

Language Teaching and Educational Research

e-ISSN 2636-8102

Volume 5, Issue 1 | 2022

Mother Tongue Use in EFL Grammar Classroom: Attitudes and Impact

Marwan Saeed Saif Moqbel

To cite this article:

Moqbel, M. (2022). Mother tongue use in EFL grammar classroom: Attitudes and impact. *Language Teaching and Educational Research (LATER)*, 5(1), 36-58. <https://doi.org/10.35207/later.1115937>

[View the journal website](#)



[Submit your article to LATER](#)



[Contact editor](#)



Copyright (c) 2022 LATER and the author(s). This is an open access article under CC BY-NC-ND license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)

Research Article

Mother tongue use in EFL grammar classroom: Attitudes and impact

Marwan Saeed Saif Moqbel  ORCID

Associate Professor, Center for Languages & Translation, Ibb University, YEMEN

Abstract

The use of mother tongue (MT) in EFL classrooms has been a controversial topic among researchers and teachers. While some claim that MT should not be used in EFL classrooms, others argue that MT can contribute to English language learning. The present study was conducted to investigate the use of Arabic as a mother tongue in EFL grammar classroom in the Centre for Languages at Ibb University in Yemen with a view to identifying when EFL learners favour the use of MT and the impact of that on learners and their English learning. Data were collected from EFL intermediate learners through a questionnaire administered to (51) learners and focus group discussions in which 22 learners participated. The collected data were analysed quantitatively using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (t -test) and qualitatively. The findings showed that although the EFL learners favoured English as a medium of instruction, they showed positive attitudes towards a judicious use of their MT for some functions. Regarding the impact of MT use, the findings revealed that the EFL learners believe that the use of their MT in EFL grammar classroom is necessary due to the vital role that it can play in facilitating and enhancing their language learning as well as their cognitive ability. Statistically significant differences were not found in the mean scores of responses according to gender. Based on the findings, some recommendations to be considered to ensure effective use of MT in EFL classroom and suggestions for further research were given.

Received

12 May 2022

Accepted

30 May 2022

Keywords

mother tongue

L2

EFL learners

EFL grammar classroom

Suggested APA citation: Moqbel, M. (2022). Mother tongue use in EFL grammar classroom: Attitudes and impact. *Language Teaching and Educational Research (LATER)*, 5(1), 36-58. <https://doi.org/10.35207/later.1115937>

Note(s) from the author(s)

» None

Author(s)' statements on ethics and conflict of interest

Ethics statement: I hereby declare that research/publication ethics and citing principles have been considered in all the stages of the study. I take full responsibility for the content of the paper in case of dispute.

Statement of interest: I have no conflict of interest to declare.

Funding: None

Acknowledgements: None

Introduction

The use of the mother language (MT/L1) in foreign/second language (FL/SL) teaching has been a controversial issue amongst language teachers and researchers since a long time (Alsied, 2018). Tracing back the use of MT in language classroom will take us to the early method of FL/SL learning, namely grammar-translation method, which emphasized the use of the native language as a medium of instruction and translating the reading texts to students' MT. However, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Direct Method appeared as a reaction to the grammar-translation method in terms of emphasizing learning a foreign language in the same way as a child acquires his MT and preventing the use of L1 in foreign language teaching and learning (Cook, 2001).

In the early 1970s, due to the change in the view of the functions of language, the Communicative Approach emerged. Although this approach emphasized the use of the target language as a vehicle to learn it and for classroom communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), judicious use of L1 is accepted where feasible in communicative language teaching (Al Asmari, 2014; Knežević, 2019; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Additionally, during the last few decades, the use of MT in L2 classroom started to be considered and a body of literature on the use and the role of MT in FL classroom has grown (Alshammari, 2011), indicating a shift in approach to teaching foreign languages using ML in EFL classroom. In fact, a lot of researchers (e.g., Akkaya & Atar, 2015; Çelik & Aydın, 2018; Cook, 2001; Kaymakamoğlu & Yiltanlılar, 2019; Kaynaradağ, 2016; Mohebbi & Alavi, 2014; Sali, 2014; Sert, 2005; Tang, 2002) and teachers have recently argued in favour of systematic and judicious use of MT in EFL classroom.

During the last three years, believing in the important role that MT can play in enhancing learning EFL and responding to the learners' desire, the researcher, as an English teacher at the Centre for Languages and Translation - Ibb University, started to think seriously about using ML in EFL grammar classroom to enhance learners English learning. At the beginning, the teacher started using ML to explain the meaning of difficult words or grammar rules and concepts or to give learners instructions on how to carry out classroom activities, especially when he gets some hints from learners' faces about their confusion.

The teacher believes that the actual role of grammar rules is to help learners to speak, write, and comprehend texts, so, in his EFL grammar classroom; he usually gets EFL learners to focus on the form and then ask them to reflect their understanding of the forms by producing their own examples. However, when the teacher asks the learners to give their own examples, only few learners respond even when the teacher points some learners to give their own examples. An idea that triggered to the teacher's mind one day was to create scenarios in MT (Arabic) and to ask the learners to reflect them in English. Fortunately, the teacher found that such a technique works well; the EFL learners use the scenarios created by the teacher to speak in English. In general, the idea behind the current investigation has its underpinning in previous research (e.g., Ellis, 2005; Ellis, 2006; Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2001; Trendak, 2015).

To identify the attitudes of the EFL learners towards MT use and the impact of the approach the teacher followed in using MT in EFL grammar classroom, the current study was conducted. While the study represents an extension of similar studies conducted in the Arab

context (e.g., Ahmad, Radzuan, & Hussain, 2018; Al Asmari, 2014; Al-balawi, 2016; Ālfaḥān, 2018; Almohaimeed & Almurshed, 2018; Alshehri, 2017; Alsied, 2018; Galali & Cinkara, 2017), it stands by itself as the solo study in the local context.

Research questions

To achieve the objectives of the study, the study addressed the following questions:

1. What are EFL learners' attitudes towards using MT in EFL grammar classroom?
2. What is the impact of using MT in EFL grammar classroom on EFL learners and their language learning?
3. Are there statistically significant differences in the means of EFL learners' responses in relation to their attitudes towards MT use and their perceptions of the impact of MT use in EFL grammar classroom according to *gender*?

Significance of the study

The present study adds to the growing body of literature related to the use of MT in EFL classroom. It contributes to the long-standing debate among ELT educationalists and researchers regarding the use of monolingual and bilingual approaches in EFL classroom by investigating the attitudes of EFL learners towards MT use and their perceptions of the impact of MT use in EFL grammar classroom. In this, the study provides insights for EFL teachers on how and when they can use MT in EFL classroom. Besides, the study highlights a particular way of using MT in EFL grammar classroom, which can be adopted by EFL teachers to encourage their EFL learners to speak in English. Moreover, supporting the positive evidence of using MT in EFL classroom, the study may motivate policy makers and theorists to reconsider the status of MT in EFL learning.

Literature Review

The current study stems from some theories that provide evidence of a facilitative effect of MT in the target language classroom. It builds on Vygotsky's cognitive and sociocultural theory, which highlights the role of MT in SL classroom (Wu, 2018). Vygotsky's cognitive and sociocultural theory is also about Zone of Proximal Development, which individuals can develop cognitively with the help of other people. In language learning context, learners' MT can be used by teachers to scaffold learners in learning L2 (Wu, 2018). Besides, from the perspective of sociocultural theory, it can be stated that MT helps learners involved in interaction to establish "a shared perspective on the task at hand, which is an important element of language learning within a task-based situation" (Dailey-O'cain & Liebscher, 2009, p. 136). It can also be viewed in terms of the teachers' anticipation of some difficulties learners are likely to encounter with some concepts or points and the teacher' use of the MT as a device to control those difficulties which are beyond the learners' competence to allow them to focus on the elements within their ability (Dailey-O'cain & Liebscher, 2009).

The study is also based on Cummins' linguistic interdependence hypothesis (1978, 1981, 1991). In general, according to Cummins' hypothesis, L1 and L2 are not independent of each other; rather, they are linked in the mind and operate through the same processing system. Cummins went further, suggesting that learners' competence in L2 partly depends on their competence in L1 (Wu, 2018). Due to the common underlying competence between L1

and L2, it can be stated that competence in L1 can support L2 learning and that the transfer of cognitive, academic or some skills across languages can be possible (Wu, 2018). In addition, the study takes its impetus from the theory of codeswitching in naturalistic environments. This involves teacher codeswitching to L1 in the classroom to enhance students' learning without causing detriments to the development of their linguistics skills in L2 (Macaro, 2009). Macaro (2009) added that the 'optimal use' of codeswitching to L1 can enhance SL acquisition/proficiency better than using L2 solely.

