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Assessing the Role of Arabic in EFL Classes: An Activity Theory Approach

Submitted by:

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PhD (The Teaching of English as a Foreign Language)

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics

to

The Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

London Metropolitan University

I certify that the research and the writing embodied in the thesis are entirely my own work except where due reference is made in the text.

Signature: Brahim Machaal **Date:** 7/3/2012

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'And We did not send any apostle but with the language of his people, so that he might explain to them clearly' (Quran, 14. 4)

Abstract

In this research, I investigate the role of Arabic in the classes of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), by exploring the uses of Arabic during classroom activities that teachers and students engage in. I also look into how such role shapes the attitudes of the stakeholders in the institution where the research took place. While the literature reveals that the use of the learner's first language (L1) in foreign language (L2) classrooms can be beneficial and sometimes even necessary for the teaching-learning process, the role of Arabic as the students' first language (L1) in EFL classes, although it is a controversial issue, has not been properly researched. This scarcity of research calls for comprehensive and in-depth studies to contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon and to help in filling the existing knowledge gap. I undertook the present research as an endeavour and contribution toward such ambition.

For the purposes of this study, I employed a mixed methods approach to tackle the issue from a broader perspective. Thus I have used questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and class observations. In addition, I have made use of the principles of Activity Theory (AT) as a conceptual framework to help interpret the findings of the research in a rigorous and systematic manner. This theoretical background has provided a suitable lens to analyse human behaviours as complex as the ones found in EFL classrooms. AT also has helped in identifying three main roles that Arabic plays in the EFL classes.

The results suggest that Arabic is useful, and sometimes even necessary, in EFL classes as it serves as a pedagogical tool that mediates the teaching-learning activity, and as an educational scaffold that facilitates the students' learning expansion. Furthermore, Arabic has been found to be the source of contradictions within and between the components and participants of the EFL teaching- learning activity. Additionally, data analysis has revealed that the participating EFL teachers have displayed levels of confidence by adopting an eclectic approach to EFL teaching and through assuming ownership of their teaching in a stance that is characteristic of the post method era.

It is anticipated that these findings will help to raise the awareness towards the role of Arabic in EFL classes, inform the revision of the EFL pedagogic policy, and pave the way for more research endeavours on the topic. Such initiatives will enlighten the development of an alternative, appropriate and efficient local pedagogy that is suitable for EFL preparatory English programs in Saudi colleges and universities. The findings also appear to be of significant value for EFL teachers' professional development programs and suggest a rethinking of the training and recruitment of EFL teachers for this part of the world.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
ALM	The Audio-Lingual Method
AT	Activity Theory
BANA	Britain, Australia and North America
CS	Code-switching
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	English as Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
FL	Foreign Language
ICT	Information and communication technology
L1	First Language
L2	Second language
LASS	Language Acquisition Support System
LAD	Language Acquisition Device
SCT	The Socio-Cultural Theory
UG	Universal Grammar
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development
Interviews, PM	Interviews with the Policy makers
Interviews, T	Interviews with the teachers
PM	Policy maker
SC	Students' Comments
Sa, Sb, Sc...	Unidentified students in a class
Sx	The bright student in a class
T1, T2, T3.....	EFL Teachers

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'If time is taken to build second language skills based on a solid foundation in the first language, the results can be high-level bilingualism and biliteracy.' (UNESCO, 2005, p 2)

Introduction

The use of the learner's first language (L1) in foreign language (L2) classrooms has been a controversial issue for both linguists and foreign language practitioners. Most post-reform foreign language teaching methods have either banned or ignored the use of L1 in L2 classes (Macaro, 2009). Views based on recent research findings, undertaken in various parts of the world and suggesting the usefulness of L1, have been gaining momentum among ELT professionals and scholars. Due to the extraordinary spread of English and its adoption as an international and global language, the use of L1 in EFL classes in particular has recently become the focus of numerous research studies (Turnbul and Daily-O'Cain, 2009). In contrast, the role of Arabic in Saudi EFL classes has not been researched enough, although the efficiency of the 'English only' policy has not been evident and research conclusions suggest that Arabic is misused in Saudi EFL classes (Al-Abdan, 1993). The survey of the literature that I have undertaken for this research revealed that only two research studies bearing on the issue have been published since Al-Abdan's study, namely (Al-Nofaie, 2010; Storch and Aldosari, 2010).

