Allowing or Refusing the Use of a Student's Mother Tongue in an English Learning Classroom: An Explorative Study

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Abstract

This study examined how students who do not speak English as their first language rely on their native tongue while studying English and participating in English courses. The researchers focused primarily on student opinions and perspectives related to their first language. Data were collected

from 175 respondents through an online survey; a questionnaire survey of 21 teachers was also used. The participants came from diverse backgrounds, were of different ages, had different English language skill levels, and spoke various first languages. The study showed that students use their first languages in a classroom for numerous reasons, which are affected by factors such as their age or their English comprehension. Teachers and students can use this study to evaluate first language usage in the classroom and improve learning outcomes by recognizing why students revert to their first languages.

Keywords: L1 (Arabic), L2 (English), ESL/EFL, Attitudes, Positive, Negative

Introduction

Instructors want students to immerse themselves deeply in the curriculum they are studying, yet this effort can cause stress and a sense of disequilibrium for students. Hence, foreign language teachers coax students out of their comfort zones as they expose them to a new language (Alharthi, 2020, Artieda, 2017; Dewaele & Salomidou, 2017; Tribushinina, Dubinkina-Elgart, & Rabkina, 2020). People in an unfamiliar setting sometimes struggle to stay connected to their roots, which offer a familiar haven. English language students exemplify this reliance on the known when they revert to their native tongues when learning a second language (L2). The first language (L1) helps an individual to understand his or her culture and assert some understanding or control of a confusing situation. This paper focuses on exploring students' perspectives of and habits when using an L1 in an English course. The researchers explore how experts have assessed L1 use and dealt with it in English courses while also examining various classroom approaches that encourage or discourage L1 use, before investigating how bilingualism affects the habit of relying on a native tongue.

Much of the existing research surrounding students' use of L1s in English classes has come classroom observations. This concentration on the professional has left a sizeable gap as L2 students who use an L1 are often not included in these studies. Cook (2001) evaluated L1 use in the classroom and discussed some of the potential benefits of using native languages in L2 courses. Her research focused on how various language systems conflict with one another in certain aspects, such as grammar and syntax, so that students must focus entirely on an L2 to comprehend it. Cook's position, which is common among linguists and educators, insists that students must reduce

or eliminate their L1 usage to integrate the new linguistics of an L2. Exposure is also considered essential to understanding a new language; therefore, students are encouraged to speak entirely in the L2 and interact with people who are native speakers of the L2. Despite being encouraged to separate their languages, students often compared and contrasted characteristics of the L1 and L2 as they learned the L2 (Cook, 2001).

Cook (2001) also examined the processes for developing languages, revealing that, when students began learning their L1, they did not understand other languages to facilitate learning. As a result, she concluded that students should only use an L2 for language acquisition and develop skills based on their skills in their L1. Some techniques making L1 use more positive in a classroom include:

- Understanding and verifying word meaning;
- Developing grammatical skills;
- Managing students;
- Instructing students and explaining classroom rules; and
- Contacting students and families outside the classroom.

Polio and Duff (1994) addressed L1 use in English courses, probing how university educators employed English in U.S.-based foreign language courses. Their discoveries about why people rely on an L1 when learning a new language aligned with those of Cook (2001). They discussed several reasons why English might enhance a foreign language course, such as communicating directions to students, developing grammar and syntax skills, confirming vocabulary words, developing student relationships, and explaining abstract linguistic concepts. According to Polio and Duff (1994), the most common reason for using an L1 in a foreign language setting was to obtain information on the meaning of words, phrases, and concepts.

Auerbach (1993) insisted that the instructor should be the one to decide whether to use the English-only method, because every classroom and every student group are unique and no approach fits all situations. Schweers (1999) was one of the first researchers to look at L1 use from the perspective of the language student. He researched why and how often students relied on their L1 in English courses, focusing specifically on Spanish students at the University of Puerto Rico. Approximately 88.7% of students believed speaking Spanish should be allowed in L2 English courses, whereas no instructor at the university supported the idea; this showed a stark contrast in how the two groups viewed the issue. Likewise, no student interviewed thought instructors should only use

English outside the classroom, with many students and instructors agreeing that Spanish should be used to explain complicated concepts. Both sides showed very little support for using Spanish for English testing, with only 6.4% of the students favoring the idea. Students unanimously believed Spanish should be practiced 30% of the time, and 1.1% of the participants thought 90% of the time was appropriate. Approximately 68.3% of students admitted to using Spanish in English courses to avoid confusion.

Experts conducting instructor-centric studies have found that instructors and students have sharply contrasting views of the use of the L1 in L2 classrooms. Rodriguez Juarez and Oxbrow (2008) revealed that most of the students interviewed in their study claimed that L1 use in an English classroom improved their learning experience; most preferred to have grammar explained in their L1 rather than English. However, the students asserted that instructions and other activities should be in English instead of the L1. Hence, students mostly agreed with and supported L1 use in L2 classrooms, at least in specific situations. Scholars should investigate these issues further to understand the basis of these beliefs and why students feel they are presenting viable options.

Literature Review

L1 use in English classrooms has remained a contentious issue among researchers, instructors, and students. Each person possesses a unique opinion on the issue based on a unique perspective and preference. The researchers examine studies focusing on using an L1(Arabic) in English classrooms and provide insights into this ongoing discussion.

First Language Usage

Most research surrounding L1 use has focused on a broad, generalized examination of specific languages or viewpoints. Historically exploring expert insights might shed light on L1 use in an L2 setting. Cook (2001) analyzed reasons for supporting L1 use in English courses, refuting the claim that a student's knowledge of one language might interfere with the learning of another language. Cook (2001) contended that students in a language course interpret and understand linguistic information better than they are given credit for and can use their knowledge of their L1 to better grasp an L2. Students could connect the L1 and L2 in their minds based on phonology and grammar, even if an instructor went to great lengths to separate the two languages. Miming or

providing physical examples did not prevent students from applying an understanding of an L1 to the learning of an L2. Instead, Cook (2001) suggested several ways instructors could leverage L1 knowledge in their curricula to explain word meanings and grammatical concepts. Teachers often used their students' L1 to explain what words meant and how they were used. These findings led Cook (2001) to recommend that instructors use students' L1 to teach as long as L1 use remains minimal.

Of course, any research into the nature of L1 use in English courses would not be complete without exploring student perspectives. Kim, Kweon, & Kim (2017) assessed English as Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Korean higher education was studied in the engineering colleges. This research aimed to study students' perceptions of EMI and L1 use in EMI classes of engineering and to include directions for EMI to be followed by Korean engineering schools. A research was carried out by the undergraduate students of the three universities. Five hundred and twenty-four students were in the sample, with more students insufficient than enough in terms of English, and most students opted to study middle Korean instead of EMI. However, most research participants believed that the EMI should be sustained, but that it should strengthen compulsory school policies. Furthermore, the usage of L1 in EMI classrooms was preferred by students without school differentiation: about 90 percent of pupils in any school accepted that L1 should be used to help them learn.

