



## **Perceptions of University Students Regarding English Language Instructors' Utilization of the Mother Tongue in Higher Education Classrooms**

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### **تصورات طلبة الجامعة حول استخدام مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية للغة الأم في قاعات التعليم العالي**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates the first-year of English language university students' attitude toward using Arabic Language inside higher education classrooms. The importance of using the mother tongue in foreign language teaching classrooms has been extensively discussed, especially where English practice is a crucial academic condition. This study employed a mixed-methods approach, gathering quantitative data via questionnaires distributed to 40 first-year students and qualitative data through semi-structured interviews with a selected subset of participants. The results indicate that students predominantly possess favorable opinions towards the restricted and intentional use of Arabic, especially for elucidating grammar, clarifying challenging terminology, and providing directions. Students articulated that the overuse of Arabic language limits their exposure to English and reduce speaking practice. The research indicates that students prefer an English -centric classroom atmosphere, supplemented by reasonable use of their mother tongue when required.

The results indicate the necessity for a balanced and principled application of Arabic in university EFL programs.

**Keywords:** English as a Foreign Language, mixed approaches , native language, student perceptions.

### **الملخص**

وقد ناقشت أيضاً هذه الدراسة أهمية استخدام اللغة الأم في تعليم اللغات الأجنبية على نطاق واسع ولا سيما في المجالات التي يعدها تدريب الطلبة على التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية شرطاً أكاديمياً أساسياً. اعتمدت هذه الدراسة منهجية بحث متنوعة بين جمع البيانات الكمية من خلال استبيانات وزعت على 40 طالباً من طلبة السنة الأولى، كما جمعت البيانات النوعية عبر مقابلات شبه منظمة مع مجموعة مختارة من الطلبة

تشير النتائج على ان الطلبة يمتلكون في الغالب أراء إيجابية حول الاستخدام المحدود للغة العربية، خاصة في شرح القواعد النحوية وتوضيح المفردات الصعبة، وتقديم التعليمات والتوجيهات للطلبة، كما عبر الطلبة على ان الافراط في استخدام اللغة العربية يقلل من تعرّضهم للغة الإنجليزية ويفيد من فرص ممارسة مهارة التحدث . وتوضح الدراسة ان الطلبة يفضلون بيئه صفية تتحول حول اللغة الإنجليزية بشكل أساسى علية ان تدعم الاستخدام المعقول للغة الام عند الضرورة القصوى . وتوكّد النتائج على ضرورة تطبيق متوازن ومحترم لاستخدام اللغة الام داخل فصول تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية :** آراء الطلبة، اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية ، اللغة الام ، طرق متعددة .

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Context of the Research

The utilization of the native language in foreign language classrooms has been one of the most contentious topics in language instruction. Traditional methods such as Grammar Translation Method depends on learners' native language; however, communicative approaches prioritize wide utilization of the target language. In higher education EFL settings, particularly Arab collages, educators often switch between English and Arabic to enhance learning, and aid students understanding. At Elmergib University, faculty of languages, first year students frequently launch their studies with various levels of English ability among learners. Consequently, English language educators encounter difficulties in utilizing pure English education with guaranteeing a full comprehension by their learners. This scenario promotes significant inquiries regarding students' views on teachers employment of Arabic inside English classrooms.

### 1.2 Problem Statement

Despite the spread usage of Arabic language among university English language instructors, there exists numerous research examine students' perceptions of this practice. Some students may perceive the employment of Arabic language as beneficial and supportive, while others may argue that this practice affect their English growth. Teachers may find it challenging to implement suitable language- use practice without knowledge of students' views.

### 1.3 Objective of the Research

This study aims to investigate first- year learners' attitudes of using the mother tongue (Arabic) by English language instructors in EFL classrooms at Elmergib University.

### 1.4 Research Questions

What are the attitudes of first-year students regarding the usage of Arabic by English language instructors in EFL classrooms?