While the three research projects mentioned above describe the use of Arabic in EFL classes and the attitudes towards it, they stopped short of explaining the various reasons behind its use and how its role as an EFL teaching-learning tool shapes the stakeholders' attitudes. In light of the acceptance that the research endeavours undertaken so far did not properly investigate the role of Arabic in EFL classes, more comprehensive and in-depth studies are required. These research endeavours would contribute to the understanding of the role of Arabic in EFL classes and would help to fill the existing gap in research and therefore raise the awareness about the practice.

I have undertaken the present research with a view to establish the role of Arabic in EFL classes and the extent to which such role shapes the stakeholders' attitudes. In fact, the main question the research was set to answer was establishing the role of Arabic in EFL classes. Equally, more specific questions related to the extent to which this role of Arabic has contributed to shaping the attitudes of the participants in the research and to the actual uses of Arabic in EFL classrooms needed to be answered. While I am fully aware that a study that investigates the students' L1 would suggest that the focus would also be on the role of that language as part of its speakers' identity; I have approached the issue in this study solely from a pedagogical

point of view as the title suggests, leaving therefore the issue of Arabic as a symbol of the learners' identity for future studies to tackle. In order to find answers to the questions of this research, and based on the results of the pilot study, I have concluded that a comprehensive research method paradigm would be more practical.

As a research methodology, I have adopted a mixed methods approach to tackle the issue from a broader perspective. I made use of questionnaires, interviews and class observations. I have also employed Activity Theory (AT) (Engeström, 1987) as a conceptual framework so as to interpret the findings in a rigorous and systematic manner, by linking these findings to the socio-cultural environment of the study. The main purpose behind this research was to raise the awareness towards the role of Arabic in EFL classes, inform EFL policy making, and pave the way for future research on the topic. The findings could also make contributions towards the development of an efficient alternative approach that would form the basis of an appropriate local pedagogy for EFL preparatory English programs in Saudi colleges and universities.

Like any research project, the present study has been a journey that required meticulous preparations and a lot of planning. In addition, a research endeavour is not only unique but it is above all inseparable from its author. For the sake of this research, being acquainted with the different identities of the researcher would contribute to the reader's understanding of how research findings are reported, and it should also account for the change of 'voice' (Bakhtin, 1990), language or even the way the writing conventions are used throughout this thesis. The reader's attention is therefore drawn to four relevant identities that the author has enjoyed throughout this journey; the author as an EFL teacher, as a researcher, as a translator, and finally as a policy maker.

The fact that I, the author, am an Arabic speaking EFL teacher should account for the unintentional bias towards the usefulness of Arabic in EFL classes in the context of this research. This could mainly be the result of the first-hand experience that I have with the role of Arabic as a pedagogical tool in Saudi EFL classes. My teaching background as well has an impact on the way data are interpreted, given that classroom-gained information helps in understanding the implications of the statements expressed by the participants or the behaviours observed in their classes.

As a researcher, I have remained cognisant of the need to follow both local and universal research ethical requirements in order to maintain professionalism and carry out a sound research. Thus, the study followed research ethics guidelines that are universally known in the research field as well as the research ethics procedure as set by London Metropolitan University. While carrying out this research, I strived to separate myself from my identity as a

teacher. At all times, the approach was to observe absolute objectivity and professionalism; while designing or administering the questionnaires, while carrying out class observations, and while conducting interviews.

Similarly, I benefited a lot from my experience as a translator and interpreter. Thus, I have used the same code of conduct that professional translators are governed by while translating the students' comments. Incidentally, research translation could prove a demanding task as it is a matter of cooperation between the researcher who possesses the background knowledge of the research topic and the translator who renders the findings to the other language, trying as much as possible to preserve the original meaning. In this case, the researcher and the translator were all one; which made the translation process smooth and quick, as both background knowledge and linguistic skills were available to me, the researcher/translator. Had the help of a translator been sought, the possibility of distorted meaning wouldn't be discarded especially in the cases where the translator might not be familiar with the epistemological background of the research topic.

Finally and equally important, my voice as a policy-maker is also added to the mix. Towards the end of 2010, I was promoted to manage the college's English language centre. The mission was to improve the English proficiency of the preparatory year students to allow them to continue their undergraduate studies in English. This position afforded me an excellent opportunity to try out some of the implications suggested by the findings of the research. Quite expectedly, this conviction regarding the applicability of the research findings impacted on my voice in various parts of this dissertation.