Kovačić and Kirinić (2011) also looked at L1 use in the classroom through the lens of a specific language, Croatian, in English for specific purposes (ESP) courses. They approached both students and instructors about whether or not students' L1s should be used in classrooms, measuring how they interpreted the regularity, utility, and suitability of L1 use in an English course. Both instructors and students agreed that L1 use could help in a specific context, but some differences did exist between the two groups. For example, 56.1% of students stated they occasionally preferred to use Croatian, but only approximately 45% of instructors agreed. In addition, 50.9% of students preferred instructors to use their L1 in class moderately. Moreover, 73.1% of students and 80% of teachers believed that using Croatian remained essential to learning. Most participants across both groups agreed that using a student's L1 facilitated the teaching of complicated or abstract concepts. Consequently, experts have demonstrated that L1 use benefits English learning, although no researcher has comprehensively analyzed students' perspectives on

this issue. Because of this gap in understanding, the current study focuses on research related to students and their opinions.

Asif, Bashir and Zafar (2018) noted that English is already a core pedagogy. Many advanced universities in Pakistan use English as their medium, but students and teachers, particularly Urdu, were engaged in their first languages. This study has been done at the Center of Communication and Cultural Studies at the University of Management and Technology to explore whether students and teachers are limited to interactions in English. Qualitative techniques for characterizing English-only variables have been used. The surveys have shown that most students wish to learn English, but know certain core elements that keep them from learning English in schools. Linguistic, human, social, psychological and structural influences became key factors focused primarily on objectives, theories, desires and wishes.

Student Attitudes Toward Using Their L1s with Different Languages

Despite the value of discussing student perspectives on L1 use in English courses, few experts have looked into this topic; those who have discussed it tended to focus on comparing students' and instructors' opinions. Khati (2011) performed a study similar to that of Sharma, focusing on L1 use in an English course, and it yielded similar results. In addition to exploring students' perspectives, Khati (2011) asserted that L1 use in English courses could improve the acquisition and understanding of various subjects beyond English. He reported that allowing students to use their L1s as needed could improve learning rather than impede it. Although these studies provided critical information about students' perceptions, they only sparsely analyzed the reasoning used by the students. The current study concentrates not only on L1 use and opinions regarding it, but also on assessing other issues related to L1 use and varying linguistic skill levels.

Alshammari (2011) found that 61% of students and 69% of instructors supported using Arabic in English courses, the inverse of the other experts' findings, with instructors favoring Arabic use more highly than students. Furthermore, 54% of students supported explaining new words and concepts in Arabic, but only 5% favored Arabic instruction all the time. Conversely, instructors embraced using Arabic for new linguistic topics but not for discussing vocabulary words and phrases. Instructors also agreed that using Arabic in class instead of English saved time. Interestingly, 21% of all participants supported always using Arabic in English courses.

Mahmoudi and Amirkhiz (2011) scrutinized how students at various educational levels perceived the use of an L1 in English classrooms. Students across all levels embraced using English as the dominant language in class instead of their L1.

Kong and Wei (2019) analyzed from different perspectives English as Medium of Instruction (EWMI) in the Chinese context, a small number of semibiographical variables were used to assess the impact of most experiments on attitudes. Furthermore, the tests involved often demonstrate methodological limitations (e.g., loss inadequate sizes). In order to overcome these restrictions, this study investigated the effect on the attitudes of students at six Chinese tertiary institutes towards the EMI and the sociobiographical variables selected. Five recently tested factors and two others including those that have been understood, were included. The supposed injustice and risk correlated with the English language and therefore broadened the focus of this research line. Participants were highly positive regarding EMI. The study on 'perceived unfairness' and 'university' regression was described as statistically important EMI forecasters. Strategy and research implications have been discussed.

Alkhudiry and Al-Ahdal (2020) analyzed the EFL discourse of Saudi Learners. Language researchers and teachers have long been interested in discourse research as a means of assessing the mental processes affecting written or spoken writing. This research is particularly relevant for the whole Saudi EFL community since it attempts to explain the intervention pattern in the EFL success of students in their mother tongue. The purpose is to propose alternatives to this particularly confusing problem for teachers and students alike. Incidents of MT interference have been statistically identified and linguistically examined to support disturbance and damage patterns. Language breakdown was then established on ten parameters of the language. The findings illustrate, that Saudi EFL students are mainly facing written problems with a subject-verb agreement, insufficient verb form, redundancy of preposition and so on. Research would be necessary to overcome these problems in the early stages of EFL exposure in the pre-university scene.

In conclusion, existing research on L1 use in language courses is heavily weighted toward teachers' perceptions, with little direct or in-depth analysis given to students' perspectives. Few scholars have conducted research set in EFL classrooms, and few have analyzed English as a second language (ESL) course. This study hopes to bring attention to this discrepancy and encourage further research into students' perspectives on L1 use in English courses.

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

The study aims to understand the perceptions and reasons of Arab learners of the English language about using Arabic in English classrooms. The study also seeks to understand the measures employed by classroom managers, teachers, and curriculum developers to prevent using Arabic in English classes.

Furthermore, the measures employed to motivate the usage of English in the classrooms are identified as well as students' perceptions towards such measures effectiveness. These research aims help to identify the positive reinforcement of using English language in English classes. Particular emphasis will be placed on differentiating between measures prescribed by an institute and those used by a specific teacher to limit pedagogy. Finally, students' opinions about punishments and positive reinforces are elicited. The following questions guide the study:

1. Why do Arab learners of the English language use Arabic in English classes?
2. What measures are employed in English classrooms to dissuade use of the Arabic language?
3. How do teachers and classroom managers motivate Arab learners of the English language to use English in classes?
4. What challenges are perceived by English teachers when teaching English to Arabic speakers?

Methodology

The current study employed a quantitative approach to assess the factors affecting the use of Arabic language in English classrooms. The study used a questionnaire survey to understand students' perspectives regarding Arabic use in English classes, the punishing behaviors that might dissuade them from resorting to Arabic while in class, and the motivators promoting them to use English.

Participants

A sample of 175 students and 21 teachers participated in the study voluntarily. The study targeted native speakers of Arabic who are learning English. Because Arabic is the L1 of many Middle Eastern nations, such as Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Egypt, Libya, Lebanon, Jordan, and Yemen, the sample was expected to be multicultural while also having varying levels of language proficiency.