What concerns do learners have about the use of Arabic by educators?

What are the student's perceptions of the balanced use between English and Arabic in their English classes?

In what kind of classroom situations do students think using Arabic is beneficial?

### 1.5 Importance of the Research

This study is important since it provides higher education instructors with insights on students' perspectives about using mother tongue language inside EFL classrooms. The result may assist the educators at Elmergib University in making educated choices regarding the efficient use of Arabic to enhance learning while ensuring sufficient exposure to English.

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1 Theoretical Frameworks on the Utilization of Native Language

According to (Vygotsky, 1978; Anton & DiCamilla, 1998) learning is facilitated by language and using the mother tongue functions as a cognitive tool to improve understanding. Utilizing the first language enables learners to associate new knowledge with pre-existing linguistic and mental structures. Translanguaging theory suggests that bilingual learners inherently employ their complete linguistic range to extract meaning and learn more effectively (García & Wei, 2014).

## **2.2 Arguments against the Utilization of Mother Tongue**

According to (Krashen, 1985; Turnbull, 2001) proponents of English only instruction assert that extensive exposure to the target language is crucial for achieving proficiency. Overreliance on the mother tongue may reduce students' opportunities to engage in English practice, increase reliance on translation and discourage learners from engaging in cognitive thinking in English (Macaro, 2005; Nation, 2003).

## **2.3 Justifications for the Utilization of Native Language inside EFL classroom**

According to (Cook, 2001 & Auerbach, 1993) that discreet and reasonable use of the mother tongue can enhance foreign language learning, especially for beginner learners. Teachers often use the first language to explain complex grammar, abstract vocabulary, and task instructions more effectively (Schweers, 1999; Macaro, 2005). Furthermore, the utilization of one's native language helps in reducing tension and foster a nurturing teaching environment (Cummins, 2007; Anton & DiCamilla, 1998).

## **2.4 Student Perspectives on L1Utilization in EFL classrooms**

Several studies such as (Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Alshehri, 2017) indicates that students generally support limited use of their mother tongue, particularly in higher education contexts. Students generally prefer using the English language inside the classroom; however, they prefer using Arabic with a limited range to clarify any complexity in the material. (Schweers, 1999; Debreli & Oyman, 2016). Proficiency level is a key factor influencing these perceptions, with lower-level learners showing stronger support for L1 use than advanced learners (Macaro, 2005; Nation, 2003).

## **2.5Research gap**

While many studies focus on teachers' beliefs about mother tongue use (Macaro, 2001; Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009), fewer studies examine first-year university students' perceptions in Arab higher education contexts (Alshehri, 2017). This study addresses this gap by focusing on first-year students at Elmergib University, providing context-specific evidence from a Libyan higher education setting.

## **3.Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study employed a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions. The quantitative data provided general trends, while the qualitative data offered deeper insights into students' opinions.

### **3.2 Participants**

The participants were 40 first-year students enrolled in the Faculty of Languages at Elmergib University. All participants were native speakers of Arabic and were studying English as part of their academic program.

### **3.3 Instruments**

#### **3.3.1 Questionnaire**

A questionnaire consisting of two sections was used. The first section collected demographic information, while the second section included Likert-scale statements related to students' perceptions of teachers' use of Arabic.

#### **3.3.2 Students' Perceptions Questionnaire**

The main instrument used in this study was a students' perceptions questionnaire designed to investigate first-year university students' views on English language teachers' use of the mother tongue (Arabic) in EFL classrooms at Elmergib University. The questionnaire was a self-report instrument developed in light of the relevant literature on first language use in foreign language teaching (Cook, 2001; Macaro, 2005; Schweers, 1999) and the researcher's

interest in understanding students' perceptions in the Libyan higher education context (see Appendix A).

The questionnaire consisted of 10 items measured on a five-point Likert scale, where:

1 = Strongly Disagree,

2 = Disagree,

3 = Neutral,

4 = Agree,

5 = Strongly Agree.