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. Each of these chapters could stand by itself; however, together they complete and complement one another. In the Introductory Chapter, which describes the socio-cultural context in which the research took place, I introduce Saudi Arabia as the country where the research took place and present an overview of its educational system. I also discuss the extent to which the spread of English as a global language impacts the country's foreign language policy. I mention the objectives officially set for the teaching of English at the Saudi schools as well as in the English preparatory year program offered by the college where this research has taken place. Furthermore, I equally address the 'English only' approach and native speakerism as two controversial notions that characterise EFL teaching in Saudi Arabia, and discuss their implications on EFL policy and pedagogy. In this Introductory Chapter, I lay down a general background to the topic of the study and explain the rationale behind it as well. Overall, I describe in this chapter the socio-cultural context that contributes to a better understanding of the study and its findings.

In the second chapter, I present a survey of the literature related to the topic in order to situate the study within its field and show the contribution it makes to fill the gap in the field. I start with the definition of the key terms used in this thesis, move on to introduce few foreign language teaching methods with a focus on their position towards the use of L1 in L2, and present the discussion of some of the factors that influence foreign language learning. In this chapter, I also cover the attitudes of various scholars toward the use of the learners' L1 in L2 classes and explore some of the research studies that focussed on the issue. I conclude the chapter with a table summarising a few representative studies that have been carried out in various parts of the world on the use of L1 in L2 classes.

In Chapter Three, I introduce AT as the theoretical framework against which the findings are analysed and interpreted. I open the chapter with a short discussion of the theory of learning and touch on the principles of the sociocultural theory, and then presents AT and its various principles. I then explain how these tenets apply to the research and define the main components of the theory. Finally, I discuss AT's principles of mediation, expansion and contradictions, and I introduce some of the research studies that have used this theoretical framework.

In Chapter Four, I explain the research paradigm used to collect the data. I start with a report on the pilot study that served to set the ground for this research. Then I introduce the main question as well as the secondary questions that the research has sought to answer. In this section, I explain the mixed methods research approach that is used by the study. Thus, I discuss the different methods and describe the participants and how they were chosen. In addition, I present a summary of similar studies relevant to the research approach adopted for this research. Finally, I lay out in detail the research ethics as they have been observed throughout the research; and I conclude by mentioning some limitations that the research has run into.

Chapter Five is the first of the three chapters that present the findings and their analysis. In this chapter, I bring in the analysis and discussion of the data that were drawn from the different research tools, and which support the suggestion that Arabic is made use of as a pedagogical tool that mediates the EFL teaching-learning activity. I present the evidence to show how the students use Arabic to facilitate their learning, how EFL teachers use their students' L1 to mediate their teaching, and how policy makers consider that a justified use of Arabic could serve as an efficient pedagogical tool that facilitates and maximises students' learning.

In Chapter Six, I present data which suggest the use of Arabic as a pedagogical tool that facilitates learning expansion in EFL classes. I report the findings to suggest that students as

well as teachers use Arabic as a learning scaffold to help students progress through their zone of proximal development. I also mention that there is a fine line between learning and learning expansion, which makes expansion a stage of learning development that is a high order of learner, but which is not always noticed. I also present data that shows how both teachers and students make use of Arabic to help EFL learning progress and develop. I conclude the chapter with a discussion on the relationship between learning expansion and knowledge creation.

On the other hand, in Chapter Seven I tackle the construct of contradictions that seem to exist between the various components and participants of the EFL teaching-learning activity. I analyse and discuss data that point to the existence of contradictions within and between the various levels of the EFL teaching-learning activity. I therefore show how the 'English only' policy is in contradiction with the practice in EFL classes, how teachers are in contradiction with the learning needs of their students, and how the students behave in contradiction to the college policy as well as to the instructions of their teachers. I made the suggestion, based on the data analysis, that these contradictions are brought about by the inconsistency in attitudes and behaviours of the participants, by a fear of stigma and pursuit of political correctness on the part of some EFL teachers, and above all by the lack of awareness shown mainly by the students.

Finally, I triangulate the findings to explain the attitudes expressed by the participants in this research towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes. Accordingly, in Chapter Eight I present a triangulation of the findings from the quantitative and the qualitative studies. I dedicate this chapter to discussing the implications of the findings on EFL teaching policy, EFL teacher training and EFL teacher recruitment in the Saudi colleges and universities. I also make recommendations for future research in order to deepen the understanding and broaden the knowledge about the role of Arabic in Saudi EFL classes. Finally, I propose the suitability of AT as a research tool to study EFL classes and their dynamics. I also share my personal experience vis-à-vis the use of Arabic in EFL classes and cite few anecdotal evidence that highlights the ethnographic aspect of this study.