The classrooms for this study were sampled using convenience sampling so the researchers could secure prior permission from the institute, teachers, and students before administering the student questionnaire and teacher questionnaire. Although convenience sampling is considered inferior to random sampling concerning the generalizability of findings, it is believed to be justified while exploring research questions where easy access and lack of availability of a sampling frame are vital considerations (Emerson, 2015).

Instruments

An online questionnaire, consisting of 21 items, was designed to elicit students' opinions about reasons for using the Arabic in English classrooms, their teachers' ways of punishing them for using the Arabic, the ways used to dissuade them from using the Arabic, and the positive motivators for using English (Appendix A).

In addition to the student questionnaire, teachers' online questionnaire including 12 open-ended questions was used to recognize the perspectives on the negative punishments and positive reinforces used in English classrooms to encourage students to use English language only. The semi structured questions asked the teachers if they had any special tools or techniques to motivate students to use English or prevent students from reverting to Arabic. The inclusion of teacher questionnaires helped assess if the differences in pedagogy and other teacher-related factors, such as the delivery of lessons, use of teaching aids, choice of evaluation criteria, and frequency of evaluations, significantly impacted students' English learning (Appendix B).

Results

The pilot study of 10 respondents established the questionnaire's reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84, which is considered acceptable (all values above 0.70 are believed to indicate a reliable instrument; Cohen, 2013).

Students' Questionnaire Survey

The final sample of 175 respondents included 44.51% women and 55.49% men, with two respondents choosing not to declare their gender. The majority (70.11%) were 18 to 24 years of age, 19.54% were between 25 and 34 years of age, and 8.05% were 35 to 44 years of age. As the questionnaire was administered to students, this age profile reflects the population (see Figure 1). The nationalities of the respondents were also noted. The majority were Saudi Arabian (82.67%
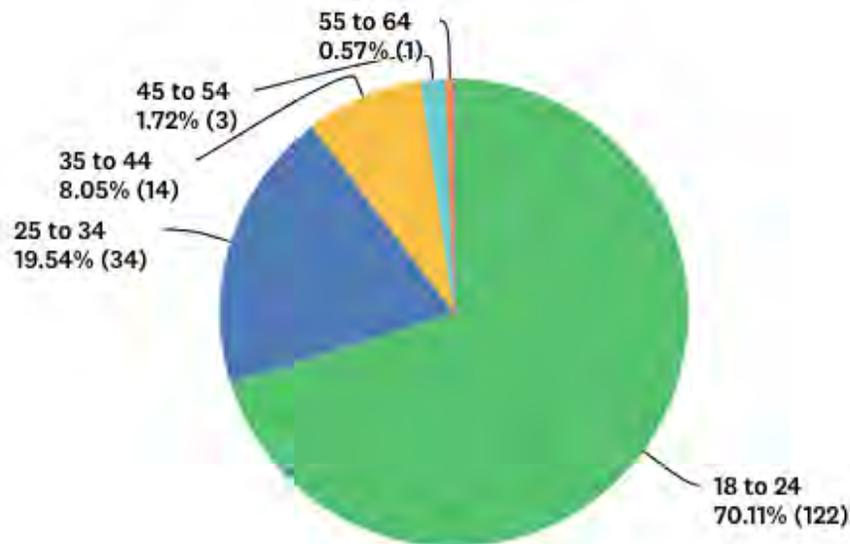

Figure 1. Age profile of respondents

of the entire sample), and 10.67% were Jordanian. Figure 2 shows the distribution of nationalities.
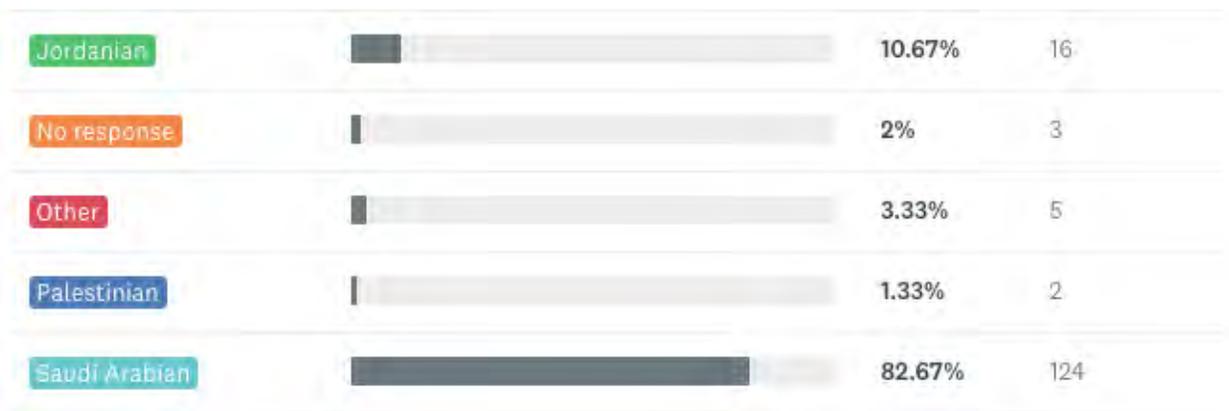

Figure 2. Nationalities of the sample

Students' language proficiency is shown in Figure 3. Of the respondents, 32.18% stated they were at the low-intermediate level, 29.31% at the high-intermediate level, and 10.34% at the low-beginner level. Most respondents had intermediate English language skills, according to their own assessments. One respondent skipped the question.