Moreover, the study stems from research on SL acquisition, which highlighted the interaction of the components of L1 and L2 and that the development and use of L2 is affected by the already-existing L1 (Cook, 2003). According to Meisel (2011), the initial linguistic knowledge of L2 learners is shaped and constrained by their previously acquired grammatical competence. Furthermore, the study is stimulated by previous debate for using MT in L2 teaching/learning (e.g. Auerbach, 1993; Afzal, 2013; Rosales & Gonzalez, 2020; Stapa & Majid, 2012).

In relation to teaching a target language, two approaches have been identified: the monolingual approach and the bilingual approach. The monolingual approach involves using the target language solely in teaching to enhance learning it (Alsied, 2018; Imani & Farahian, 2016; Tang, 2002) through promoting extensive L2 input and interaction among learners (Rosales & Gonzalez, 2020). In contrast, the bilingual approach involves using learners' MT as a learning aid when teaching the target language (Burat & Çavuşoğlu, 2020; Kaymakamoğlu & Yıltanlılar, 2019; Rosales & Gonzalez, 2020).

Each approach has its own supporters who argue for its advantages. The monolingual approach to EFL/ESL instruction is "by no means the taken-for-granted norm everywhere in the world" (Auerbach, 1993, p. 10). This may be due to the belief that teaching target languages should be based on the characteristics of L1 acquisition as many teaching methods (e.g., the Direct Method, the Oral Approach, the Audio-lingual Method, Total Physical Response) have claimed since the Reform Movement (Cook, 2001). The supporters of this approach (e.g., Krashen, 1981; Kellerman, 1995; Ellis, 2005) argued that learners should be exposed only to the target language to enhance it effectively (Burat & Çavuşoğlu, 2020) and that using ML in a target language classroom may have a negative influence on the development of the learners' target language and the autonomy of learners during target language learning (Kaymakamoğlu & Yıltanlılar, 2019).

However, due to denying the rights of learners to draw on their language resources and strengths and believing in the importance of using the learners' MT in the target language classroom, the monolingual approach has been rejected (Auerbach, 1993) and the bilingual approach to teaching target languages has appeared. The supporters of this approach (e.g., Vygotsky, 1962; Atkinson, 1987; Cook, 2001; Alptekin, 2002; Tang, 2002; Nation, 2003; Afzal, 2013; Mahmutoğlu & Kicir, 2013) believed that using learners' MT is necessary for learning the target language (Burat & Çavuşoğlu, 2020; Kaymakamoğlu & Yıltanlılar 2019) as that provides scaffolding for learners' learning process (Burat & Çavuşoğlu, 2020). Arguing against the monolingual approach, Cook (2007) stated that this approach neglects learners' culture, which leads to the danger of neglecting their identity as well. Similarly, Alptekin (2002) argued that the strict adherence to native speaker norms within the culture of the target language seems to be no longer valid, particularly when it comes to English language teaching methodology.

During the last few decades, a lot of research was conducted in relation to the use of MT/L1 in L2 classroom. In the light of the previous studies, it can be stated that learner's MT has various functions and uses in EFL classrooms: explaining complex grammar points causing trouble to learners (Al-balawi, 2016; Ālfārĥān, 2018; Auerbach, 1993; Burat & Çavuşođlu, 2020; Cook, 2001; Edstrom, 2006; Mirza, Mahmus, & Jabbar, 2012; Mohebbi & Alavi, 2014; Neokleous, 2016; Ngoc, 2018; Paker & Karaađaç, 2015; Sharma, 2006; Tang, 2002); explaining and checking meanings of words, sentences, complex concepts and ideas (Al-balawi, 2016; Ālfārĥān, 2018; Alshehri, 2017; Çelik & Aydın, 2018; Cook, 2001; Mirza et al., 2012; Mohebbi & Alavi, 2014; Neokleous, 2016; Ngoc, 2018; Rosales & Gonzalez, 2020; Paker & Karaađaç, 2015; Sharma, 2006; Tang, 2002); checking for comprehension (Akkaya & Atar, 2015; Al-balawi, 2016; Ālfārĥān, 2018; Atkinson, 1987; Auerbach, 1993; Çelik & Aydın, 2018; Edstrom, 2006; Kaymakamođlu & Yıltanlılar, 2019; Kaynardađ, 2016; Neokleous, 2016; Sharma, 2006); giving instructions (Al-balawi, 2016; Atkinson, 1987; Auerbach, 1993; Çelik & Aydın, 2018; Cook, 2001; Mirza et al., 2012; Neokleous, 2016; Rosales & Gonzalez, 2020; Sharma, 2006; Tang, 2002); clarification purposes (Afzal, 2013; Alshammari, 2011); language analysis (Atkinson, 1987; Auerbach, 1993; Kaynardađ, 2016); providing feedback and explaining errors (Akkaya & Atar, 2015; Auerbach, 1993; Mohebbi & Alavi, 2014; Ngoc, 2018); communicating content to learners (Sali, 2014); establishing connections between the grammar of MT and that of L2 (Neokleous, 2016); discussing cross-cultural issues (Auerbach, 1993; Ngoc, 2018); classroom management (Akkaya & Atar, 2015; Alshehri, 2017; Auerbach, 1993; Çelik & Aydın, 2018; Cook, 2001; Edstrom, 2006; Ngoc, 2018); discussing classroom methodology at early levels (Atkinson, 1987); making humor to make learners relaxed and motivated (Akkaya & Atar, 2015; Al-balawi, 2016; Burat & Çavuşođlu, 2020; Ngoc, 2018); building and developing rapport with learners (Alshehri, 2017; Mohebbi & Alavi, 2014; Paker & Karaađaç, 2015; Sali, 2014; Sert, 2005); as part of students' collaborative learning and individual strategy when conducting activities; translation (Neokleous, 2016); communicating with learners outside the class; talking about the exam and about administrative information (Paker & Karaađaç, 2015); and testing (Atkinson, 1987; Cook, 2001). According to Atkinson (1987), using learners' MT in testing can maximize the validity and reliability of many types of tests and constrain the complexity of the tests as Cook (2001) claimed.

In relation to attitudes, the literature is full of studies that highlighted the positive attitudes towards the use of MT in EFL classroom. For instance, in Arab context, there are several studies that indicated that EFL teachers, EFL students, or both teachers and students have positive attitudes towards the use of MT in EFL classroom (e.g., Ahmad et al., 2018; Al Asmari, 2014; Al-balawi, 2016; Ālfārĥān, 2018; Almohaimeed & Almurshed, 2018; Alshammari, 2011; Alshehri, 2017; Alsied, 2018; Galali & Cinkara, 2017). In spite of this, the results of these studies showed that teachers believe that English should be the main language used in the classroom and that MT can be used to serve learning functions when necessary, suggesting that the use of MT in EFL classroom should be limited, judicious and systematic.

The positive attitudes of teachers and learners towards the judicious use of MT in English classroom have also been reported in various non-Arabic contexts, including Chinese (e.g., Tang, 2002; Wang, 2005), Turkish (e.g., Kayaođlu, 2012; Mahmutođlu & Kicir, 2013; Burat & Çavuşođlu, 2020), Persian (e.g., Hashemi, 2013; Sa'd & Qadermazi, 2015), Nepali (e.g., Sharma, 2006), Indonesian (e.g., Pardede, 2018), Bengali (e.g., Mirza et al., 2012; Obaidullah,

2016), Spanish (e.g., Alvarez, 2014), Greek (e.g., Neokleous, 2016), and Japanese (e.g., Serag, 2017)

Regarding the benefits of using MT in the target language classroom, literature highlighted the importance of using learners' MT to enhance the target language learning. In general, and apart from pure language leaning benefits, MT can play a "supportive and facilitating role in the classroom" (Tang, 2002, p. 39) in terms of managing and saving time when establishing tasks (Ahmad et al., 2018; Atkinson, 1987; Kaymakamoğlu & Yıltanlılar, 2019; Kaynardağ, 2016; Mansory, 2019; Sali, 2014; Sharma, 2006), establishing positive classroom atmosphere (Kaymakamoğlu & Yıltanlılar, 2019; Neokleous, 2016), giving clear instructions, especially in lower levels (Burat & Çavuşoğlu, 2020; Kaymakamoğlu & Yıltanlılar, 2019; Kaynardağ, 2016; Sali, 2014), following administrative requirements (Kaymakamoğlu & Yıltanlılar, 2019), and managing discipline (Ahmad et al., 2018; Sali, 2014). Additionally, using MT in EFL classroom makes learners feel at ease and comfortable, decreases their foreign language anxiety level, lessens their cognitive and affective burden (Ahmad et al., 2018; Albeshir, Hussain, & Farid, 2018; Ālfārĥān, 2018; Çelik & Aydın, 2018; Kaymakamoğlu & Yıltanlılar, 2019; Sali, 2014; Sharma, 2006), makes them more receptive (Ālfārĥān, 2018), increases their confidence, and enhances their rapport with their teachers (Çelik & Aydın, 2018). According to Alvarez (2014), MT plays an important role in English learning of students in terms of fostering their affective, motivational, cognitive, and attitudinal aspects.