The instruments were created to assess students' perspectives on teachers' use of Arabic, focusing on comprehension, language practice, affective factors (such as anxiety and confidence), and overall evaluation of language use in the classroom.

Before administration, the questionnaire items were reviewed to ensure clarity and relevance to the research questions. The respondents' personal information included basic background variables such as gender and academic program. After collecting students' responses, the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

The statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS version 23. The choice of a Likert-scale questionnaire was due to its wide use in similar studies on mother tongue use in EFL classrooms and its suitability for measuring attitudes and perceptions (Macaro, 2005; Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Debreli & Oyman, 2016).

### **3.3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight volunteer students. The interviews examined students' experiences with Arabic usage, their preferred balance of classroom language, and the perceived impacts on learning and confidence.

### **3.3.4 Methods of Data Analysis**

#### **Data Analysis Methods**

This study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative data were based on students' answers and were coded and analyzed using SPSS Version 23.

Descriptive statistical techniques, including percentages, frequencies, means, and standard deviations, were employed to analyze the data so that students' responses clearly reflected their views on using the Arabic language inside EFL classrooms.

Results were presented using tables to show students' responses. Conclusions were drawn from both quantitative and qualitative data regarding students' views on using Arabic inside EFL classrooms.

Semi-structured interviews were transcribed and analyzed to identify key themes. The analysis involved identifying data, important points, and common themes related to the advantages and disadvantages of using Arabic inside EFL classrooms.

The qualitative data served to validate and clarify the quantitative outcomes. The discussion section combined findings from both quantitative and qualitative data. Consequently, this facilitated the development of conclusions and recommendations based on the study's comprehensive results.

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

Informed consent was obtained, and students were informed of the study's purposes. Participation was voluntary, privacy was assured, and participants were free to withdraw at any time.

### **3.7 Statistical Analysis**

The quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). In addition to descriptive statistics, a set of inferential and relational statistical

techniques was employed to examine differences between groups and relationships among the study variables.

### 3.8 Tests of Differences

To examine whether students' perceptions differed significantly across demographic variables, tests of differences were conducted. When comparisons involved two groups (e.g., gender), an independent samples t-test was applied. For comparisons involving more than two groups, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. These tests were employed to determine whether observed differences in mean perception scores were statistically significant rather than due to random variation.

### 3.9 Correlation Analysis

To explore the relationships between key variables, correlation analysis was conducted. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine the strength and direction of relationships between variables such as the use of Arabic in the classroom, students' anxiety levels, confidence, comprehension, and opportunities for English speaking practice. Correlation analysis provided insight into whether increases or decreases in one variable were associated with corresponding changes in another.

### 3.10 Analysis of Relationships Between Variables

To further investigate the nature of the relationships among variables, regression analysis was employed. This analysis aimed to determine the extent to which the use of the mother tongue predicts students' overall perceptions and learning-related outcomes, such as confidence, comprehension, and speaking practice. Regression coefficients were examined to identify significant predictors and to assess their relative contribution to the dependent variables.

### 3.11 Significance Level

All inferential statistical tests were conducted using a significance level of  $p \leq 0.05$ , which is commonly accepted in educational research. This threshold was used to determine statistical significance and ensure the reliability of the findings.

## 4. Data Analysis and Results

This section presents the quantitative analysis of first-year university students' perceptions regarding English language instructors' use of Arabic in EFL classrooms. The analysis is based on responses collected from **40 students** using a **ten-item Likert-scale questionnaire**. The data were analyzed using **SPSS (Version 23)** and are reported through **descriptive statistics**, including means, standard deviations, and percentages of agreement.

Given the exploratory nature of the study and the limited sample size, the analysis focuses on **describing trends and patterns** rather than testing statistical significance or causal relationships.

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Questionnaire Items

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for all questionnaire items, including the mean scores, standard deviations, and the percentage of students who selected *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* for each statement.

