. Arabic is the first language in Saudi Arabia; therefore, this study will investigate the use of Arabic language (L1) in learning English as a foreign language (FL) from the learners' perception. The study is intended to investigate the Arab student needs for of L1 usage in L2 pedagogy and what are the complications to explore the potentialities of the mother tongue use in English Language education. Furthermore, to find out the types of problems challenge the foreign language learner. The study is delimited to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), at the university level, who study English as foreign language (EFL) as their major.

1.1 Questions of the Study

The study tries to find an answer for the following questions:

- 1) Why the use of (L1) is needed in a nonsupportive environment?
- 2) How effective and facilitative is the use of L1 in EFL education?
- 3) What types of difficulties that challenge the foreign language learner?
- 4) To what extent does the level of the students affect the use of L1?

1.2. Significance of the study

The results will be of immense help to have insights of the reasons behind the use of L1 in L2 education. Moreover, it shed light on the student's vision and attitudes towards the use their first language in unsupportive environment. Moreover, it helps to better understanding of the nature of FL education, and why the students in need to use their (L1). Due to such insights teachers of English will be well-informed about which materials or methods could be helpful for their students to learn English language effectively. In the meantime, it shed light on the risk and problems result as a concrescence of the use of L1.

2. Review of Literature

Using (L1) or mother tongue as a teaching technique has had many complications, once it had been accepted as a teaching technique for a long time as in the case of Grammar-L1 Method. It is a controversial question answerable on the existing objectives and teaching approaches. The role of the mother tongue in monolingual classes is an issue, which is often overlooked in discussing the methods and teacher training programs. Nevertheless, it is gradually reestablishing itself as a useful and genuine instructive tool, (Murphy, 1987-88; Duff, 1990; Timor, 2012; Mohebbi & Alavi, 2014). Moreover, several publications have given evidence of a movement to reassess the potential contribution of (L1) in foreign language education after it was neglected for many decades (Atkinson, 1987). Consequently, the role of (L1) in foreign language teaching has been open to much criticism.

2.1. Argument against the use of L1 in EFL

Researchers in foreign and second language have been asking how a learner learns a foreign or second language. What that enables a learner to internalize a new linguistic system? How does he do it? Fries (1945:69), the behavioral physiologist, claims that a person who has already learned his mother language widely might never learn a foreign language the same way as a child learns his native language. That means the new language will never function for the learner the same way his mother language does. A foreign language learner might suffer much more if he attempts to transfer his previous knowledge to cope with the new language until he has established a direct connection between his experience and utterances in the new language that consume time and efforts. Moreover, the frequent reference to find equivalents or looking for the meaning in the target language may cause delay eventually or even for un pleasant habits or misperceptions which results in weakness in the process of the target language acquisition. Some studies provided evidence against the use of L1 in EFL education. The excessive use of L1 in L2 education results in forming bad habit and reducing the adequate exposure for the target language (Voicu, (2012); Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Turnbull & Arnett, 2002). According to Lightbown and Spada (1999) attributes the errors found in L2 to the transfer of patterns transferred from L1, thus, he claims that L1 is the source of errors in the L2 education. Likewise, Wong, (2010) highlights the role of the maximum exposure to the use of L2 classroom to have a proper acquisition for the target language. The frequent use of L1 in L2 classroom was accused of being the source of errors interference, communicative incompetency, case of monotony and boredom in the classroom which leads to learn about the language not the Language itself. Moreover, many scholars have no favor with the use of

L1 in L2 classroom; like Atkinson (1987:246) attributes the problems in L2 attainment to the overuse of L1 in L2 education which causes the learner to forget the main purpose of learning and practicing the target language. On the other hand, Turnbull (2001) approves that the exclusive use of the target language strengthens exposure to L2. In addition, Fries (1945:73) supports the exclusive use of target language in the EFL classes; he claims that with appropriate materials based on descriptive analysis of language to be studied and the mother tongue of the learner can make the maximum progress toward the satisfactory proficiency in a foreign language.