The highest educational levels of the respondents are presented in Figure 4. Six respondents declined to share their details. Most had a high school education (49.11%) or a bachelor's degree (39.05%), and smaller percentages had a master's degree (9.47%) or a doctorate (2.37%). This distribution reflects the greater opportunities for polishing language skills as students' progress through their years of education.
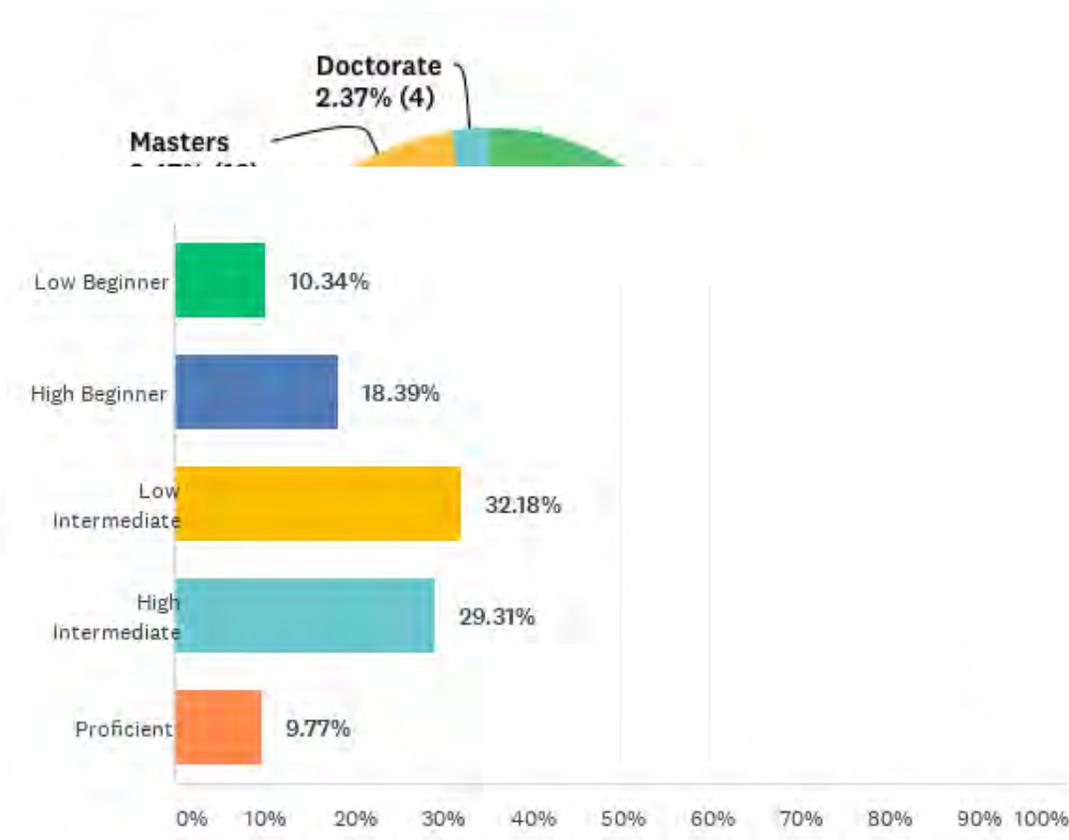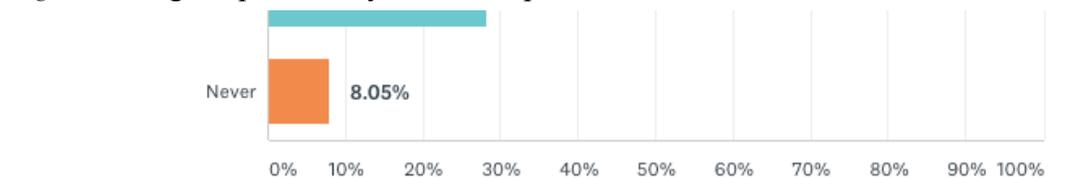
Figure 3. English proficiency of the sample

Figure 5. Frequency of use of the L1 in class

Figure 5 shows how frequently students used their L1 in the L2 classroom. Most respondents used the L1 either sometimes (28.74%) or rarely (28.16%), 22.41% used it usually, 12.64% always used it, and 8.05% never resorted to it.

When asked about their reasons for reverting to their L1, 20.69% of the respondents said that explaining a new idea was always a cause, 27.59% said that was usually a cause, and 32.76% said it was sometimes the cause. Only 5.75% said that explaining a new idea was never a reason. Using the L1 to chat with classmates had even more support, with 35.06% saying they preferred to always chat in their native language, 28.74% saying they usually preferred to do so, and 21.84% saying they sometimes preferred to do so. Only 6.90% of respondents said they never chatted with their classmates in Arabic during class.

Students seemed to have more discipline when they were asked about it with regard to the need to use Arabic to understand English lessons better, with only 7.56% saying they always needed to learn English lessons in Arabic, 16.86% saying they usually needed to do so, 30.23% saying they sometimes or rarely needed to do so, and 15.12% saying they never needed to do so. When asked how often they had to revert to Arabic to understand the meaning of a new word, 19.65% of respondents said always, 26.59% said usually, 28.32% said sometimes, 18.5% said rarely, and 6.94% said never. Using Arabic for self-expression was always necessary for 4.02% of respondents, usually necessary for 10.92%, and sometimes or rarely necessary for 32.76%. Only 19.54% claimed they never needed the help of Arabic to express themselves.

Of the respondents, 32.76% admitted to using Arabic when talking with classmates, 28.16% said they usually did so, 22.41% said they sometimes did so, 9.77% said they rarely did so, and 6.9% said they never did so. Regarding the use of Arabic for non-class-related work, 36.78% always used it, 30.46% usually used it, and 19.54% sometimes used it. When asked, 38.73% said they always needed to use Arabic to feel connected to their culture, 23.7% said they usually did, and 23.12% said they sometimes did. When asked whether they used Arabic to complete classwork faster, 15.61% stated always, 21.39% usually, 31.21% sometimes, 24.28% rarely, and 7.51% never.

Table 1 lists the reasons for using the L1 in an L2 class and includes the mean and standard deviation values. The highest possible value for the mean was 4.

Table 1.

Reasons for Using Arabic in L2 Classrooms

Reason	Mean	Standard Deviation
To explain a new idea	1.6	1.13
To chat with classmates	1.2	1.2
To understand English lessons	2.3	1.14
To understand the meaning of a new word	1.7	1.19
To express oneself	2.5	1.05
Because classmates are using Arabic	1.3	1.22
To work on non-class-related topics	1.2	1.18
To feel connected to their culture	1.2	1.21
To complete classwork faster	1.9	1.17