In terms of benefits related to language learning, generally speaking, the use of learners' MT can be a needful and pedagogical aid in the teaching and learning of English as Afzal (2013) indicated. Its use in EFL classroom properly and judiciously can support the development of learners' target language in a positive way (Kaymakamoğlu & Yıltanlılar, 2019). It can also speed up the target language learning process in a natural way (Albeshir et al., 2018). Research (e.g., Ahmad et al., 2018; Al-balawi, 2016; Alshammari, 2011; Cook, 2001; Kaymakamoğlu & Yıltanlılar, 2019; Sali, 2014; Sert, 2005; Tang, 2002) showed that the occasional and judicious use of L1 in EFL classroom by both learners and teachers can enhance learners' comprehension and learning of L2. Sali (2014) argued that using MT can be effective to check learner comprehension as it is much easier for the learners to understand and for teachers to monitor the learners as it strengthens the seriousness of the messages that teachers want to convey.

Using MT in EFL classroom can be helpful in terms of clarifying ambiguous grammar rules and structures and abstract words, making them more understandable and meaningful for EFL learners (Adil, 2019; Burat & Çavuşoğlu, 2020; Çelik & Aydın, 2018; Kaymakamoğlu & Yıltanlılar, 2019; Tang, 2002), improving metalinguistic awareness for complex grammatical sentences and vocabulary in L2, helping learners make use of their knowledge of MT in L2 (Kaynardağ, 2016) and understand the meaning of new and abstract words more better (Adil, 2019; Almohaimeed & Almurshed, 2018; Kaynardağ, 2016), making rather complex aspects of English more straightforward for learners (Sali, 2014), and helping EFL learners even those of advanced level retain vocabulary (McCann, 2005). Besides, using MT to compare English grammar with the grammar of the learners' MT can be very positive, especially with low and beginning level students (Cole, 1998; Damra & Qudah, 2012). According to Damra and Qudah (2012) and Galali and Cinkara (2017), raising learners awareness and knowledge of similarities and differences between the grammar and cultures of MT and L2 can be beneficial and may lead to more effective learning of L2. This can also help EFL learners avoid mistakes by

breaking erroneous MT transfer habits (Neokleous, 2016) and may improve their accuracy of translations (Afzal, 2013). In support for the use of MT in L2 classroom, the findings of the experiments conducted by Miles (2004) showed that the use of Japanese in English classroom can help students learn and improve.

Although there is a huge body of literature that highlights the importance of using learners' MT in the target language classroom, there are still some questions regarding the extent MT should be used, the purposes and functions it should be used for, when and how it should be used without causing harm to learners' learning of the target language, the skill and aspect of the language, the level of the learners, and who should use it in the classroom. In fact, educationalists warned about the overuse of the ML in the target language classroom as that may lead learners to feel that they cannot really understand any item in the target language until it is translated and that they can speak in the classroom in their MT even when they can use the target language (Atkinson, 1987). Similarly, Nation (2003), Mirza et al. (2012), Neokleous (2016), Kaymakamoğlu and Yıltanlılar (2019) and Rosales and Gonzalez (2020) stressed that MT should not be overused as that can make learners dependent on it, which may negatively affect their target language acquisition and learning (Kaymakamoğlu & Yıltanlılar, 2019; Mirza et al., 2012) due to reducing the amount of learners' exposure to comprehensible and meaningful input and output in their learning process (Mirza et al., 2012; Rosales & Gonzalez, 2020), which can negatively affect the development of the learners' communicative skills in the target language, especially if the primary concern is the communicative skills development (Adil, 2019; Kaymakamoğlu & Yıltanlılar, 2019; Kaynar dağ (2016). In agreement with these arguments, the researcher thinks that MT can be useful in EFL classroom, yet it should be used when needed. According to Nation (2003) and Mohebbi and Alavi (2014), a balanced approach that considers the role of the MT in L2 learning context and ensures the importance of maximizing the use of the target language in the classroom should be adopted.

Another important factor that should be considered when using MT in L2 classroom is the proficiency and level of learners (Miles, 2004; Mirza et al., 2012; Paker & Karaağaç, 2015; Serag, 2017). In other words, there is a correlation between learners' level and their desire to use their MT in English classroom as Pardede (2018) indicated. Research (e.g., Adil, 2019; Almohaimeed & Almurshed, 2018; Alzamil, 2019; Auerbach, 1993; Cole, 1998; Kaymakamoğlu & Yıltanlılar, 2019; Mahmutoğlu & Kicir, 2013; Ngoc, 2018; Pardede, 2018; Sali, 2014) highlighted this point, indicating generally that while EFL learners and teachers agree that using MT in EFL classroom is useful at beginning and low levels and to some extent at intermediate level as learners at these levels have little knowledge of the target language, they prefer the use of English at advanced level because they are competent enough to understand meanings in English. In brief, the more advanced level of learners, the more negative attitudes EFL learners and teachers may have towards the use of their MT in EFL classroom and vice versa.

The language aspects or skills should also be considered when thinking about the use of MT in L2 classroom (Paker & Karaağaç; Sali, 2014). Supporting the bilingual approach, Cook (2001) claimed that learners can learn grammar and vocabulary more effectively by using their L1. Similarly, Çelik and Aydın (2018) stated that "cross-lingual references and code-switching" can serve communicative purposes while dealing with grammatical aspects in EFL classroom (p. 8).

In this vein, the findings of some previous studies, including experimental ones (e.g., Tang, 2002; Paradowski, 2007; Damra & Qudah, 2012; Sali, 2014; Sa'd & Qadermazi, 2015; Al-balawi, 2016; Imani & Farahian, 2016; Galali & Cinkara, 2017; Ahmad et al., 2018; Almohaimeed & Almurshed, 2018; Kaymakamoğlu & Yıltanlılar, 2019; Knežević, 2019) indicated that teachers and learners found using MT in EFL classroom beneficial when learning new vocabularies and explaining grammatical structures, especially the difficult ones. Actually, the need for using MT in EFL grammar classroom emerges from the fact that teaching grammar is so complex and that it is sometimes so difficult to make grammar points comprehensible through L2, which makes it difficult for EFL learners, especially at lower level, to comprehend unless MT is used (Edstrom, 2006; Miles, 2004).

Regarding the role of MT in EFL reading classroom, the findings of the experimental study of Nayeri (2015) indicated that schema activation in L1 leads to improving Iranian high school students' reading comprehension ability in English. Similarly, the results of Imani and Farahian (2016) revealed that lecturers believe that the use of MT has a facilitating role and helps improve EFL learners' reading comprehension. In relation to EFL reading classroom, Paker and Karaağaç (2015) showed that the teachers used MT in EFL writing classes to explain how to identify and write topic and supporting sentences, paragraphs, thesis statements, types of essays, and to give feedback about their writing; which helped students to improve their writing. Likewise, the findings of Stapa and Majid (2012) revealed that the use of L1 in L2 writing with low level proficiency ESL learners can help them generate ideas and produce better quality essays.

In relation to speaking and listening activities, the use of MT is not usually recommended. Cole (1998) argued that using MT is considered inappropriate and unjustifiable unless difficult instructions are required or there are cultural content that is vital to comprehension. Similarly, Mansory (2019) revealed that EFL students have negative attitudes towards speaking in L1 during group and pair work in EFL classroom.