2.2. Argument in Favor of L1

Grammar-Translation- Method dominated the arena of foreign languages pedagogy since its presence in 19th century as a major method for instruction. Stern (1991), states that no full and carefully documented history of the GTM exists. The study of classical Latin and an analysis of its grammar and rhetoric become the model for foreign language study from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. So far, innovative approaches have come to existence as a reaction to GMT to cope with its inadequacies. Despite the radical rejection to GTM techniques and its rigid obligation to use L2 only, it is observed that, in most cases the teachers and learners' practice some of GTM techniques during the process of target language learning process. Frequently, certain explanation of the language or activities will be the most efficient if done in the learners' mother tongue (Lewis, 1986:57). The teachers who forbid the use of learners' mother tongue have forgotten what goes inside the learners' head. The learners search in his mind for the equivalent of the item in question in his mother tongue, and he is satisfied only when he finds it (French, 1975). The thinking, feeling and all the heritage literature of the learner is deep-rooted in L1. At the basic stages of learning an L2, everyone spontaneously thinks before uttering their words; therefore, L1 learner endure much more to speak the target language, because of his limited vocabulary list and basic proper utterances. Cook (2002) states that individuals need to speak to sort out their thoughts, and when learning a new language this often done better through the MT. Moreover, the learner needs to comprehend the input to "build up academic concepts." Flores (Chiou, 2014). Some researches argue that learners frequently mentally practice the use of the MT specially in the initial stages of during their learning process. Regardless of the method applied or approach adopted, they conduct this in their own mother tongue. **A study investigating** the role of L1 in the L2 Classroom **was carried out by Schweers (1999)**. The study found that (88.7%) of the participants felt that L1 (Spanish) should be used in their English classes. A considerable number of students like the use of L1, because it helps them when they feel lost. About 87 percent of students feel Spanish (L1) facilitates their learning of English (L2) between "a little" and "a lot," and about 57 percent think it helps from "fairly much" to "a lot." These results displayed that L1 should be used to some degree. Students feel there are clear cases where Spanish will facilitate their comprehension of what is happening in class. A majority also agrees that the use of Spanish helps them to learn English. A similar study 'Using L1 in the English Classroom', in China (Tang, 2002:36) have been published. The author remarks that 'the value of using the mother tongue is a neglected topic in the TEFL methodology literature' and 'little empirical research has been done to find out if it is an effective teaching

and learning tool'. The results on the use of L1 have many similarities to Schweer's study: students and teachers responded positively toward its use, although there were minor inconsistencies. The most important observation in this research is 'a supportive and facilitating role of L1 in the English classroom' used 'only as a means of improving foreign language proficiency'. Both of Schweers and Tang's results that inform that L1 has shaped the EFL learner's way of thinking; therefore, it is advisable to be avoided from the very beginning of the process, but the gradual elimination will be the wise decision. Also, the use of L1 in the L2 classroom has been a topic for many empirical studies (Timor, 2012; Mohebbi & Alavi, 2014) which emphasized the use of L1 as an active technique in L2 pedagogy.

At the primary stages of learning a foreign language the learner faces confusion in linguistic, semantic, and sociolinguistic aspect of the foreign language (Stern, 1991: 82). For this reason, the use of the mother tongue would be allowed but it should be handled with care in EFL classes especially, at the primary stages of learning a foreign language. Schweers (1999:6) states that the use of L1 has a "necessary and facilitating role" in the second and foreign language classroom. Similarly, Littlewood and Yu (2011:45) backing the use of the mother tongue either straightforward as a teaching technique to explain a difficult point, or indirectly to build positive relations or help control schooling process. Other scholars advocate the use of the mother tongue in L2 education, because it saves time – like Green (1970: 217-223) who states that many words, especially abstract nouns are difficult or time-consuming and might cause misunderstanding, so it is practical to give a mother tongue explanation or approximate equivalent directly. Liao's (2006) conducted a study targeted Taiwanese college students who were studying English to discover the effect of L1 on L2. He distinguishes three strategic roles in the use of L1: as a memory strategy (memorize words, idioms, grammar, and sentence structures), dynamic strategy (reducing worry and increase motivation to learn L2), and social strategy (asking questions or cooperating with others). Finally, some learners need the mother tongue to feel secured and relaxed. They may be the type of learner that needs to relate concepts in English to equivalents in their L1. This may be their most effective way of learning vocabulary. They may also feel that having a mother tongue equivalent is a far more efficient way of arriving at meaning than a constant process of working things out.