The next set of questions inquired about the measures taken to dissuade students from using Arabic in class. Of the respondents, 79.07% asserted that their institutes did not impose punishment. Similar results were reported when students were asked if teachers used punishing behaviors, with 72.35% asserting no and only 27.65% saying yes. Figure 6 lists the punishing behaviors employed by teachers based on the reports of the respondents. The most common punishment reported for L1 usage was the admonition to repeat the same statement in English (53.37%), followed by a verbal warning (38.65%) and a written warning (11.04%). When asked how often the punishing behaviors seemed to be successful in changing student behavior, only 11.11% claimed always, 26.9% claimed usually, 28.07% claimed sometimes, 16.37% claimed rarely, and 17.54% claimed never.
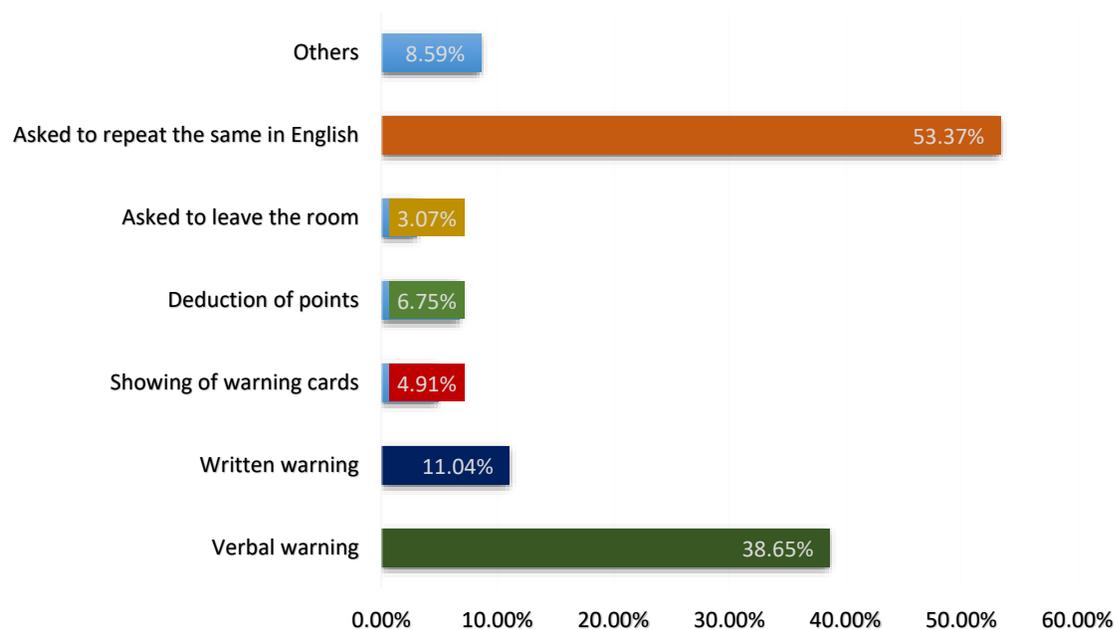
Figure 6. Punishing behaviors employed by teachers in L2 classrooms

Figure 7 shows the punishing behaviors the students would like to see employed in their classes. A majority of the respondents, 61.35%, said they would like their teachers to use the tactic of asking them to repeat the same statement in English. The other punishing behaviors received little support.
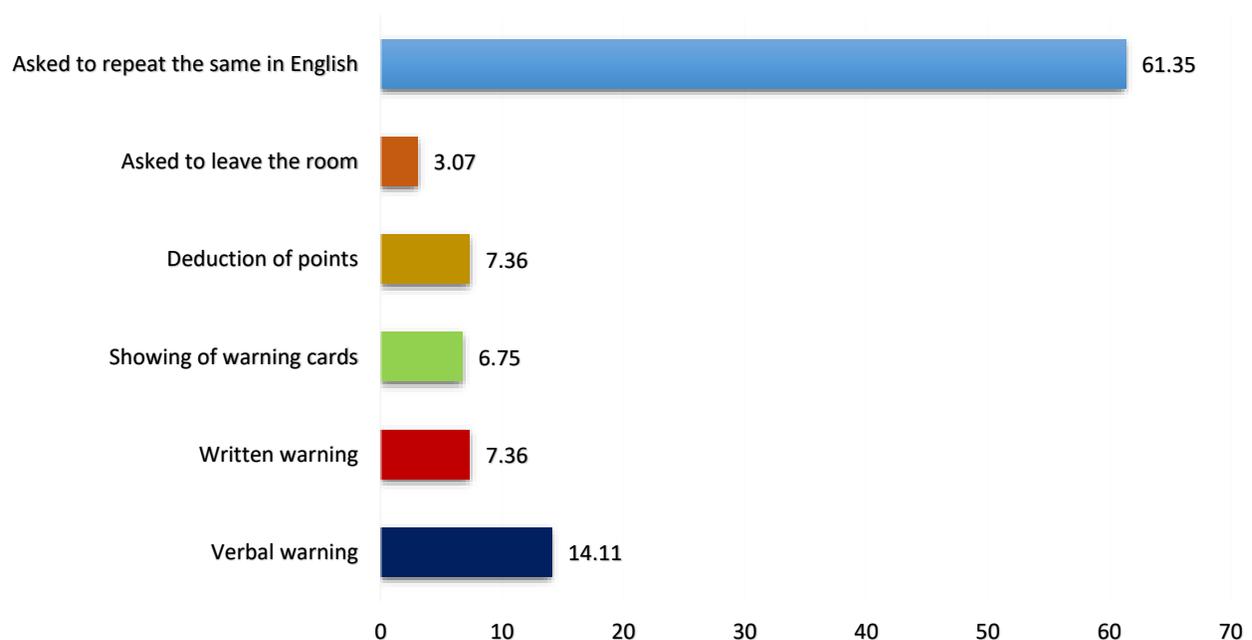

Figure 7. Punishing behaviors respondents would like to see in their classes

The next questions inquired about positive reinforces used in the classroom that promoted English language usage. Many of the respondents, 59.76%, asserted that there was no declared policy for positive reinforcement at their institute, although 40.24% said that was such a policy. Nearly equal numbers of respondents declared that their teachers used positive reinforces to motivate them to speak in English, with 49.12% saying they did and 50.88% saying they did not. Figure 8 lists the positive reinforces and percentages of respondents who said that positive reinforces were employed in their classes. A significant number of respondents (33) did not answer this question. These respondents may not have felt that positive reinforces were used in their classes and, therefore, chose not to answer the question. Among the respondents who answered the question, 45.77% reported they were awarded points and 40.14% said they were praised.
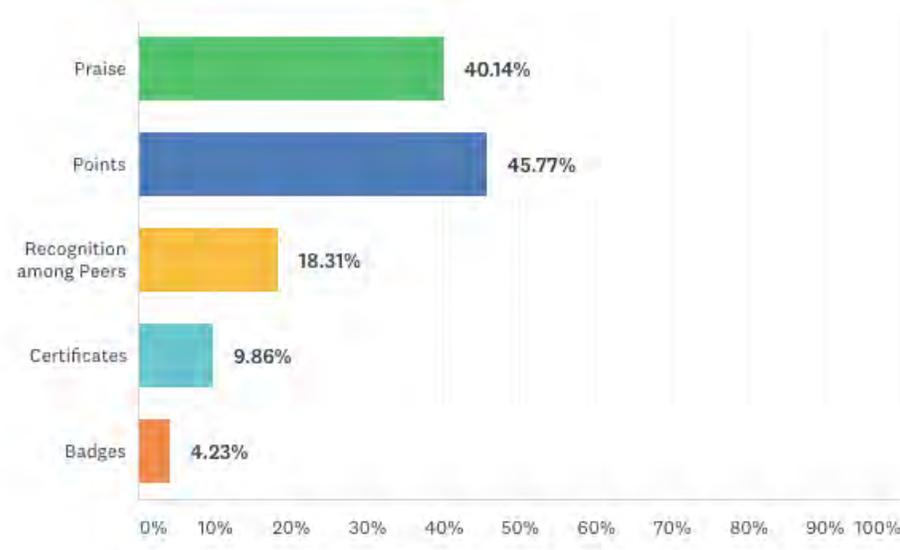