Chapter One

The Introductory Chapter

'As English becomes a basic skill, so success in other areas of the curriculum becomes dependent on success in English. In effect, failure to master English as a basic skill means failure in other disciplines.' (Graddol, 2006, p 120)

1.1 Introduction

This research has sought to establish the role of Arabic in the classes of English as a foreign language (EFL) and determine how such role shapes the attitudes of the stakeholders towards the practice. Hence, it has focused on how Arabic is used by teachers and students in various classes of the English preparatory year program in a Saudi college and used questionnaires, interviews and class observation as tools to collect evidence related to the issue. The research was undertaken in an educational context that adopts the 'English only' approach as its policy, and where the use of Arabic in EFL classes is seen as taboo. The policy, which results from the adoption of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, goes against the reality in the EFL classrooms. While the facts on the ground suggest that the use of a limited amount of Arabic could be useful in mediating the EFL teaching-learning activity, especially for beginner and low-proficiency students, the practice is not welcome. In various parts of the world, however, the unfounded proscription of L1 in L2 classes has been continuously re-examined, questioned and challenged.

The use of L1 in EFL classes has been a debatable issue among scholars, researchers and practitioners for the last few decades. Whilst the monolingual policy received a lot of support in English language teaching (ELT) (e.g. Krashen, 1984; MacDonald, 1993; Polio and Duff, 1994; Long, 1996; Turnbull, 2001; Moore, 2002), calls for the inclusion of the students' mother tongue especially in the EFL context have been gaining increasing momentum (e.g. Auerbach, 1993; Atkinson, 1987 and 1993; Burden, 2000; Butzkamm, 2003 and 2007; Cook, 2001 and 2002; Cummins, 2009; Ellis, 1994; Macaro, 2005 and 2009; Mckay, 2003; Nation, 2003; Schweers,1999; Tang, 2002; Wigglesworth, 2003). Both opponents and proponents of the inclusion of L1 in ELT have their arguments, based either on research and practice or on dogma and theoretical affiliations.

Despite the absence of a cohesive theory or any substantiated research to support the 'English only' classroom dogma, EFL stakeholders and professionals in Saudi Arabia constantly warn against the use of Arabic in EFL classes and insist on the exclusive use of the English language (Jenkins, 2010). A discernible sign of the monolingual approach is exemplified by the choice of

course books that preach (CLT) and promote the exclusive use of English in EFL classes. In addition, the inclusion of 'native speakerism' (Holliday, 2005) as a condition for recruitment is another clear indication that the monolingual ideology is the one prescribed for EFL education in this country. In fact, many job advertisements make it clear that only native speakers should apply for the positions of EFL instructors or teachers.

On the other hand, research all over the world as well as experience on the ground indicate that the 'English only' approach may not be suitable for beginners in a non-English speaking context, such as the preparatory year programs in Saudi universities. For instance, the students who participated in this research study English as a foreign language and need to achieve an intermediate proficiency level in English to graduate from the college preparatory year program. Such objective is hardly ever met due partly to the fact that, by proscribing the use of Arabic, which is one of the students' favourite learning strategies, the college policy does not seem to take into account the socio-cultural background of the students.

In that the Saudi colleges that use English as a medium of instruction, EFL teachers are not allowed to make use of Arabic in their classrooms (Jenkins, 2010), although their students require it. Meanwhile, research findings suggest that the use of students' L1 facilitates comprehension in L2 classrooms. According to Mukattash, the use of L1 in EFL classes has been found to 'facilitate both teaching and learning, systematize comprehension of EFL structures and items and hence leads to meaningful learning' (2003, p. 224). Monolingual EFL classrooms in which no L1 is used may not only prove impossible but even unreal; given that L1 is always present within the learners themselves through their cognitive activities also known as the 'silent language' or 'inner speech' (De Guerrero, 2005; Vygotsky, 1986). Quite similarly, Harbord (1992) suggested that 'translation / transfer is a natural phenomenon and an inevitable part of second language acquisition, regardless of whether or not the teacher offers or 'permits' translation' (p. 351).

Classroom practice and experience suggest that beginner and low-level students would almost always need some assistance in the form of L1 use, in order to comprehend the content presented or to explain abstract notions and words. This kind of help was called Language Acquisition Support System (LASS) or environmental 'scaffolding' (Burner, 1983). In this context, Howatt (1984) predicted that any 'language teaching revolution' to come would need to include the use of L1. The same point was highlighted by Butzkamm who argued the case for the use of L1 in L2 for the following reasons, explaining that through

> using the mother tongue, we have learnt to think, learnt to communicate and acquired an intuitive understanding of grammar. The mother tongue is therefore the greatest

> asset people bring to the task of foreign language learning and provides a Language Support System. (2007, p. 71)

Vygotsky (1978) argued that this support is necessary for any learning to occur, to progress, to expand and develop. Support to learning has also been considered a very important mediation tool (Leont'ev, 1978). Referring to the English learners of French, Hammerly suggested that 'ignoring or forbidding English will not do, for learners inevitably engage in French-English associations and formulations in their mind' (1989, p. 51).