**Table 1** Descriptive Statistics of Students' Perceptions Questionnaire (N = 40)

Item	Statement (Short Description)	Mean	Std. Deviation	% Agree / Strongly Agree
1	Arabic helps understand difficult lessons	4.10	0.85	75%
2	Preference for English most of the time	3.90	0.92	68%

3	Arabic useful for grammar explanation	4.00	0.88	70%
4	Too much Arabic reduces speaking practice	3.95	0.90	70%
5	Arabic reduces anxiety	3.80	0.95	65%
6	Arabic should be used only when necessary	4.20	0.80	78%
7	Arabic increases confidence	3.85	0.93	67%
8	Arabic should be limited in speaking activities	4.05	0.87	73%
9	Arabic helps follow classroom instructions	4.00	0.86	72%
10	Preference for limited and purposeful Arabic use	4.30	0.75	80%

*Note: Scale ranges from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.*

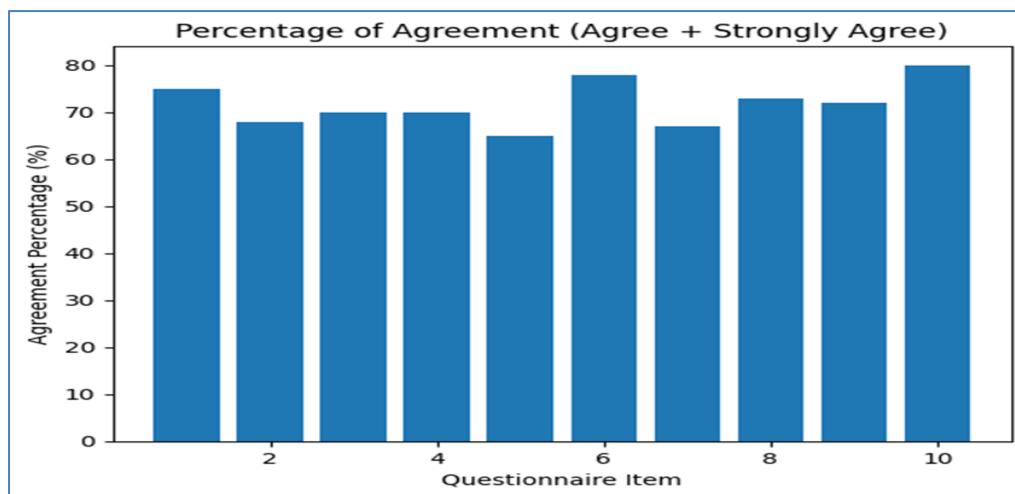
#### 4.2 Interpretation of Descriptive Results

As shown in Table 1, the **mean scores ranged from 3.80 to 4.30**, indicating generally positive student perceptions toward the **limited and purposeful use of Arabic** in EFL classrooms. The highest mean score was observed for Item 10 ( $M = 4.30$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ), with **80% of respondents** expressing agreement. This result reflects a strong consensus among students in favor of a balanced approach in which Arabic is used selectively rather than extensively.

Items related to **comprehension and instructional clarity** received high levels of agreement. For example, Item 1 (“Arabic helps understand difficult lessons”) recorded a mean score of **4.10** with **75% agreement**, while Item 3 (“Arabic is useful for grammar explanation”) and Item 9 (“Arabic helps follow classroom instructions”) both achieved mean scores of **4.00** with agreement levels above **70%**. These findings suggest that students perceive Arabic as an effective support tool for understanding complex linguistic content and classroom procedures. At the same time, students clearly expressed a preference for **English-dominant instruction**. Item 2 (“I prefer my teacher to use English most of the time”) yielded a mean score of **3.90**, with **68% agreement**, indicating that students value extensive exposure to English. This preference is further reinforced by Item 8 (“Arabic should be limited during speaking activities”), which recorded a mean score of **4.05** and **73% agreement**, highlighting students’ awareness of the importance of maximizing English use during communicative tasks.