According to Cook (2001), there are some factors that should be considered when thinking about using learners' MT in the target language classroom. The first factor is 'efficiency,' which involves asking if something can be done more effectively through the MT. The second factor is 'learning,' whether the use of MT alongside the target language can be helpful for learning the target language. The third factor is 'naturalness,' whether the learners feel more comfortable about some functions and topics in their MT rather than the target language. The fourth factor is 'external relevance,' whether the use of both languages can help learners master specific uses of the target language and use in real-life situations.

Methodology

The present study is descriptive. It adopted a mixed-method approach whereby both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. The quantitative part is reflected in the responses to the three-point Likert items of the questionnaires, while the qualitative part is reflected in the responses to the points involved in the questions used to direct the focus group discussions (FGDs). Using the case study method and the teacher-as-researcher method, the researcher was able to investigate the attitudes of EFL students towards using MT and their perceptions of the impact of using their MT in EFL grammar classroom in depth and in real context.

Participants

The participants in the current study were (51) intermediate EFL learners (males and females) who joined the Centre for Languages and Translation, Ibb University. Most of the learners were secondary school graduates, except five of them who were university graduates. They joined the centre to improve their proficiency in English. To get a diploma in English (intermediate level), the learners have to study English for two semesters. In each semester, they have to take four English courses, namely Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Grammar. Each course is of 12 classes, each class of two hours.

Instruments

In the light of literature – mainly Alshammari (2011), Kayaoğlu (2012), Hashemi (2013), Alvarez (2014), Galali and Cinkara (2017), Serag (2017), Alsied (2018), and Burat and Çavuşoğlu (2020) – and the comments of referees, the researcher developed a questionnaire and a focus group discussion to collect data for this study. The questionnaire encompassed two sections: the first section (12 three-point Likert items) aimed at identifying the learners' opinions about when MT should be used, while the second section (13 three-point Likert items) aimed at identifying the impact of using MT in EFL grammar classroom on EFL learners and their English learning. Regarding the FGDs, they were used to collect more data with a view to achieving the study objective and answering its questions. Using the FGDs, the researcher could probe deep into the learners' minds in order to improve a better understanding of when and how teachers should use MT in EFL classroom and the impact of the approach the teacher followed in using MT in EFL grammar classroom on the learners and their English learning.

The content and the face validity of the items of the instruments were first verified through giving them to two colleagues. Then, they were translated into the respondents' MT and the translated versions were checked and edited for accuracy through the suggestions of one more expert. Besides, the instruments were piloted to two respondents to identify any ambiguities or problems with the items of the instruments. To estimate the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire and to measure its reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated. The values of alpha coefficient were (0.86) for the entire questionnaire, (0.76) for the first section, and (0.80) for the second section of the questionnaire, indicating good levels of reliability.

Procedures

During the academic year 2020-2021, the teacher taught two English grammar courses for two groups of intermediate EFL learners at the Centre for Languages and Translation, Ibb University. As the level of the learners is intermediate, the teacher used their MT judiciously and systematically during the EFL grammar classes for specific functions with a view to encouraging them to speak in English and enhancing their learning of English grammar.

To identify the attitudes of the EFL learners towards MT use in EFL grammar classroom and the impact of the approach the teacher followed in this regard, the researcher collected data using a questionnaire of two sections and FGDs. The first section of the questionnaire was administered to (51) learners (20 males and 31 females) who were present in the first class of the second semester to identify their opinions about when their MT should be used, while the

second section was administered to (48) learners (20 males and 28 females) who were present in the last class of the course; i.e., after teaching the course to identify their perceptions of the impact of MT use in EFL grammar classroom.

For the FGDs, the researcher formed four WhatsApp groups of five to six learners, two for males and two for females to discuss the six questions used to direct the FGDs. The researcher posed the questions one by one, giving the participants enough time to discuss the point of each question. The researcher acted as a moderator for the discussions. To ensure good communication with the participants, the FGDs were conducted in learners' MT, yet English was used during the discussions to some extent.

Data analysis

Both the qualitative and quantitative methods were used to analyze the data collected. The data collected via the FGDs were analyzed qualitatively. The data collected via the questionnaire were computed and analyzed using SPSS for Windows (version 20). The researcher calculated the descriptive statistics for each item of the questionnaire. Besides, the researcher used *t*-test to identify whether there are statistically significant differences in responses of the respondents according to *gender*.

For statistical analysis, three distinct levels (high, medium, and low) were created to describe the means of respondents' estimation of their attitudes towards using MT in EFL grammar classroom and the impact of using MT on them and their learning of English:

- from 1.00 to 1.66 indicates a low-value mean,
- from 1.67 to 2.33 indicates a medium-value mean, and
- from 2.34 to 3.00 indicates a high-value mean.

This categorization was calculated by identifying the difference between the high value in the Likert scale (i.e., 3.00) and the low value (i.e., 1:00) and then dividing the figure by the number of levels (i.e., 3) to get (0.66).

Findings and Discussion

Descriptive analysis

RQ #1: What are EFL learners' attitudes towards using MT in EFL grammar classroom?

To answer the first question; i.e., to identify the EFL learners' opinions about when MT should be used in EFL grammar classroom, the researcher calculated the means, the standard deviations, and the percentages for each item of the first section of the questionnaire and arranged them in descending order as shown in Table (1).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the items sorted in a descending order

#	Item	Descriptive Statistics			Estimation
		M	SD	%	
5	Using MT to explain difficult English grammar rules.	2.90	0.31	96.52	high
10	Using MT to clarify doubts about understanding some	2.88	0.33	95.82	high

	English grammar rules and concepts.				
4	Making use of MT in English grammar classroom when necessary.	2.85	0.36	95.13	high
7	Using MT to explain new and difficult English vocabulary items.	2.83	0.48	94.43	high
1	Using MT to explain difficult concepts or ideas.	2.81	0.53	93.83	high
8	Using MT to explain the differences and similarities between Arabic and English grammar rules when teaching English grammar.	2.79	0.50	93.05	high
3	Using English as a medium of instruction in English grammar classroom.	2.54	0.71	84.71	high
12	Using MT to express my ideas and feelings that I cannot explain in English.	2.40	0.82	79.85	high
9	Using MT to explain how to carry out classroom activities.	2.38	0.79	79.16	high
2	MT should never be used when teaching English grammar.	2.35	0.73	78.47	high
6	Using MT to establish rapport with students: making jokes, showing concern to the students, and showing empathy.	2.25	0.81	75.00	medium
11	Asking the teacher questions in MT.	1.81	0.82	60.41	medium

Note: Scoring of the negative item, namely Item No. (2) was reversed so that a high score reflected a more positive attitude towards MT use.

As data in Table 1 indicates, the average of items ranged from (1.81) to (2.90) with corresponding percentages from (60.41%) to (96.52%), indicating a high level of agreement among the respondents on when MT should be used in EFL grammar classroom. Similar to the findings of some previous studies (e.g., Afzal, 2013; Almohaimed & Almurshed, 2018; Galali & Cinkara, 2017; Hashemi, 2013; Mahmutoğlu & Kicir, 2013; Mirza et al., 2012; Neokleous, 2016; Paker & Karaağaç, 2015; Tang, 2002), the respondents of this study are in favour of using their MT to explain difficult English grammar rules ($M = 2.90$; $SD = 0.31$), to clarify doubts about understanding some English grammar rules and concepts ($M = 2.88$; $SD = 0.33$), and to explain new and difficult English vocabulary items ($M = 2.83$; $SD = 0.48$) and difficult concepts or ideas ($M = 2.81$; $SD = 0.53$). In consistency with Neokleous (2016) and Damra and Qudah (2012), the EFL learners in this study like teacher to use their MT to explain the differences and similarities between Arabic and English grammar rules ($M = 2.79$; $SD = 0.50$).

Regarding when EFL learners want to use their MT in EFL classroom, Table (1) shows that the respondents have a consensus to use MT to express ideas and feelings that they cannot explain in English ($M = 2.40$; $SD = 0.82$). This finding is in line with Hashemi (2013) and Imani and Farahian (2016). Actually, if EFL learners are not allowed to use their MT to express their feelings and ideas that they cannot explain in English due to their low level of English proficiency or lack of appropriate English words, they may not be able to participate well in the classroom (Imani & Farahian, 2016).