2.3. *L1 vs. L2*

The question, whether to use L1 in EFL pedagogy has not been determined yet. There are language teachers who avoid the use of mother tongue as much as possible. For example, GMT was criticized for being a dull and boring; subsequently, it needs a hard effort to memorize limitless lists of vocabulary and grammar rules. Thus, the learner had always to endeavor translating sample or abnormal sentences for a dead language. Inefficiency of instruction, limitations of practice techniques and the dependency of the learner on his or her mother tongue results in limited proficiency of communication. This was more likely to create frustration for the learner while it made few demands on the teacher (Richards & Rogers, 2001, Bowen et al., 1985). Taylor (1972:56-580) declares that 'the reason why many teachers have been frightened of using the learners' mother tongue or any L1 in EFL class is the reflection of the attitude are used among the teachers after the rejection of the GMT'. In practice, many teachers translate words or sentences when they feel that their students have a

real difficulty in coping with the foreign language context. Despite, the behaviorists have insisted on the use of the foreign language in the EFL class, this opinion admits the idea that the language is habit formation; it was found that L1 was used when communication breaks down. Rivers, (1964: 88) points out that ‘L1 at utterance level is legitimate way of facilitating the language-learning processes when concepts are too abstract, or too confused for the use of situational and gestural methods.’ To think in the foreign language, wherever possible, it should be taught situationally, using pictures, gestures contextualization, etc., to stimulate expressive practice, but it should not be taken as a technique to avoid the L1 dominance. The efficiency of a presentation is to be determined not by the teacher's avoiding the learners' mother tongue, but by how quickly the learners can use the item correctly in appropriate situations.

Fries (1945: 69), sees that a person previous experience of his MT hinders the process of learning L2 and this view obviously supports the behavioral perspective of second language acquisition. Taylor (1972:17) who opposed the ideas of Fries, articulates that it ‘was able to explain how a learner learns a foreign language in the past but is considered inadequate at present.’ He claims that the hypothesis seems to partially or invalid in at least three different areas. First, behavioral psychology and transfer theory have been found to be invalid, since they do not adequately account for the learner's creative contribution to language learning. Second, linguistic theory is at present insufficient in comparing languages for points of differences to predict points of learning difficulty. And third, it has been known for some time that foreign language learners make some errors which cannot be attributed to the structure of their mother tongue, and therefore, cannot be predicted by a comparison of learners' mother tongue and the foreign language.

3. Methodology

3.1. The Subjects

The questionnaire was to administer to university students studying English as a major subject, to examine their views on the use of Arabic in the process of learning English. The sample of students who were investigated was selected from four levels in four colleges (groups) within Shaqra university: Thadiq College (41); Shaqra College (41); Huraymila (37), and Ad-Dawadmi College (40).

3.2 Instrument

The questionnaire was adopted as a tool for collecting data to elicit the student's perception of the use of L1 in L2 pedagogy. The researcher designed the questionnaire to collect explicable data about the needs for using Arabic, its effectiveness, and the problems of the overuse of Arabic in L2 education. The subjects were asked to mark their responses on a 5-Likert scale running from (Strongly agree= 5 pnts, Agree = 4 pnts, Not sure =3 pnts, Disagree = 2 pnts, Strongly disagree = 1 pnts). The items of both questionnaires were based on the theoretical discussion of the literature reviewed in 2

3.3. Procedures

The questionnaire was revised in the light of ELT professionals' comments to determine the contents validity and the relevance of its items; The researcher adopted the Split-half Method to decide the degree of the reliability of the tool; because there is a practical difficulty in administering the questionnaire twice or constructing alternate form of it. the questionnaire was distributed to the subjects who were all Arab students. It was distributed to the subjects in the fourth levels in each college. These four colleges were chosen to represent Shaqra university, because they have two branches: one for boys and one for girls. The number of the students in each level was chosen randomly from the attendance list just as representative sample.

Table 1. Shows the final sample distribution by college, level, and gender

College	Level				Gender		Total
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	Male	Female	
Thadiq College	10	10	10	10	23	18	41
Huraymila College	10	9	10	10	19	18	37
Al-Dawadmi College	10	10	10	10	20	20	40
Shaqra College	11	10	10	10	19	22	41
Total	41	40	40	38	81	78	159
Percentage	25.8%	25.2%	25.2%	23.9%	50.9%	49.1%	100.0%

4. Analysis and Discussion

The responses to the questionnaires of the 159 students were tabulated and computed. The following is an analytical interpretation and discussion of the findings regarding different points related to the objectives and questions of the study. The responses are statistically treated through the (SPSS) by computing the arithmetic mean, the standard deviation and the (t) test for each item to test the degree level of significance, as illustrated in the following tables.