Concerns about the **negative effects of excessive Arabic use** were also evident. Item 4 (“Too much Arabic reduces my opportunity to practice speaking English”) obtained a mean score of **3.95** with **70% agreement**, indicating that a substantial proportion of students believe overuse of Arabic may hinder their speaking practice and language development.

Items related to **affective factors**, such as anxiety reduction and confidence, showed comparatively lower mean scores, though they remained above the neutral midpoint. Item 5 (“Arabic reduces anxiety”) recorded a mean score of **3.80**, while Item 7 (“Arabic increases confidence”) achieved a mean score of **3.85**, with agreement levels of **65%** and **67%**, respectively. These results suggest that Arabic provides moderate emotional support, particularly for first-year students, but is not perceived as the primary factor influencing confidence or motivation.



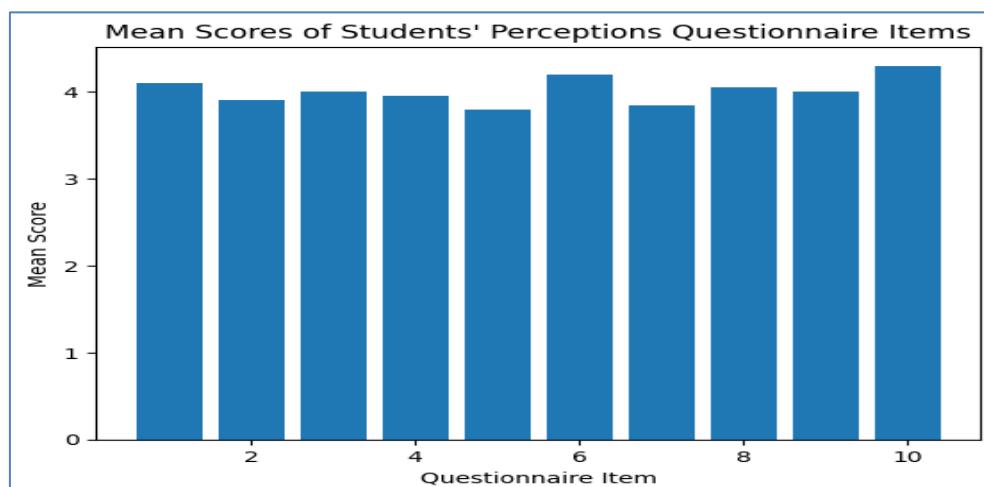
**Figure 1.** Mean Scores of Students' Perceptions Questionnaire Items

This figure presents the mean scores for the questionnaire items (Items 1–10). It can be observed that all mean values are above the neutral midpoint (3.00), ranging from **3.80 to 4.30**, which reflects an overall positive student attitude toward the limited and purposeful use of Arabic.

The highest mean score was recorded for **Item 10 (M = 4.30)**, indicating strong student support for the selective and well-considered use of Arabic in English language classrooms.

Items related to **comprehension, grammar explanation, and classroom instructions** (Items 1, 3, 6, and 9) showed relatively high mean scores, suggesting that students perceive Arabic as a useful instructional aid in understanding complex content.

Items associated with **affective factors**, such as anxiety reduction and confidence enhancement, recorded comparatively lower mean scores; however, these values remained above the neutral midpoint, indicating generally positive perceptions.



**Figure 2.** Percentage of Agreement (Agree + Strongly Agree).

This figure illustrates the percentages of agreement (Agree + Strongly Agree) for each questionnaire item.

The agreement percentages range from **65% to 80%** across the items. The highest level of agreement was observed for **Item 10 (80%)**, further confirming students' preference for the limited use of Arabic in English language classrooms.

High agreement percentages were also found for items related to **grammar explanation, classroom instructions, and limiting Arabic use during speaking activities**, highlighting students' awareness of the importance of maintaining English as the primary language of instruction.

Items related to **affective dimensions**, such as anxiety reduction and increased confidence, recorded relatively lower agreement percentages, suggesting that emotional support through Arabic is perceived as a secondary rather than a primary instructional factor.