The findings of this study also indicated that EFL learners like teacher to use their MT to explain how to carry out classroom activities ($M = 2.38$; $SD = 0.79$). This function of MT was highlighted in literature (e.g. Al-balawi, 2016; Ālfarhān, 2018; Burat & Çavuşoğlu, 2020; Damra & Qudah, 2012; Kaymakamoğlu & Yıltanlılar, 2019; Paker & Karaağaç, 2015; Rosales & Gonzalez, 2020; Turin, 2017), which indicated that students prefer to get instructions in their

MT. This may be due to the effectiveness of MT in such situations in terms of saving time and ensuring that students are clear about what to do.

Besides, the finding of the study revealed that EFL learners like teachers to use their MT to establish rapport with them ($M = 2.25$; $SD = 0.81$). In relation to this finding, literature (e.g., Alshehr, 2017; Burat & Çavuşoğlu, 2020; Mohebbi & Alavi, 2014; Paker & Karaağaç, 2015) revealed that EFL teachers use MT for making jokes, showing concern to the students, showing empathy, which can help develop a good relationship and reduce social distance with students (Paker & Karaağaç, 2015). According to Turin (2017), developing a good relationship with students is a key factor to keep them open to the learning process.

The lowest mean score was given for the function ‘asking the teacher questions’ ($M = 1.81$; $SD = 0.82$). It seems that the EFL learners at this level are quite competent to sometimes ask the teacher their questions in English. This finding is supported by findings from previous studies (e.g., Alsied, 2018; Hashemi, 2013; Imani & Farahian, 2016; Mahmutoğlu & Kicir, 2013; Turin, 2017) regardless of the percentage of consensus among the EFL students involved in previous studies about using MT to ask questions to teachers, which is affected by the level of English proficiency of the respondents. Similarly, Kayaoğlu (2012) indicated that there is a consensus among teachers to allow students in grammar classroom to ask questions in their MT to reduce their anxiety.

In spite of the disagreement of the respondents that MT should never be used when teaching English grammar ($M = 2.35$; $SD = 0.73$), there is a high agreement among them that EFL teachers should make use of MT in English grammar classroom when necessary ($M = 2.85$; $SD = 0.36$) and that English should be the medium of instruction in English grammar classroom ($M = 2.54$; $SD = 0.71$). These findings are in harmony with those of some previous studies which indicated that EFL students (e.g., Ahmad et al., 2018; Almohaimeed & Almurshed, 2018; Alshammari, 2011; Alsied, 2018; Galali & Cinkara, 2017; Mahmutoğlu & Kicir, 2013; Neokleous 2016; Tang, 2002) and teachers (e.g., Ahmad et al., 2018; Al Asmari, 2014; Alshehr, 2017; Burat & Çavuşoğlu, 2020; Hashemi, 2013; Tang, 2002) have positive attitudes towards the judicious and systematic use of students’ MT in EFL classroom and towards using English as the medium of instruction.

RQ #2: What is the impact of using MT in EFL grammar classroom on EFL learners and their language learning?

To answer the second question; i.e., to identify the EFL learners’ perceptions of the impact of using their MT in EFL grammar classroom, the researcher calculated the means, the standard deviations, and the percentages for each item of the second section of the questionnaire and arranged them in descending order as shown in Table (2).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the items sorted in a descending order

#	Item	Descriptive Statistics			Estimation
		M	SD	%	
2	Using MT in the classroom helped me understand English grammar rules better.	2.90	0.37	96.52	high

9	Using MT to explain new and difficult English vocabulary items helped me understand them more.	2.88	0.39	95.82	high
8	Using ML to explain the differences and similarities between Arabic and English grammar rules helped me understand English grammar better.	2.85	0.41	95.13	high
4	Creating scenarios in Arabic and asking students to reflect them in English encouraged them to participate in the classroom.	2.79	0.50	93.05	high
3	Creating scenarios in Arabic and asking students to reflect them in English encouraged me to speak in English.	2.77	0.56	92.35	high
7	Using ML in the classroom had no negative impact on my learning of English grammar.	2.75	0.53	91.66	high
10	Using MT to explain how to carry out classroom activities helped me to participate in classroom activities successfully.	2.67	0.60	88.88	high
11	Using MT in the classroom made me more comfortable and receptive.	2.63	0.57	87.49	high
12	Using MT made me less stressed in the classroom.	2.60	0.68	86.80	high
6	Using ML in the classroom reduced the difficulty of learning English grammar.	2.58	0.71	86.10	high
1	Using MT in the classroom helped me learn English language in general.	2.56	0.68	85.41	high
13	Using MT in the classroom made me more focused.	2.46	0.74	81.94	high
5	Creating scenarios in Arabic and asking students to reflect them in English prevented me from thinking in English.	2.38	0.76	79.16	high

Note: Scoring of the negative item, namely Item No. (5) was reversed.

As Table 2 indicates, the average of items ranged from (2.38) to (2.90) with corresponding percentages from (79.16%) to (96.52%), indicating a high level of agreement among the respondents on the positive impact of using MT in EFL grammar classroom. Table (2) also shows that the respondents agreed that using MT in EFL grammar classroom helps them understand English grammar rules better ($M = 2.90$; $SD = 0.37$), reduces the difficulty of learning English grammar ($M = 2.58$; $SD = 0.71$), and has no negative impact on their learning of English grammar ($M = 2.75$; $SD = 0.53$). In line with these findings, Tang (2002), Mirza, Mahmus, and Jabbar (2012); Afzal (2013); Imani and Farahian (2016); and Galali and Cinkara (2017) indicated that EFL students found the use of their MT helpful to explain complex grammar points. Similarly, Damra and Qudah (2012), Mahmutoğlu and Kicir (2013), Paker and Karaağaç (2015), and Almohaimeed and Almurshed (2018) revealed that EFL students believe that using their MT in English grammar classroom helped them understand English grammar rules better. Likewise, Mohebbi and Alavi (2014), Al-balawi (2016), and Ālfārhān (2018) indicated that EFL teachers found that using L1 in EFL classroom can help learners to understand grammatical points better.

Besides, Table (2) shows that using ML to explain the differences and similarities between the grammar rules of MT and English helps EFL learners understand English grammar better ($M = 2.85$; $SD = 0.41$), which can enable them to avoid making mistakes in English that result from mother tongue interference. This finding is in line with that of Mahmutoğlu and

Kicir (2013), who showed that the EFL student participants support the use of their MT to understand the differences between the grammar of their MT and that of English. Similarly, Neokleous (2016) indicated that the EFL students think that the use of their MT when explaining grammar rules not only broaden their knowledge but also enable them to build links with both languages, which will help them to avoid mistakes by breaking erroneous MT transfer habits.

The findings of this study showed that using MT to explain new and difficult English words can help EFL learners understand them more ($M = 2.88$; $SD = 0.39$). In harmony with this finding, Tang (2002), Damra and Qudah (2012), Mirza et al. (2012), Afzal (2013), Mahmutoğlu and Kicir (2013), Galali and Cinkara (2017), Turin (2017), and Almohaimeed and Almurshed (2018) revealed that EFL learners found the use of their MT beneficial when presenting new vocabulary items and useful for understanding the meaning of new and difficult words better. Similarly, Mohebbi and Alavi (2014), Al-balawi (2016), and Ālfārhān (2018) indicated that EFL teachers found using L1 in EFL classroom useful for EFL learners to understand difficult concepts and vocabulary items.

Additionally, the findings indicated that using MT to explain how to carry out classroom activities can help EFL learners to participate in classroom activities successfully ($M = 2.67$; $SD = 0.60$). In fact, without understanding the instructions of how to perform an activity or a task, learners won't be able to participate in classroom activities. This is similar to Damra and Qudah (2012) and Serag (2017), who revealed that EFL students agree that the use of MT in EFL classroom help them to participate successfully in classroom activities. In the same vein, Ngoc (2018) revealed that EFL teachers use students' MT to explain instructions of activities to enhance students understanding and to encourage them to complete the tasks.

Moreover, the respondents indicated that using MT in the classroom made them more comfortable and receptive ($M = 2.63$; $SD = 0.57$), less stressed ($M = 2.60$; $SD = 0.68$), and more focused ($M = 2.46$; $SD = 0.74$). Actually, the feeling of anxiety and stress can be an obstacle before learners to actively participate in the classroom. These findings are consistent with those of some recent studies (e.g., Al-balawi, 2016; Hashemi, 2013; Mahmutoğlu & Kicir, 2013; Neokleous, 2016; Rosales & Gonzalez, 2020; Serag, 2017; Turin, 2017) which indicated that the use of EFL learners make them feel at ease, comfortable and less stressed in EFL classroom. Contrary to the findings of this study, Tang (2002), Afzal (2013), and Almohaimeed and Almurshed (2018) revealed that very few EFL students stated that the use of their MT makes them feel at ease, comfortable and less stressed in EFL classroom, which can be attributed to the level of respondents of these studies.