Table 2. The need for L1 (Statements 1 – 7)

No	Statements	Ordinal scale	Positive Ranks	Ties	Negative Ranks	Mean	SD	Sig. (two-tailed)
1	When I am studying English, I often use L1 to understand unfamiliar words	5	127	6	26	3.99	1.19	0.001
2	The first language is essential to understand English idioms and metaphoric expressions	1	144	6	9	4.30	0.91	0.001
3	It is important to employ L1 to explain the exercises and tasks.	6	110	15	34	3.87	1.20	0.001
4	L1 in EFL classes facilitates interpersonal interactions	3	127	18	14	4.12	1.00	0.001
5	Explanation of newly FL texts into L1 increases my competence	7	121	13	25	3.81	1.09	0.001
6	L1 helps clarifies the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences and saves time	2	139	8	12	4.22	0.97	0.001
7	L1 is needed for explaining the problematic areas in English.	4	136	12	11	4.09	0.88	0.001

The need for (L1) indicates that the students use Arabic which is their mother tongue to enable them to contrast Arabic with English and to cope with the difficulty that results from the fundamental difference between Arabic as Semitic language and English as Indo-European language. For example, statement 5 which designed to elicit students' opinion about if explanation of newly FL texts into L1 increases their competence or not; they respond positively expressing their need for (L1) be exploited in English language learning.

87.4 %, of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that they believe L1 is a very important mean for understanding idioms and metaphoric expressions; thus, it confirms the use of L1 in English language learning ($M = 4.22$, and $SD = 0.97$). On the other hand, statement 7 was intended to obtain students' judgment about the need for (L1) in explaining the complicated areas in English. 85.9 %, of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that they use their mother tongue in learning English ($M = 4.09$, and $SD = 0.88$). The greatest support of using Arabic (L1) is that - it enables them to compare Arabic with English and to overcome the difficulty and, possibly even more importantly, which structures are easy and need very little attention. The student who uses Arabic (L1), while studying English is also in a situation to know probable problems with expressions – words with non-equivalents and the likewise.

The statements number 2,6, 4, and 7 were overall highly rated. They received a percentage of 90.6%, 87.4%, 82.4% and 81.8% respectively. This result, finds an answer for the first question that articulates: “Foreign language teaching / learning in a non-supportive environment incorporates the use of L1 (Arabic) in one form or another by both the instructor and the learner, i.e., it is not only necessary but also an inevitable fact.” This is evidence that most of the respondents (students) confirmed the need for L1 in EFL pedagogy. The subjects' responses were disagreed to statement 9, which reads: “It is impossible to learn English without continuous reference to Arabic.” Though, the percentage of the uncertainty is 50.3%, but this it might be attributed to many factors: such as the teaching/learning strategies, teachers' competence, motivation, attitude of learners, teaching methods and instructional materials among the other variables that can extensively be used in foreign language learning. However, a contrastive grammar is highly useful for a learner, because it is an effective process in teaching and learning a foreign language. Moreover, idioms are the most difficult expressions in an all languages; therefore, L1 has a crucial need to give the meaning of (L2) idioms, proverbs, and metaphoric expressions.

L1 helps learners to comprehend and gain insight while they are learning L2 with peers or in group-works, and they are in need to diagnose difficulties of cultural concepts, vocabulary items or nonequivalent words. Subsequently, most learners feel they need to use Arabic (L1) in the process of learning English language (L2) learning. They may be the type of learners that need to relate concepts of English to equivalents in their L1 or to understand new texts and explain problematic areas in the target language. The need for L1 use in this case emerges necessarily, because Arabic and English are from different origin.

Table 3. The Effectiveness of L1 (Statements 8 – 14)

No.	Statements	Ordinal Scale	Positive Ranks	Ties	Negative Ranks	Mean	SD	Sig. (two-tailed)
8	L1 creates awareness of similarities and differences between Arabic and English.	3	133	18	8	4.09	0.80	0.001
9	L1 helps to promote my understanding of the text and its style.	5	127	18	14	4.00	0.89	0.001
10	L1 enables me to understand grammatical, and lexical aspects of English texts	1	119	30	10	4.50	0.94	0.001
11	Using a bilingual dictionary makes it easier to find the most possible meaning.	7	106	21	42	3.52	1.23	0.001
12	The structures of English are best learned when compared and contrasted with those of Arabic.	6	112	16	31	3.82	1.23	0.001
13	The use of L1 in EFL classes makes me feel secure and improves my learning aptitudes	4	130	18	11	4.08	0.92	0.001
14	If the instructor speaks my L1 this will facilitate learning of the FL	2	132	21	6	4.11	0.84	0.001