### 4.3 Summary of Quantitative Findings

Overall, the descriptive analysis reveals three key patterns:

1. **Strong support for limited and purposeful use of Arabic**, particularly for comprehension, grammar explanation, and classroom instructions.
2. **Clear preference for English as the dominant classroom language**, especially during speaking and communicative activities.
3. **Awareness of the potential negative impact of excessive Arabic use** on opportunities for English practice.

These findings demonstrate that students favor a **principled bilingual approach**, in which Arabic functions as a supportive pedagogical tool rather than a substitute for English.

### 4.4 Analytical Scope and Limitations

The statistical analysis in this study is limited to descriptive measures. No inferential tests (e.g., tests of differences, correlation analysis, or regression analysis) were conducted. Consequently, the results describe observed trends within the sample but do not allow for statistical generalization or examination of relationships between variables. The findings should therefore be interpreted as exploratory and context-specific.

### Academic Paragraph Explaining the Results Table

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of students' responses to the ten questionnaire items measuring their perceptions of English language teachers' use of Arabic in EFL classrooms. The table reports the mean scores, standard deviations, and the percentages of students who agreed or strongly agreed with each statement. Overall, the mean scores ranged from 3.80 to 4.30, indicating generally positive attitudes toward the limited and purposeful use of Arabic in the classroom. The highest mean score was recorded for Item 10 ( $M = 4.30$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ), which reflects students' strong overall preference for limited and strategic use of Arabic in English classes. Similarly, high mean scores were observed for Item 6 ( $M = 4.20$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ) and Item 1 ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ), suggesting that most students believe Arabic should be used only when necessary and that it helps them understand difficult lessons. In contrast, relatively lower mean scores were found for Item 5 ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ ) and Item 7 ( $M = 3.85$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ), indicating moderate agreement regarding the role of Arabic in reducing anxiety and increasing confidence. In general, the results demonstrate a clear preference for an English-dominant classroom environment supported by selective and purposeful use of the mother tongue.

### Qualitative Themes from Interview Data

Theme 1: Arabic as a Support, Not a Replacement Students emphasized that Arabic should serve as a tool to aid English learning, not as a replacement.

Theme 2: English Proficiency for Speaking Skills Students showed a strong preference for English-only instruction during speaking activities.

Theme 3: Confidence and Comfort Some students reported feeling less anxious when instructors occasionally used Arabic, especially at the beginning of the academic year

Theme Code 1: General Attitudes Toward Teachers' Use of Arabic

1. How do you feel when your English teacher uses Arabic language inside the EFL classroom?  
A. The majority of students indicated that they feel at ease and supported when the teacher incorporates Arabic, particularly when the material becomes challenging. They believe that

Arabic facilitates a better comprehension of the lesson and enhances their ability to follow explanations.

B. Conversely, some students expressed a preference for English to be the primary language of instruction, suggesting that Arabic should be employed only when absolutely necessary, as excessive Arabic usage diminishes their exposure to English.

Theme Code 2: Situations Where Arabic Is Most Helpful

2. In your opinion, in which circumstances is the use of Arabic most beneficial during English lessons?

A. Students indicated that Arabic worked most beneficial in explaining complex grammatical concepts and challenging vocabulary that proved obstacles to straightforward comprehension in English.

B. Numerous students noted the utility of Arabic in clarifying classroom directives, examination rules, and procedures guidelines.

Theme Code 3: Arabic as an Instrument for Understanding and Explanations.

3. Could you provide an instance where Arabic facilitated your comprehension of a challenging English concept?

A. Students recounted instances wherein educators employed Arabic to demonstrate grammatical elements, including tenses or sentence construction, thereby facilitating immediate comprehension of the instructional material.

B. Certain students articulated that Arabic translations of abstract vocabulary facilitated more effective retention of meanings.