Regarding the distinct approach adopted to using MT in EFL grammar classroom in this study, the findings indicated that creating scenarios in MT and asking EFL learners to reflect them in English encourages the EFL learners to participate in the classroom ($M = 2.79$; $SD = 0.50$) and to speak in English ($M = 2.77$; $SD = 0.56$). Besides, there was agreement among the respondents that this approach to using MT does not prevent them from thinking in English ($M = 2.38$; $SD = 0.76$). This indicates that the respondents found this approach of MT use in EFL grammar classroom effective as it can encourage EFL learners to participate and to speak in EFL classroom. In contrast, Hashemi (2013) indicated that a lot of the participants (teachers and students) agreed that the use of MT in English classroom can prevent EFL students from thinking in English. Similarly, Almohaimeed and Almurshed (2018) indicated that most

advanced EFL students agreed that the use of MT may prevent them from thinking in English, whereas few beginner and intermediate students agreed upon that.

Generally speaking, the findings reached by this study highlighted the vital role that learners' MT can play in EFL classroom, if used judiciously and systematically, in terms of helping EFL learners learn English language in general ($M = 2.56$; $SD = 0.68$). This findings is supported by many previous studies (e.g., Afzal, 2013; Ahmad et al., 2018; Albeshar et al., 2018; Almohaimeed & Almurshed, 2018; Mahmutoğlu & Kicir, 2013; Mirza et al., 2012; Mohebbi & Alavi, 2014; Serag, 2017) which revealed that the use of learners' MT can help them improve language learning.

RQ #3: Are there statistically significant differences in the means of EFL learners' responses in relation to their attitudes towards MT use and their perceptions of the impact of MT use in EFL grammar classroom according to gender?

The *t*-test for independent samples analysis was used to explicate any significant differences in the respondents' opinions about when MT should be used and their perceptions of the impact of using MT in EFL grammar classroom. The results of *t*-test are outlined in Table (3).

Table 3. T-test results for respondents' responses based on 'gender'

	Variable	N	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i> (2-tailed)
Attitudes	Male	20	2.58	0.29	49	0.234	0.816
	Female	31	2.56	0.36			
Impact	Male	20	2.60	0.34	46	1.434	0.158
	Female	28	2.73	0.30			

Table (3) shows that no statistically significant difference was found [$t(49) = 0.234$, $p = 0.816$] between *males* ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 0.29$) and *females* ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 0.36$) at the (0.05) level of significance in relation to their opinions about when MT should be used in English grammar classroom. With respect to the impact of using MT in English grammar classroom, Table (3) also shows that no statistically significant difference was found [$t(46) = 1.434$, $p = 0.158$] between *males* ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 0.34$) and *females* ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 0.30$) at the (0.05) level of significance. This implies that both male and female EFL learners have similar attitudes towards using their MT in English grammar classroom and perceive the impact of that in the same way although it was noted that the females perceived the positive impact of using MT more highly than that of males. In respect to gender, this study is in line with Burat and Çavuşoğlu (2020), who indicated that there was no difference in EFL teachers' perceptions and practice of L1 in EFL classroom based on gender and with Ahmad et al. (2018), who revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in the beliefs of EFL teachers about the use of L1 in EFL classroom.

Qualitative data analysis

The main purpose of the FGDs was to identify more ideas about EFL learners' opinions about using Arabic in EFL classroom and to evaluate the strategy that the teacher used to

involve Arabic in EFL grammar classroom.

The first question was asked to identify the participants' opinions about when the teacher should use MT in EFL classroom. Based on the ideas raised during the discussions, it can be stated that there was an agreement that MT can be used in EFL classroom to explain difficult grammar rules and the meaning of difficult and new words and concepts, to give instructions, to check learners' comprehension, to create humour, to explain the differences and similarities between Arabic and English grammar rules, to give learners advice on how to improve their English as well as when teacher finds it difficult to convey a particular idea or when the teacher feels that learners are unable to understand a particular point as this can make them feel uncomfortable and stressed. In this, the study echoes the findings of a lot of recent studies that highlighted when MT should be used in EFL classroom (e.g., Adil, 2019; Akkaya & Atar, 2015; Al-balawi, 2016; Almohaimeed & Almurshed, 2018; Burat & Çavuşoğlu, 2020; Damra & Qudah, 2012; Kaymakamoğlu & Yıltanlılar, 2019; Sali, 2014; Sert, 2005; Tang, 2002).

The second question was allotted to identify the opinions of the participants about the technique adopted by the teacher to use MT to encourage EFL learners to speak in English. The technique involved creating scenarios in MT for EFL learners who cannot give their own examples and then asking them to reflect the scenarios in English. Based on the discussions with the participants, it can be stated that there was an entire consensus that the said technique is helpful in terms of encouraging EFL learners to apply grammar rules and speak in English and reducing their stress and cognitive burden.

To quote a participant's words (the excerpts given are translated from Arabic),

I like it. It helped me to apply the grammar rules. It also enhanced my confidence that I could speak in English.

A second participant commented,

In the classroom, we sometimes feel stressed and cannot use our own words to give examples, but the scenarios given by the teacher encourage us to participate.

A third participant said,

It is really useful. It doesn't only help us to apply the rules and speak in English, but also enhances our translation skill.

A fourth participant said,

I sometimes want to participate in the classroom but I feel I have no examples to give. When the teacher gives us scenarios, I get encouraged to participate.

A fifth participant added,

What is interesting about the technique is that it encourages us to speak in English and helps us to retain grammar rules.

The third question asked the participants about how the teacher encouraged them to apply grammar rules and speak in English in the classroom. The aim of this question was to verify the answer to question two. Based on the discussions, it can be stated that the teacher encouraged the learners to apply grammar rules and speak in English in the classroom through asking them to give their own examples from their daily life and to do exercises related to the grammar rules in question, praising students, creating scenarios in Arabic and asking EFL learners to reflect the scenarios in English, and correcting learners' mistakes in friendly manner.

A participant commented,

I like the way of asking volunteers to give examples and then pointing to particular learners to participate, encouraging them to speak through creating scenarios in Arabic and asking them to reflect the scenarios in English.

The fourth question asked the participants about the approach (bilingual or monolingual) and the main language (Arabic or English) EFL teachers should use in EFL grammar classroom. In the light of the discussions, it can be asserted that there was an agreement among the participants that the bilingual approach should be adopted in EFL grammar classroom, yet the participants stressed that Arabic should be used only when necessary (e.g., explaining difficult grammar rules and words, giving instructions when students feel confused) and that English should be the medium of instruction in order to ensure identifying the correct pronunciation of words, improving listening skill, and increasing the amount of exposure to English in the classroom. A participant commented,

I am for the bilingual approach. Arabic should be used in the classroom when necessary; for example to explain difficult words and difficult grammar rules.

Another participant commented,

I prefer the bilingual approach, yet English should be the medium of instruction.

In this, the study is in agreement with many recent studies that highlighted the preference of EFL learners and teachers for the bilingual approach; i.e., using the target language as a medium of instruction and MT when necessary (e.g., Ahmad et al., 2018; Al Asmari, 2014; Almohaimeed & Almurshed, 2018; Alshehr, 2017; Alsied, 2018; Galali & Cinkara, 2017; Mahmutoğlu & Kicir, 2013; Tang, 2002).

The fifth question was allotted to identify the advantages that EFL learners may get from using their MT in EFL grammar classroom. The participants confirmed that using Arabic in EFL grammar classroom is beneficial in terms of enhancing EFL learners' comprehension of difficult grammar rules and concepts and abstract words more better, especially of low proficiency learners; facilitating content transfer to learners; reducing the stress of EFL learners and making them more receptive; encouraging EFL learners to participate in the classroom as they know what they have to do; removing ambiguity of difficult points, which results in better understanding of the lesson; reducing cognitive burden of learners, especially of low proficiency learners; and retaining grammar rules and new vocabulary items. A participant commented,

Sometimes, when the teacher explains grammar rules in English, I say to myself it is not clear enough but I cannot ask him to repeat the explanation. When the teacher asks us if it is understood, and one of the students requests him to re-explain the point and the teacher explains the point again using Arabic, I say to myself, yes, now it is clear.