The above table summarizes the subjects' responses to the second section of the questionnaire (the effectiveness L1, statements 8 – 14)

The responses to the statements of this section are highly rated. As an evidence for example, statements 8 inquired students whether the use of L1 (Arabic) while studying English creates awareness of similarities and differences between Arabic and English. 83.6 %, of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that the use L1 creates awareness of similarities and differences between the two languages ($M = 4.09$, and $SD = 0.80$). As it is read in table above, that this statement scored rank 3, (which is rather high among the other statements in this section). This confirms the claim that says comparison of the mother tongue with the L2 will yield aspects where the two languages are similar and those where they are different. In those aspects of similarity, transfer will be helpful, and the similar elements will be easy to learn. Thus, in the case of differences, L1 will increase the learner awareness in order not to hand over negative transfer. I have the same opinion that teachers should not treat the use of L1 by themselves or learners as a sin, and that L1 does have a place in ELT methodology. Atkinson (1993) among the other scholars who advocate the use of L1 warns from the excessive use L1 in any monolingual class, since it reduces the use of the TL. The researcher believes that learners and teachers alike need to be made aware of the limitations and pitfalls of L1 use in the classroom, as unprincipled use of L1 can have long-lasting negative effects on the learners' awareness and production of the target language.

Likewise, the students' opinions about the help of L1 in promoting the learners' understanding of the text and its style is confirmed. 79.8 %, of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that L1 helps to promote the learners' understanding of the text and its style. ($M = 4.00$, and $SD = 0.89$). The subjects (students) strongly agreed to the statement number 10, which claims the use of L1 helps them to understand grammatical and lexical aspects of English texts. This statement scored a percentage of 90%, rank, which is the highest score among the other responses in this section. Therefore, it is confirmed that L1 creates consciousness of similarities and differences between Arabic and English language. The

teacher with awareness of the Arabic is also in an optimal situation to know potential problems with vocabulary items. Besides, statement 8 which inquired students whether the use of L1 (Arabic) while learning English creates awareness of similarities and differences between Arabic and English; it is found that 83.6 %, of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that the use L1 creates awareness of similarities and differences between the two languages. To use a monolingual dictionary effectively, learners need to have a large enough vocabulary (at least 3000 words) and need to be able to interpret definitions, which are much more difficult than L1 synonyms. Most Arab learners of English as a foreign language do not achieve this until they have been studying English for nine to ten years. Despite the advice to use monolingual dictionaries, it is found that most Arab learners use bilingual dictionaries to get the meaning directly and save their time. On the other hand, statement 14 confirms that the instructor who speaks the students L1 is in an optimal situation to facilitate learning of the (L2).

In conclusion, most learners feel secure in using Arabic. They may be the type of learners that need to relate concepts in English to equivalents in their L1. This it might be their most helpful way of learning vocabulary. They may also feel that having a mother tongue equivalent is an effective resource to get the meaning than a tedious process of working things out through what is known in methodology 'contextualization'. This section is highly rated. The responses confirm the effectiveness of L1 use in English language learning. The responses approved the effectiveness of L1 usage and the significance were statistically approved. (Green 1970 & Liao's 2006)) point to the effectiveness of L1 since it can be exploited as a strategy of learning a foreign language because it can be strategy for time-saving, approximate equivalent. or dynamic strategy for reducing worry and increasing motivation. It appears from these results that the students, significantly agreed to the effectiveness of L1 in learning/teaching English process.

Table 4. the problems of L1 (Statements 15-21)

No.	Statements	Ordinal Scale	Positive Ranks	Ties	Negative Ranks	Mean	SD	Sig (two-tailed)
15	Frequent use of L1 increases the risk of L2 vocabulary attainment	3	32	16	111	3.49	1.17	0.001
16	Intensive use of L1 decreases the adequate exposure to target language (L2)	1	134	9	16	4.29	1.12	0.001
17	L1 has little value in building my L2 competency or improve my speaking skills.	5	106	42	11	3.35	1.01	0.001
18	The more I am involved in using L1, the less I learn L2 style.	6	76	18	65	3.09	1.41	0.211
19	Heavy use of L1 obstructs me to think in English	4	78	41	31	3.49	1.11	0.001
20	I feel frustrated when I encountered by authentic foreign language circumstances	2	108	12	39	3.65	1.31	0.001
21	Bilingual dictionaries are not always helpful, because some words have no equivalents.	7	71	12	76	3.00	1.39	0.653