Theme Code 4: Detrimental Consequences of Overreliance on Arabic

4. Under what circumstances do you believe the use of Arabic should be avoided in English language instruction?

A. Numerous students expressed the belief that the utilization of Arabic during speaking exercises restricts their engagement with English.

B. Certain students indicated that excessive reliance on Arabic by instructors diminishes their efforts to comprehend English explanations.

Theme Code 5: The Influence of Arabic on English Practice

5. In your opinion, does the incorporation of Arabic impact your chances to practice spoken English? If so, how?

A. The majority of students believed that the frequent use of Arabic affects their opportunities to engage in English inside the classroom.

B. Some students elaborated that the consistent availability of Arabic leads students to depend on it, consequently reducing their attempts to articulate themselves in English.

Theme Code 6: Affective Influences (Anxiety and Confidence)

6. How does the use of Arabic in the classroom affect your confidence and anxiety when learning English?

A. Students said that using Arabic reduces their anxiety and makes them feel more confident, especially when they don't understand something in English.

B. Some students said that using too much Arabic makes them less motivated and less willing to try in English.

Theme Code 7: Preferred Language Balance

7. Do you prefer your teacher to use only English, only Arabic, or a mix of both? Why?

A. Most students preferred a mix of both languages, using English mainly and Arabic only for clarification.

B. A few students preferred instruction in English only, believing it would help them improve their speaking skills more quickly.

Theme Code 8: Arabic Use Over Time

8. Do you think Arabic should be used more at the beginning of the academic year and less later? Why or why not?

A. Many students thought Arabic should be used more at the beginning of the year to help new students adjust.

B. Students suggested that the use of Arabic should gradually decrease as their English proficiency improved.

Theme Code 9: Ideal Balance Between English and Arabic

9. What do you believe is the appropriate balance between English and Arabic for university-level English instruction?

A. Students suggested that English should constitute approximately 70–80% of the instructional time, with Arabic employed solely to clarify concepts that students find difficult to grasp.

B. Certain students underscored the importance of Arabic as a supplementary tool, rather than a substitute for English.

Theme Code 10: Pedagogical Recommendations

10. Do you have any recommendations regarding the effective integration of Arabic by instructors within English language classrooms?

A. Students suggested that instructors should initially provide explanations in English, resorting to Arabic only if comprehension remains elusive.

B. Students advised against the use of Arabic during speaking exercises, advocating for its primary application in the clarification of grammar and vocabulary.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

According to the results given from the questionnaire and the interview, first-year students at the Faculty of Languages, Elmergib University, generally agree on the limited and purposeful use of Arabic in EFL classrooms. The findings indicate that students perceive Arabic as a valuable supportive tool, particularly for explaining complex grammar and vocabulary and understanding classroom instructions. These results suggest that Arabic plays an important role in facilitating comprehension and reducing misunderstanding, especially among learners at the early stages of university study.

However, the findings also demonstrate that students are highly aware of the negative effect of the overuse of the Arabic language inside English classes. A large number of respondents agreed that frequent use of Arabic reduces their opportunities to practice speaking English and limits their exposure to the target language. This indicates a clear concern that overreliance on the mother tongue may hinder the development of oral proficiency and communicative competence. Students therefore do not support uncontrolled or frequent use of Arabic but rather prefer it to be used selectively and purposefully.

In addition, the results show that Arabic has a significant impact on students' affective factors, such as anxiety and confidence. Many students reported that brief use of Arabic reduces anxiety and increases confidence, particularly when they face difficulties in understanding lesson content. This suggests that Arabic contributes to creating a more supportive and less stressful classroom environment, which is especially important for first-year students adjusting to university-level English instruction.