In this, the study mirrors the findings of previous studies in other contexts which highlighted such benefits of using MT in EFL classroom (e.g., Ahmad et al., 2018; Albeshier et al., 2018; Ālfarhān, 2018; Almohaimeed & Almurshed, 2018; Burat & Çavuşoğlu, 2020; Kaymakamoğlu & Yıltanlılar, 2019; Sali, 2014).

The sixth question was allotted to identify the disadvantages of using Arabic in EFL grammar classroom. During the discussions, one main concern was raised by almost all the participants, namely the overuse of Arabic in EFL grammar classroom, which may reduce EFL

learners' exposure to English and makes them depend on their MT. This mirrors the findings of some previous studies (e.g., Albeshar et al., 2018; Kaynaradağ, 2016; Mahmutoğlu & Kicir, 2013; Ngoc, 2018).

Actually, using ML in L2 classroom cannot be avoided, especially with low level proficiency learners. However, this should not be taken as a call for the overuse of L1 in a FL/SL classroom as that may lead to reducing the amount of students' exposure to the target language, which can have a negative effect on the target language learning. Rather, it is a call for EFL teachers to make use of L1 in EFL classroom judiciously, purposefully, and effectively (Çelik & Aydın, 2018; Kaynaradağ, 2016; Mansory, 2019; Mohebbi & Alavi, 2014; Tang, 2002) with a view to enhancing the FL/SL learning and making learners less stressful in the classroom, taking into account the proficiency level of the learners, the language aspect in question, and the purpose of the MT use.

Like Cook (2001), Tang (2002), Damra and Qudah (2012), Afzal (2013), Mohebbi and Alavi (2014), Sa'd and Qadermazi (2015), Imani and Farahian (2016), Ahmad et al. (2018), and Çelik and Aydın (2018); the researcher thinks that, if used properly, systematically and judiciously, learners' MT can be advantageous pedagogically in the teaching and learning of English and psychologically in terms of reducing the cognitive overload and anxiety of EFL students in the classroom.

Conclusion and Implications

The present study has significant and pedagogical implications for EFL learners and teachers. It revealed that the EFL learners are in favour of judicious bilingual approach in EFL classroom, in which English is the medium of instruction and their MT is used judiciously as a supportive and facilitating means. Based on the findings obtained from this study, it can be stated that the use of learners' MT in EFL classroom is important due to the vital role and the key functions that it can play in enhancing learners' language learning, including helping EFL learners to understand English grammar rules and new and difficult English vocabulary items better; reducing the difficulty of learning English grammar; encouraging EFL learners to participate and speak in English in the classroom; enhancing EFL learners' understanding of the instructions of classroom activities and tasks, which can ensure their active involvement and participation in the classroom; and making EFL learners more comfortable and receptive, less stressed, and more focused in the classroom, which can contribute to their cognitive ability and their participation in the classroom. However, in order to obtain all these advantages, the learners' MT should be used systematically and judiciously as its overuse in EFL classroom may have a negative impact on EFL learners, including limiting the amount of their exposure to English in the classroom and encouraging them to be extremely dependent on their MT.

In the process of learners' MT integration into EFL classroom, the EFL teacher is the one who can take the right decisions on when, where, how, how often, and with whom to use MT. Besides, the teacher is the one who can judge whether MT use enhances or hinders learners' language learning because what may work well for one group of EFL learners may not work well for others. In other words, the right decision of the permission or prohibition of using the bilingual approach in EFL classroom cannot be taken by the education management at upper level; but rather by the EFL teachers in the classroom.

In brief, the use of MT in EFL classroom is a double-edged sword. While its systematic

and judicious use can enhance learners' learning of English, its overuse can reduce the amount of exposure to English language, and thus EFL learners language learning. In the light of the findings obtained and the arguments raised, the following recommendations are given:

- EFL teachers should be provided with proper training, so that they can use MT in an effective way in EFL classroom.
- EFL teachers should maintain a balance between MT and English use in EFL grammar classroom.
- MT should be used in EFL classroom effectively and judiciously with a view to facilitating and enhancing learners' learning of English.
- EFL teachers are recommended to use learners' MT in order to help them understand the meaning of abstract and difficult vocabulary items and difficult grammar rules and concepts, especially with low-level EFL learners.
- Learners' MT should not be overused in EFL classroom as that may make learners dependent on their MT and limit the exposure to English.
- Factors such as learners' proficiency level and language aspects and skills should be considered by EFL teachers when using MT in EFL classroom.
- Curriculum developers should take into consideration the role of MT when developing curriculum for EFL learners.

Limitations and Further Research

The findings of this work are limited to the responses of a relatively small number of EFL intermediate learners on a self-report three-point Likert scale and their opinions given in FGDs about using their MT in EFL grammar classroom. Therefore, caution should be considered when making generalizations from the findings to other contexts. However, such limitations give directions for further research on more EFL learners at different proficiency levels and at different EFL classrooms. In fact, using MT in EFL classroom is an important topic that should be examined closely to develop effective practices of using MT in such ways that enhance learners' learning of English. Further studies on the effectiveness of MT use and the attitudes of EFL teachers and learners towards using MT in EFL classroom at various proficiency levels and for different language aspects can be conducted. This includes carrying out experimental studies to identify the impact of such strategy and how to make it more useful. Although previous studies highlighted the importance of using students' MT in EFL classroom, conducting a longitudinal study is recommended to identify the exact contribution of MT to the success of EFL learners.

References

- Adil, M. (2019). Practical application of learners' first language to teaching meaning in EFL classes: A case study conducted in the department of English at King Khalid University [Special Issue]. *Arab World English Journal: The Dynamics of EFL in Saudi Arabia*. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/efl1.13>
- Afzal, S. (2013). Using of the first language in English classroom as a way of scaffolding for both the students and teachers to learn and teach English. *International Research Journal of Applied and Basic Sciences*, 4(7), 1846-1854.

- Ahmad, I., Radzuan, N., & Hussain, M. (2018). Use of first language in the classroom: Non-native EFL teachers' beliefs in teaching English to adult learners in bilingual context. *Arab World English Journal, 9*(2), 186-199. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol9no2.13>
- Akkaya, G., & Atar, C. (2015). An analysis of code-switching in Turkish EFL classroom interaction. *Annual Review of Education, Communication and Language Sciences, 12*, 53-77.
- Al Asmari, A. (2014). Teachers' perceptions about the use of mother tongue in Saudi EFL university classrooms: A gender-line investigation. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 4*(10), 2066-2075.
- Al-balawi, F. (2016). The attitudes of Saudi EFL teachers about using their mother tongue in EFL classrooms. *International Journal of Education and Social Science, 3*(7), 51-61.
- Albeshar, K., Hussain, M., & Farid, A. (2018). Use of Saudi EFL adult learners' L1 to address foreign language classroom anxiety. *Arab World English Journal, 9*(2), 379-396. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol9no2.25>
- Älfarhän, I. (2018). *Saudi Arabian teachers' perceptions of teaching EFL in K-12 school settings* (Publication No. 10750603) [Doctoral Dissertation, Saint Louis University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Almohaimed, M., & Almurshed, H. (2018). Foreign language learners' attitudes and perceptions of L1 Use in L2 classroom. *Arab World English Journal, 9*(4), 433-446. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol9no4.32>
- Alptekin, C. (2002). Towards intercultural communicative competence in ELT. *ELT Journal, 56*(1), 57-64.
- Alshammari, M. (2011). The use of the mother tongue in Saudi EFL classrooms. *Journal of International Education Research, 7*(4), 95-102.
- Alsied, S. (2018). An investigation of the use of the first language in Libyan EFL classrooms. *TEFLIN Journal, 29*(2), 155-176. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15639/teflinjournal.v29i2/155-176>
- Alshehri, E. (2017). Using learners' first language in EFL classrooms. *IAFOR Journal of Language Learning, 3*(1), 20-33.
- Alvarez, L. (2014). Selective use of the mother tongue to enhance students' English learning processes...beyond the same assumptions. *PROFILE, 16*(1), 137-151.
- Alzamil, A. (2019). The effects of the use of first language on learning English as a second language: Attitudes of Arabic EFL learners. *Arab World English Journal, 10*(3), 192-201. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol10no3.13>
- Atkinson, D. (1987). The mother tongue in the classroom: A neglected resource? *ELT journal, 41*(4), 241-247. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/41.4.241>
- Auerbach, E. (1993). Reexamining English only in the ESL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly, 27*(1), 9-32.
- Burat, G., & Çavuşoğlu, Ç. (2020). Teachers' perceptions on using first language in Northern Cyprus EFL classrooms. *Near East University Journal of Education Faculty (NEUJEF), 3*(2), 11-41.
- Cole, S. (1998). The use of L1 in communicative English classrooms. *The Language Teacher, 22*(12), 11-14.
- Çelik, Ş. S., & Aydın, S. (2018). A review of research on the use of native language in EFL classes. *The Literacy Trek, 4*(2), 1-14.
- Cook, G. (2007, April 18-22). *Unmarked improvement: Values, facts, and first languages* [Paper presentation/ Plenary Session]. IATEFL Conference, Aberdeen, Scotland.
- Cook, V. (2001). Using the first language in the classroom. *Canadian Modern Language Review, 57*(3), 402-423. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cmlr.57.3.402>
- Cook, V. (2003). Introduction: The changing L1 in the L2 user's mind. In V. Cook (Ed.), *Effects of the second language on the first* (pp. 1-18). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