Figure 8. Positive reinforces for promoting the usage of English in L2 classrooms
Recognition among peers was also reported (18.31%). The awarding of certificates or badges was uncommon. The responses about the success of positive reinforcement were mostly positive, with 38.82% of respondents saying it was always successful compared to 30% usually, 22.35% sometimes, 5.29% rarely, and 3.53% never. Figure 9 shows the positive reinforces the respondents would like to see used in their classrooms.
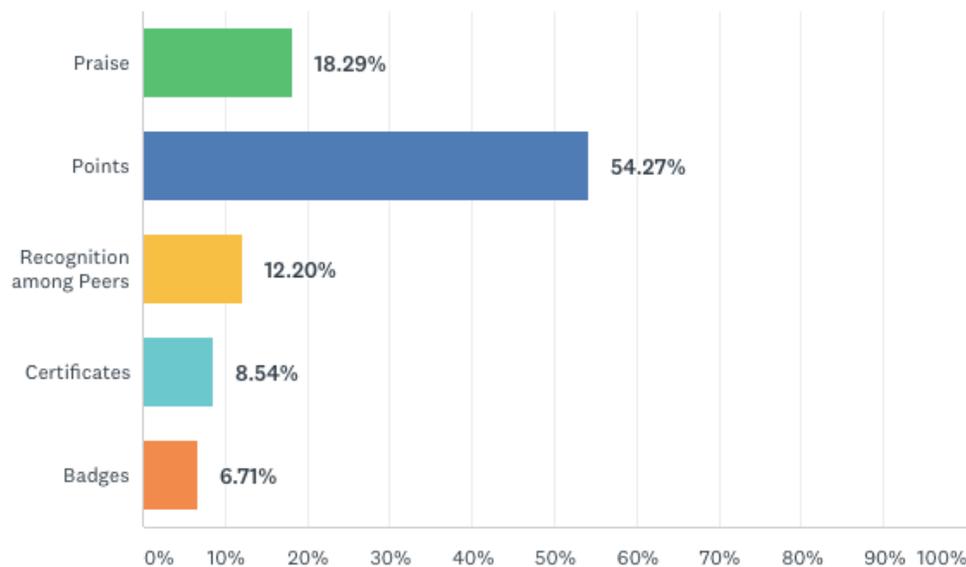
Figure 9. Positive reinforces preferred by respondents for promoting the use of English in L2 classrooms

More than half of the respondents (54.27%) would have liked to see points awarded for English usage; praise (18.29%) and recognition (12.20%) were other popular options. When asked which motivation worked better in promoting English use, the respondents asserted that positive reinforcement was the most successful (55.23%), followed by both positive and negative reinforcement (33.14%) and then neither type of enforcement (6.4%). A small percentage, 5.23%, would have liked to see negative reinforcement employed.

Teacher Questionnaire Survey

The questionnaire for teachers employed open-ended questions. The classes taught by the teachers ranged from levels 1 to 7, with listening, speaking, and writing skills covered. The range of teaching experience varied from 3 to 30 years. When asked why L2 learners tended to use their L1 in class, half of the teachers mentioned that it was because the students lacked English skills. This lack was described for vocabulary, fluency, and ability to express what they were thinking. Seven teachers believed familiarity with their L1 pulled them toward it, and four teachers cited psychological reasons, such as hesitancy and shyness about speaking an unfamiliar language. The L1 offered ease in communication, many teachers reported.

The role of culture in influencing L1 use in the classroom received a matched response, with 10 teachers agreeing that a student's culture influenced L1 use and another 10 feeling that it

did not. One teacher claimed she could not decide what her opinion was on this matter. Among the teachers who believed culture played a role in L1 use in class, the responses suggested that students from cultures that are more open to making mistakes would be more likely to practice the L2 without feeling shame; in addition, Arabs tend to be more social than some other groups, so they may be more likely to learn the L2 while conversing.

When asked if the institute had a clear policy discouraging L1 use in the classroom, 52.38% of teachers said it did not while 23.81% asserted that there was an implicit policy but there was no explicit policy. Finally, 23.81% professed that their institute had declared that L1 was not to be used in the classroom. Among the teachers' respondents, 90.48% declared they never used any punishments to prevent the usage of L1 in class, and the remaining 9.52% (only two teachers) said they indirectly punished the use of L1 by not responding to questions unless they were stated in English. The teachers who refused to employ punishments stated that punishments did not work but positive reinforces and encouragement did work.

When teachers were asked if, in their opinions, admonishments can reduce the usage of English, surprisingly, 47.62% agreed that they could and another 19.05% answered that they might work in some circumstances. Only 28.57% reported they did not believe punishment would work. Among the teachers insisting it would not work, an example of the responses was: "L2 proficiency is a spontaneous process. It can be achieved through maximum exposure to L2, not through penalizing learners." Some thought punishment might work but felt that positive reinforcement was better. One of the teachers believed that allowing students to use their L1 might help them learn English.

Only one teacher reported a formal policy (i.e., a point system) for rewarding the non-use of L1 in the classroom, whereas all others mentioned that their institutes did not have any such policy. More than half of teachers, 57.14%, declared they did not employ a reward policy for not using the L1 in the classroom, with one teacher saying, "This will add extra anxiety to introverted students and could undermine their progress." The teachers who said they used such a policy discussed point systems and encouragement, pointing out the benefits of using English, ignoring mistakes, and awarding extra marks in their practices.

Despite the fact that more than half of the teachers did not use rewards to motivate their students to not use the L1, 66.67% believed such policies could be beneficial. A further 19.05% professed they would work but would depend on certain factors, including "the learners' level of proficiency

in L2. Sometimes, the instructor himself has to resort to L1 to fill in the gap between L1 and L2 cultural differences." Another teacher thought it would work, but its negative impact would offset the benefits.

Of the teachers who responded to the survey, 80.95% mentioned that changes were required in the existing pedagogical framework to address students' L1 use in L2 classes. Some of the suggested changes were providing motivation, generating a more engaging learning environment, and offering an English introductory course at the beginner's level before embarking on the course. Some teachers disagreed and were not averse to students using the L1, including the teacher who said, "I don't think forcing students to use only the L2 is very useful; using their first language might help them understand some difficult words or concepts, which would help them in learning the L2."

Finally, some teachers suggested motivating students by speaking to them outside the classroom in English, customizing the curriculum according to the student's age, and even involving the L1 in the teaching of the L2: "Sometimes the use of the L1 can be effective in connecting the form and meaning of a new vocabulary." The use of technological aids was also recommended.