Close reading for the above table indicates that those numbers of the informant students realized that: it is desirable to be exposed mostly to L2 and explanation must be English through English. This requires a little bit of careful thought by the teacher so that the

vocabulary and structures used in the language of classroom management are also generally useful. If the use of English in classroom management is done in a planned, consistent way, then classroom management can be a very effective opportunity for learning through meaning focused input. When the students were asked whether they have a chance for L1 when they came upon by real circumstances, they assured their frustration in such case. It is true learners has no chance to translate in real situations, and they feel frustrated when they encountered by real situations; real situations need communication via the spoken word or at least the written one. Certainly, the students did not and will not have a chance to translate in the authentic situations. This may be attributed to many factors - such as the authenticity of situation, absence of equivalents due to the difference of the languages, or shortage of vocabulary which lead to weakness in communication. Since learners have little opportunity to meet and practice L2 outside the classroom, it is very important that L2 use should be maximized to the extreme in the classroom. One obvious way to do this is to carry out classroom management and other instructions in English (L2). In this way the role of the Arabic, use in classroom management should be minimized and the role of the English increased to give adequate exposure.

When the students were asked about their point of view about whether Intensive use of L1 decreases the adequate exposure to target language (L2), most of them agreed, favoring the adequate exposure to L2 in the learning process. When they asked about the usefulness that a bilingual dictionary offers in finding the most possible meaning for an unfamiliar item; the students responded that bilingual dictionaries are not always helpful specially in the case of equivalents absence. Nevertheless, this process alerts the learners to the fact that word-to-word translation is not the accurate method to learn L2, but only in context through ideas and phases. Thus, learners will be able to develop consciousness of how the languages differ. Through classifying equivalents in a bilingual dictionary for L1 and L2, questions can be raised concerning the boundaries of L1-one word in one language may be translated into two words, in another, or vice versa. Consequently, L1 here is impossible, as these items, concepts, and expressions are not shared by the two cultures. Furthermore, the respondents confirmed that the use of too much Arabic in the classroom hinder the learning of English. Therefore, the use of Arabic should be restricted to certain situations. The data which has been presented so far indicate that the responses about the 7th statements of section 3 (the problems of L1) confirms the problems of L1 use in the foreign language pedagogy. However, some exceptions indicate that, some learners need the security of the mother tongue. Auerbach (1993) claims, "Starting with the L1 provides a sense of security and validates the learners' lived experiences, allowing them to express themselves. Therefore, in this given case, the Arab students may be the type of learners that needs to transmit concepts in English to equivalents in their L1. The students who will feel there are clear cases where Arabic will facilitate their understanding of what is going on in; this may be their most effective way of learning vocabulary. The analysis and discussion to this section might give an evidence for the third question of the study that L1 has its own problems, e.g., the absence of linguistic and culture elements, untranslatability, and the differences of worldviews. Moreover, insufficient use of L2 could be a drawback to effective English language teaching/learning. The students' responses were compared in the four colleges, the comparison revealed no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the

colleges. In the meantime, males and females' responses were compared in the four colleges, it attained no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the sexes.