- Dailey-O'cain, J., & Liebscher, G. (2009). Teacher and student use of the first language in foreign language classroom interaction: Functions and applications. In M. Turnbull & J. Dailey-O'Cain (Eds.), *First language use in second and foreign language learning* (pp. 131-144). Bristol, Toronto: Multilingual Matters.
- Damra, H. & Qudah, M. (2012). The effect of using native language in grammar achievement and attitudes toward learning of basic stages EFL students in Jordan. *International Journal of Business and Social Science, 3*(1), 300-306.
- Edstrom, A. (2006). L1 use in the L2 classroom: One teacher's self-evaluation. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 63*(2), 275-292. doi:10.3138/cmlr.63.2.275
- Ellis, R. (2005). Introduction: Investigating form-focused instruction. *Language Learning, 51* (Supplement1), 1-46.
- Ellis, R. (2005). Principles of instructed language learning. *System, 33*(2), 209-224. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2004.12.006>
- Ellis, R. (2006). Current issues in the teaching of grammar: An SLA perspective. *TESOL Quarterly, 40*(1), 83-107.
- Ellis, R., Basturkmen, H., & Loewen, S. (2001). Learner uptake in communicative ESL lessons. *Language Learning, 51*(2), 281-318.
- Galali, A., & Cinkara, E. (2017). The use of L1 in English as a foreign language classes: Insights from Iraqi tertiary level students. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies, 8*(5), 54-64. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.all.v.8n.5p.54>
- Hashemi, S. (2013). The Iranian EFL students' and teachers' perception of using Persian in general English classes. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature, 2*(2), 142-152. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.2n.2p.142>
- Imani, Z. & Farahian, M. (2016). Iranian EFL university lecturers' and learners' attitude towards using first language as a scaffolding tool in reading comprehension. *International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Research, 4*(13), 19-32.
- Kayaoğlu, M. N. (2012). The use of mother tongue in foreign language teaching from teachers' practice and perspective. *Pamukkale University Faculty of Education Journal, 32*(2), 25-35.
- Kaymakamoğlu, S., & Yiltanlılar, A. (2019). Non-native English teachers' perceptions about using Turkish (L1) in EFL classrooms: A case study. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching (IOJET), 6*(2), 327-337.
- Kaynaradağ, A. Y. (2016). Shall we forget about L1 when teaching English?. *TÖMER Dil Dergisi, (167/2)*, 5-14.
- Kellerman, E. (1995). Crosslinguistic influence: Transfer to nowhere? *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 15*, 125-150. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190500002658>
- Krashen, S. (1981). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Larsen-Freeman, D., & Anderson, M. (2011). *Techniques and principles in language teaching* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Knežević, Ž. (2019). The impact of mother tongue on teaching English grammar and vocabulary. *British and American Studies, 25*, 273-278.
- Macaro, E. (2009). Teacher use of codeswitching in the second language classroom: Exploring 'Optimal' Use. In M. Turnbull & J. Dailey-O'Cain (Eds.) *First language use in second and foreign language learning* (pp. 35-49). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Mahmutoğlu, H., & Kicir, Z. (2013). The use of mother tongue in EFL classrooms. *EUL Journal of Social Sciences, 4*(1), 49-72.
- Mansory, M. (2019). Exploring teachers' beliefs and practices on the use of the mother tongue as a mediational tool in a Saudi EFL classroom [Special Issue]. *Arab World English Journal, 1*. 72-86. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/elt1.6>

- McCann, K. (2005). Not lost in translation. *IATEFL Issues*, 186, p. 8.
- Meisel, J. (2011). *First and second language acquisition: Parallels and differences*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Miles, R. (2004). *Evaluating the use of L1 in the English language classroom* [Unpublished master's thesis]. University of Birmingham Department of English Language Teaching, Birmingham, United Kingdom.
- Mirza, M. G. H., Mahmud, K., & Jabbar, J. (2012). Use of other languages in English language teaching at tertiary level: A case study on Bangladesh. *English Language Teaching*, 5(9), 71–77.
- Mohebbi, H., & Alavi, S. M. (2014). An investigation into teachers' first language use in a second language learning classroom context: A questionnaire-based study. *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching & Learning Language & Literature*, 7(4), 57-73.
- Nation, P. (2003). The role of the first language in foreign language learning. *Asian EFL Journal*, 5(2), 1-8. https://www.asian-efl-journal.com/june_2003_pn.pdf
- Nayeri, K. (2015). The effect of using L1 on Iranian high school students' reading comprehension ability. *Modern Journal of Language teaching Methods*, 4(5), 573-595.
- Neokleous, G. (2016). Closing the gap: Student attitudes toward first language use in monolingual EFL classrooms. *TESOL Journal*, 8(2), 314–341. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.272>
- Ngoc, N. (2018). The frequency and functions of teachers' use of mother tongue in EFL classrooms. *European Journal of English Language Teaching*, 3(4), 15-28. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1291463>
- Obaidullah, M. (2016). Code switching in EFL classrooms: A Bangladeshi perspective. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 6(5), 924-934. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0605.03>
- Paker, T., & Karağaç, Ö. (2015). The use and functions of mother tongue in EFL classes. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 199, 111-119.
- Paradowski, M. B. (2007). Foreign-language grammar instruction via the mother tongue. In F. Boers, J. Darquennes, & R. Temmerman (Eds.), *Multilingualism and applied comparative linguistics: Comparative considerations in second and foreign language instruction* (pp. 151–168). Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars Press.
- Pardede, P. (2018). Use of mother tongue in EFL classes of secondary schools in Jabodebek: students' and teachers' perception. *Journal of English Teaching*, 4(2), 62-80.
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rosales, V. P., & Gonzalez, L. M. (2020). Students' preferences and perspectives towards the use of their mother tongue as a means of instruction and a language learning aid. *MEXTESOL Journal*, 44(3), 1-8.
- Sa'd, S., & Qadermazi, Z. (2015). L1 use in EFL classes with English-only policy: Insights from triangulated data. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 5(2), 159-175.
- Sali, P. (2014). An analysis of the teachers' use of L1 in Turkish EFL classrooms. *System*, 42(2014), 308-318. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2013.12.021>
- Serag, A. (2017). The impact of using L1 on foreign language acquisition in Japan. *The Educational Review, USA*, 1(3), 70-76. <http://dx.doi.org/10.26855/er.2017.03.004>
- Sert, O. (2005). The functions of code-switching in ELT classrooms. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 11(8), 1-6.
- Stapa, S., & Majid, A. (2012). The use of first language in developing ideas in second language writing. *American Journal of Social Issues & Humanities*, 2(3), 148- 151.
- Sharma, K. (2006). Mother tongue use in English classroom. *Journal of NELTA*, 11(1-2), 80-87.
- Tang, J. (2002). Using L1 in the English classroom. *English Teaching Forum*, 40(1), 36-43.
- Trendak, O. (2015). *Exploring the role of strategic intervention in form-focused instruction*. New York, NY: Springer. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-12433-9

- Turin, T. A. (2017). Usefulness of using mother tongue in foreign language classroom. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*, 5(8), 27-36.
- Wang, J. (2005). Mother tongue in the English language classroom: A case of one school. *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, 2(4), 17-39.
- Wu, S. (2018). *Using the first language in the second language classroom* [Master's thesis, University of Victoria]. <https://dspace.library.uvic.ca/handle/1828/9268>