Discussion

Students use their L1 in the classroom for many reasons. The respondents in this study reported that they use Arabic, their mother tongue, to express themselves (mean 2.5, SD = 1.05), understand their L2 lessons (mean 2.3, SD = 1.14), complete classroom activities faster (mean 1.9, SD = 1.17), understand a new word (mean = 1.7, SD = 1.19), and explain new ideas (mean = 1.6, SD = 1.13). Higher average scores were seen for using the L1 to help learn English, chatting with classmates, communicating with classmates as they talk in Arabic, talking about topics not related to class, and feeling connected to the Arab culture. These reasons received more support from fewer students but were cited as having a higher frequency of usage, as indicated by the number of respondents stating they always used Arabic to fulfill these functions. Therefore, task-related and social factors were featured in the student responses.

Some experts have identified these factors as contributing to the usage of L1 in L2 classrooms. De la Fuente and Goldenberg (2020) reported that students use their L1 to understand the meaning of new words and concepts. In one seminal study, Tammenga-Helmantel, Mossing

Holsteijn and Bloemert (2020) pointed out that, if students cannot use their L1 in their English learning classroom, individuals who do not know English will detach from the language because they cannot participate. In this way, the use of the L1 can help bridge the learning gap to the new language, as students employ the L1 to understand the meanings of their lessons and new words, complete classroom activities, and explain ideas. Werang and Harrington (2020) who professed that L1 usage might have some benefits for the learning of the L2. Notably, some surveyed teachers voiced this opinion, asserting that—despite recognizing the benefits of generally discouraging the usage of the L1 in their classrooms—they still preferred to allow it sometimes because it helped students.

This insight about the L1 having a particular relevance for teachers is one of the primary findings of this paper, which leads to two questions: (1) How often should teachers allow usage of the L1? (2) If the L1 is a necessary bridge for language learning, should punishments and positive reinforces be withheld?

The first question, regarding how often teachers should allow usage of the L1, will be addressed first. Ellis (2012) as well as the teachers surveyed in this study, believed that circumstances and the teacher's judgment should ultimately decide these cases. It is noteworthy that earlier studies indicated that students primarily supported L1 usage in learning, especially when explaining a new concept or introducing grammar (Antonova-Unlu and Wei, 2020; van Rijt, et al, 2019; Antonova-Ünlü, 2020). Shvidko (2017) pointed out that having an English-only policy in L2 classrooms could instill positive attitudes, such as improved English proficiency, better preparation for interactions outside the classroom, and a more respectful environment for students and teachers and their learning goals. It has been noted that Saudi EFL teachers have been reported to be aware of the pragmatic competence of using L1 to teach L2 but their implementation is still lagging behind (Al-Qahtani, 2020;Tulung, 2020; Li, Zhao, & Han, 2020; Chien, et al, 2020).

The second question was, if the L1 is a necessary bridge for language learning, should punishments and positive reinforces be withheld? The answer to this question is complicated. On their questionnaires, students and teachers were asked if they had formal policies about such motivators. Significantly few students admitted to experiencing formal punishment policies for dissuading them from speaking in their L1, with 20.93% of students stating that their institutes had such a policy and 27.65% reporting that their teachers used such measures. However, more than half reported that being asked to repeat a statement in English was a punishing behavior that could

also be construed as a positive reinforce. Other punishing behaviors were limited to verbal and written warnings—the latter in rare cases (11.04%). The teachers confirmed the students' statements, with 23.81% saying that there was no explicit policy that forbade L1 use. Another 23.81% added that there was an implicit policy discouraging the use of the L1 in the classroom. Most teachers (90.48%) contended they did not like to punish their students for using the L1, although nearly half (47.62%) agreed that punishments work and an additional 19.05% claimed they might work in certain circumstances. Students buttressed the success of punishing behaviors, with 66.08% claiming they sometimes or always work. Most students (61.35%) were prepared to repeat the statement made in the L1 in English, but very few (14.11%) were ready for a verbal warning.

Neither the teachers nor the students preferred punishing behaviors unless they were learning tools. None of the punitive behaviors, such as deducting points, issuing warning cards or written warnings, or being asked to leave the room, received much support from teachers or students.

Macaro, Tian, and Chu (2020) bolstered these findings, reporting that any hostile environment in the classroom detracted from the learning process, fostered negativity about the L1, and undermined the effectiveness of the English language. These researchers also asserted that only those actions encouraging L2 use, promoting independent language use, and enabling the learning culture should be promoted. Lee and Levine (2020) who reported some positive benefits of a formal policy against the use of the L1 in L2 classrooms, pointed out that students feel such policies and admonishments encroach on their agency and can lead to negativity. Moreover, the anxiety in students while learning L1 can actually affect their reading skills and achievement in class (Alhuwaydi, 2020, Blankenbeckler, 2020; Carter et al, 2020; Fall, 2020; Wicht, Rammstedt & Lechner, 2020). Furthermore, students who have lower levels of anxiety perform better in L2 classes. Therefore, the context of the learning and the students' and teachers' perspectives on it matter when deciding to use punishing behaviors.

Conversely, the questionnaires asked if the institute had a formal policy on employing positive reinforcement or whether teachers used it as their chosen practice. Among the students, 59.76% said their institute had no such policy, and only one teacher agreed. Moreover, 50.88% of students added that their teachers did not use any positive reinforces to encourage them to speak in the L2. Among the teachers, 66.67% agreed that positive reinforces could encourage English

use and learning. The positive reinforces identified by respondents were formal ones, such as a point system (45.77%), and informal ones, such as praise (40.14%) and recognition by peers (18.31%). More formal awards, such as giving certificates (9.86%) or badges (4.23%), were not popular. This showed a weakness in teaching L2s because formal policies for positive reinforcement can enhance learning. Technology has enabled the generation of digital badges related to a service user's learning experience, which has been found to be significantly and positively related to the learning experience and satisfaction of the service users. Such aids can help in enhancing the students' desire to learn the L2.

Conclusion

This study explored why Arab L2 learners use their mother tongue in the classroom. A variety of factors emerged, including social factors and factors related to language learning, indicating that the mother tongue is difficult to remove entirely from student discourse. The study also looked at whether the presence of a punishment policy at an institute or the use of punishment by teachers inhibits students from using their L1 during class. The results showed that neither students nor teachers favored such behaviors unless they also had a positive learning component, such as asking a student to repeat a statement in English. Some teachers believed that the L1 can act as a bridge to the learning of the L2; existing literature supports this idea. When students and teachers were asked if they would like to implement a reward policy, the response was more positive, but the existing learning frameworks do not support such an effort—at least in terms of formal institute policies. As a result, this study suggests that administrators and teachers at educational institutes should introduce positive reinforcements to encourage students to use English during classes.