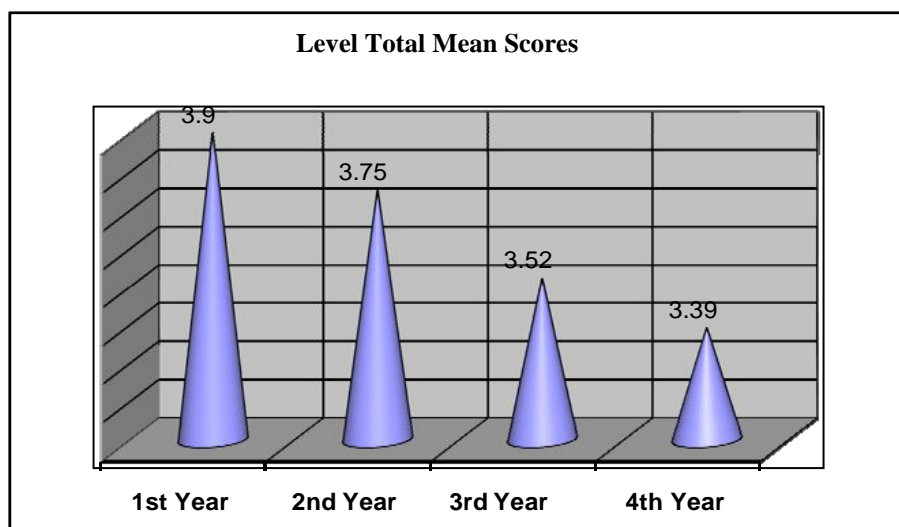


Figure 1. The Total Means for The Four Levels in The Four Colleges

It is the level of the students that affect the use of L1 in L2 education. Figure (4.1), for all the three sections of the students' questionnaires were highly accepted by the first-year students and gradually the distribution drop down in the three ascending levels as the percentage of the agreement responses. The average means scored by students, for the four levels were 3.9, 3.75, and 3.52, and 3.39 respectively, out of a maximum mean score 5.0. Learners tend to rely on their accessible language knowledge (L1) to understand the logic and organization principles behind the target language. Therefore, L1 use needs to be handled with care, because it influences the learning process, as learners tend to treat it as the reasonable starting point when learning a new language, and is a popular communication strategy (Ellis, 2005).

5. Conclusion and Implications

The findings revealed that section one 'the Need for L1' was highly rated by the first level students and lesser rated by the three upper levels. There was a consensus of opinions in favor of the use of L1 in L2 learning. It was rated higher by the first level students and the rating dropped successively in the three other levels.

Consequently, the percentage of subjects who disagreed was smaller in the first year and gradually grew bigger along with the third and fourth year. The undecided responses, however, showed unexplainable rise and fall of the respondents' uncertainty in the four levels. This revealed a reasonable answer for question one that the use of (L1) is needed in a nonsupportive environment for better understanding to the foreign language.

The second section, 'the effectiveness of L1 in L2 pedagogy' was similarly received significant rating. The results of the second section manifested the same rating, which was found in the first section, i.e., the use L1 in L2 learning was supported as an effective means by most of the respondent students. The students' responses manifested how effective and facilitative was the use of L1 in L2 education.

The students approved to the statements of the third section “Problems of L1”. Most of the respondents were in favor of the need for the use of L1 in L2 classes. A very large majority of the respondents agreed on the fact that L1 increases their awareness of similarities and differences between L1 and L2, which indicates that foreign language learners do an unconscionable mental rendering for their inherited lexicon and the target language. It is obvious that the students use their L1 to make connections and contrasts that using Arabic when explaining difficult concepts and ideas helps them save time and avoid boredom and frustration besides makes them feel secure and relax.

Most of the respondent students were in favor of: the need for the use of L1 in L2 learning, its effectiveness and the problems surrounding its use. A very large majority of the students agreed on the employment of L1 in L2 learning. It is still reasonable as large majority of the respondent students confirmed the need for it and its effectiveness. In the meantime, it was found that there is a relationship between different colleges and different levels of the students and the use of L1, i.e., the higher the level of the students was, the lower they rated the use of L1.

The present study revealed that Arabic influence is an important factor in the acquisition of English vocabulary. The importance of transfer in this area needs closer investigation especially on the similarities and differences in meaning and form of vocabulary, which causes specific problems.

There were many types of difficulties that challenge the foreign language learner such as the absence of the linguistic and cultural essentials, and the absence of equivalences and the differences of worldviews. Moreover, inadequate use of L2, and overuse use of L1 in classroom practice, could be a problem and hindrance to effective English language learning.

The study was not a longitudinal, therefore it is still not satisfactory. Also, the current study was carried out in a rural university, the results were limited only to the students to this institution. It might have some different results, if it conducted in others. In the light of the present study, a few suggestions may be made as to further research needed.

More supplementary information on the actual use and need for L1 in the classroom is required. This could be done by the means of observation and/ or interview with sample teachers and students. The investigation area could be broadened to provide more insights for the role of using the mother tongue.

Moreover, a longitudinal study could be satisfactory, or a questionnaire might have been also administered to the teachers so that their approaches and responses to the mother tongue use as a teaching tool could have been discovered. Hence, the role of using the mother tongue could have been viewed from another perspective, the eyes of the teachers, and thus, the problem might have been clarified in a better way.

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