Overall, the study reveals a balanced and principled learning among the participants. Students value Arabic as a supportive pedagogical tool but strongly prefer English to remain the dominant classroom language. Their responses indicate a clear preference for an English-dominant classroom environment supported by limited and purposeful use of Arabic when necessary.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

### 1. Recommendations for Institutional Policy

- The Faculty of Languages at Elmergib University is strongly encouraged to develop clear guidelines regarding the use of the mother tongue in EFL classrooms, emphasizing English as the main language of instruction while allowing strategic use of Arabic when necessary.
- The faculty should support professional development programs that help teachers understand how to use Arabic effectively as a pedagogical tool rather than as a substitute for English.
- Curriculum designers are encouraged to review course objectives to ensure that they promote maximum meaningful exposure to English, particularly in speaking and listening activities.

### 2. Recommendations for Instructors and Course Designers

- Teachers should adopt an English-first policy, using Arabic only when students fail to understand explanations in English.
- Arabic should be used mainly for grammar explanation, clarification of difficult vocabulary, and task instructions, and avoided during communicative and speaking activities.
- Instructors are encouraged to increase opportunities for student interaction in English, such as pair work, group discussions, and presentations.
- Teachers should clearly explain to students why and when Arabic is used, in order to raise students' awareness of the pedagogical purpose of language switching.

### 3. Recommendations for Student Academic Support

- Students should be encouraged to take more responsibility for practicing English both inside and outside the classroom.
- The university may offer support workshops focusing on speaking skills and confidence-building activities for first-year students.
- Students should be guided to develop strategies to cope with difficulty in English without immediately relying on Arabic, such as using paraphrasing, asking for clarification in English, and peer support.

## 7. Concluding Statement

This study explored first-year university students' perceptions of English language instructors' use of Arabic in EFL classrooms. The findings indicate that students generally hold positive attitudes toward the **limited and purposeful use of Arabic**, particularly as a supportive tool for enhancing comprehension, explaining complex grammatical concepts, and clarifying classroom instructions. At the same time, students clearly expressed a strong preference for **English-dominant instruction**, especially during speaking and communicative activities, reflecting their awareness of the importance of sustained exposure to the target language.

The results further suggest that while Arabic contributes to reducing anxiety and increasing confidence, its affective role is perceived as **moderate rather than central** to the learning process. Students appear to favor a balanced instructional approach in which Arabic is employed selectively and strategically, rather than extensively, to avoid limiting opportunities for English practice.

Given the descriptive nature of the analysis and the relatively small sample size, the findings should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, the study provides valuable insights into learners' expectations regarding classroom language use and highlights the importance of adopting a **principled bilingual approach** in EFL contexts. Future research is encouraged to

employ larger samples, incorporate inferential statistical analyses, and examine the perspectives of instructors to further validate and extend the present findings.

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### Appendix

#### 1. Table A1: Students' Perceptions Questionnaire Items

Item	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	Using Arabic helps me understand difficult English lessons.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2	I prefer my teacher to use English most of the time in class.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3	Arabic is useful for explaining complex grammar rules.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4	Too much Arabic use reduces my opportunity to practice speaking English.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5	Using Arabic reduces my anxiety in English classes.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6	Arabic should be used only when students do not understand in English.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
7	I feel more confident when the teacher explains in Arabic.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
8	Arabic use should be limited during speaking activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
9	The use of Arabic helps me follow classroom instructions better.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
10	Overall, I prefer limited and purposeful use of Arabic in English classes.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

#### 2. Table B1: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

No.	Interview Question
1	How do you feel about your English teacher using Arabic in class?
2	In which situations do you think using Arabic is most helpful in English lessons?
3	Can you give an example of a time when Arabic helped you understand a difficult point in English?
4	In which situations do you think Arabic should not be used in English classes?
5	Do you think using Arabic affects your opportunity to practice speaking English? How?
6	How does the use of Arabic in class affect your confidence and anxiety when learning English?
7	Do you prefer your teacher to use English only, Arabic only, or a mixture of both? Why?
8	Do you think Arabic should be used more at the beginning of the academic year and less later? Why or why not?
9	What balance between English and Arabic do you think is best for learning English at university?
10	Do you have any suggestions for how teachers should use Arabic effectively in English classes?

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#### Compliance with ethical standards

##### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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