Pedagogical Implications

The pedagogical implications of this study include a need to establish a formal positive reinforcement policy and practice within classrooms that clarifies to the students when they can use L1 and how it can help them move toward learning L2. The use of technological aids (e.g., digital badges) or even non-technological ones (e.g., a points system) that recognize positive effort is needed. With Saudi ESL teachers lagging behind in the pragmatic competence implementation of L1 in their classrooms. Recommendation that they be asked to convey some of their speech acts

in daily activities in L1 and provide them with some training for better awareness of how to employ pragmatics in teaching hold merit.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Study

The limitations of this research related to its focus exclusively on Arab students learning English. More studies that explore other contexts of L1 and L2 learning are needed to substantiate the findings of this study. The shared teacher suggestions that could improve the current pedagogical framework of teaching in L2 classrooms include the shift to a more motivated form of teaching pedagogy, with both students and teachers recommending the addition of either positive reinforces or positive and negative reinforces. The results indicated that teachers and students should introduce formal policies and informal measures encouraging students to speak in English without resorting to punishing behaviors for preventing the use of the L1. The respondents' opinions in this study and the existing body of knowledge suggest that the L1 could and should be employed to bridge the learning path to the L2. Forbidding the use of the L1 makes students feel psychological alienation, hesitancy, shyness, and even shame, all of which contribute to negative perceptions about the L1 and the learning of the L2. Further studies should explore the impact of gender on using Arabic language in English language classes. It is worthy to explore the use of Arabic in online English classes and whether technology has effect on using L1 or not as Alghammas (2020) reports that using technology in English classes improves Saudis' speaking skills. It is also presented that the study only used a quantitative research design. Future studies should be carried out utilizing experimental research methods to be backed up by qualitative analysis to cross validate the findings of the current study.

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Appendix A
Questionnaire for Arab L2 Learners of English

This study aims to assess why Arab L2 learners of the English language use their first language in classrooms. It also explores the measures utilized to discourage using the first language and the positive influencers for using a second language. Before agreeing to participate in this study, you should be informed that no identifying details are collected during this study or shared with any third-party agencies for any commercial purposes. Furthermore, all responses collected during this study will be kept confidential with the researchers. As a participant of this study, you retain the right to withdraw your voluntary support and participation at any stage of this research. If you so wish, the study results will be shared with you after they have been compiled and processed.

We remain sincerely indebted to you for your time and efforts in answering this 15-minute questionnaire.

Part A. General Personal Information

1. Please indicate your gender

a. Female   b. Male

2. What is your age?

3. What is your nationality?

4. How would you describe your proficiency in the English language?

a. Low Beginner   b. High Beginner   c. Low Intermediate   d. High Intermediate   e. Proficient

5. What are your educational qualifications?

a. High school diploma   b. Bachelor's degree   c. Master's degree   d. Doctorate   e. Other

Part B. Reasons for Using the First Language during L2 Learning

1. How often do you use Arabic in the classroom?

a. Never   b. Rarely   c. Sometimes   d. Frequently

2. Do you use Arabic to explain a new concept to your peers?

a. Never   b. Rarely   c. Sometimes   d. Frequently

3. Do you prefer to chat with your classmates in Arabic?

a. Never   b. Rarely   c. Sometimes   d. Frequently

4. How often do you need the help of Arabic to understand an English lesson?

a. Never   b. Rarely   c. Sometimes   d. Frequently

5. Do you need to refer to Arabic to understand the meaning of a new word?

a. Never   b. Rarely   c. Sometimes   d. Frequently

6. How often do you resort to Arabic because you cannot express yourself in class?

a. Never   b. Rarely   c. Sometimes   d. Frequently

7. How often do you talk in Arabic because your friends are talking in the language?

a. Never   b. Rarely   c. Sometimes   d. Frequently

8. How often do you use Arabic to talk about non-class-related topics with your peers?

a. Never   b. Rarely   c. Sometimes   d. Frequently

9. Do you use Arabic because it makes you feel connected to your culture?

a. Never   b. Rarely   c. Sometimes   d. Frequently

10. Do you resort to Arabic because it helps you complete class activities faster?

a. Never   b. Rarely   c. Sometimes   d. Frequently

Part C. Punishment for Using Arabic

11. Does your institute have a declared policy for punishing students who speak Arabic during class?

a. Yes   b. No

12. Does your teacher use punishing behavior to dissuade students from using Arabic in class?

a. Yes   b. No

13. Which of these punishing behaviors are used by your teacher to discourage the usage of Arabic during class?

    a. Verbal warning

    b. Written warning

    c. Showing of warning cards

    d. Deducting points

    e. Asking the student to leave the room

    f. Asking the student to repeat the same statement in English

    g. Other: _____

14. Do you believe the punishing behaviors are successful?

a. Never   b. Rarely   c. Sometimes   d. Frequently

15. What punishing behaviors would you like your teacher to employ to discourage the use of Arabic in class?

    a. Verbal warning

    b. Written warning

    c. Showing of warning cards

    d. Deducting points

    e. Asking the student to leave the room

    f. Asking the student to repeat the same statement in English

    g. Other: _____

Part D. Positive Reinforcement for Not Using Arabic

16. Does your institute have a declared policy for positive reinforcement for students who do not speak Arabic during class?

a. Yes   b. No

17. Does your teacher use positive reinforcement for students who do not speak Arabic during class?

a. Yes   b. No

18. Which of these positive reinforces are used by your teacher to discourage the usage of Arabic during class?

    a. Praise

    b. Points

    c. Recognition among peers

    d. Certificates

    e. Badges

    f. Other: _____

19. Do you believe that positive reinforcement is successful?

a. Never   b. Rarely   c. Sometimes   d. Frequently

20. What positive reinforces would you like your teacher to employ to discourage the use of Arabic in class?

    a. Praise

    b. Points

    c. Recognition among peers

    d. Certificates

    e. Badges

    f. Other: _____

21. Which techniques do you believe are more effective in promoting the use of English?

Appendix B

Questionnaire Survey for Teachers

Q1. What classes are you teaching?

Q2. How many years have you been teaching English to L2 learners?

Q3. In your opinion, why do L2 learners resort to their first language in class?

Q4. Do you feel that a student's cultural origin affects the use of the first language in class? For example, is there any difference between Arab learners and other students when using the first language in class?

Q5. Does your institute have any policy for discouraging the use of the first language in L2 classes? If so, what does it say?

Q6. Do you personally use any punishing behaviors to dissuade students from using their first language in an L2 class?

Q7. Do you feel such punishing behaviors are effective in discouraging students from using their first language in class?

Q8. Does your institute have any formal policy for rewarding students for not using their first language in class?

Q9. Do you personally use any rewarding techniques to encourage students not to use their first language in an L2 class?

Q10. Do you feel that this positive reinforcement effectively encourages students not to use their first language in class?

Q11. Do you feel that any changes are required in the existing pedagogical framework to address students' use of their first language in class?

Q12. Would you like to add anything to the topic of study?