In fact, research and practice have argued that there is no sound pedagogical evidence to support the claim that the 'English only' approach could lead to outstanding learning outcomes (Miles, 2005). On the other hand, there exists a plethora of widely accepted research findings favouring the usage of L1 to teach L2. For instance, it has been reported by Garcia (1990) that lower-grade teachers found it useful to use both Spanish and English to Spanish speaking learners; whereas, with higher grade levels they used only English. Nonetheless, students were allowed to use their mother tongue for all levels with good learning outcomes. In short, there seems to be a widely-shared belief that the use of L1 can benefit the learning of L2. In fact, 'when the native language is used, practitioners, researchers, and learners consistently report positive results' (Auerbach, 1993, p 18).

While EFL Saudi students will most probably not use their English with native speakers, but rather with expatriates who speak other languages and use 'English only' as a lingua franca, the EFL policy in use continues to present the English native speaker as the model speaker. However, it has been suggested that it would not be possible for any EFL learner to attain English native speakers' proficiency (Cook, 2001). Hence, the model speaker for these learners should be a proficient EFL speaker instead; given the fact that there is no teaching method that would help them attain native speakers' communicative competence (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). In reality, the maximum level of proficiency an EFL learner could ever achieve is 'native-likeness' (Canale, 1983).

Many research studies have suggested that appropriate and judicious use of L1 in L2 classrooms yields positive results in terms of learning. For instance, Hamerly suggested that an approach that uses learners' L1 thoughtfully 'can be twice as efficient, without any loss in effectiveness, as an instruction that ignores the student's native language' (1991, p.151). The phrase 'twice as efficient' suggests that the same learning outcomes could be achieved in half the time the use of other techniques would require. As a case in point, trying to explain the English word 'faith' to a class of beginners through gestures, pictures or drawings would take longer than simply providing the equivalent word or phrase in L1. In fact, explaining the meaning

of abstract words through other pedagogical techniques might not always be effective and might probably even be confusing. In addition, going to extremes simply to avoid the use of L1 should not be the aim of EFL teachers. Instead, they should focus on delivering efficient and effective classes.

In the context of Saudi Arabia, there is a very small amount of research related to what goes on in EFL classrooms. As far as the use of Arabic in EFL classes is concerned, a thorough survey of the literature only revealed three studies (Al-Abdan, 1992; Al-Nofaie, 2010; Storch and Aldosari, 2010). Consequently, the present research aimed to fill this gap by adopting a mixed methods approach to research and by using Activity Theory as a theoretical framework, with the ultimate aim to establish the relationship between the actual role of Arabic in EFL classes and the attitudes of the stakeholders towards such practice.

1.2 The Beginning of this Research

The idea for this research was inspired by my personal experience as an EFL teacher in Saudi Arabia. Deep and sometimes heated discussions with colleagues and students regarding the use of Arabic to enhance the teaching-learning outcomes of English revealed unexpected but promising perspectives. During my five years' experience as an EFL teacher in Saudi Arabia, I faced time and again the dilemma of whether to use Arabic during my classes or not. On one hand, fellow teachers and officials advised me against such use, while on the other hand students persistently requested it. In fact, the students could not understand how an Arabic-speaking teacher of English would refrain from using Arabic to explain even abstract words and complex language functions; a practice they have been used to and which they usually expect in their EFL classes. After serious reflections, discussions and a substantial amount of reading on the subject, I realized that I was not only wrong but that my loyalty to the monolingual approach was unfair both to myself and to the students I teach. I could have spared all the time and energy I dedicated to mimes, gestures and drawings as I attempted to convey the meaning of one single word or concept, while still running the risk of confusing the students once the explanation is over. Realizing the usefulness of Arabic for my EFL classes could really be likened to Butzkamm's 'eureka' experience (2007). I learnt later on that I was not alone in realizing the usefulness of L1 in L2 classes.

In an online survey initiated by the British Council and the BBC in 2009, 79% of the 641 participants from different parts of the world reported that they used their students' mother tongue to teach English. These findings and others reported in the literature, together with my personal observations in my EFL classes and anecdotal evidence related to me by other teachers, led me to embrace the view that there is room for a 'systematic' and justified use of

the students' mother tongue in the foreign language class (Cook, 2001). Subsequently, with this practice my teaching became both interesting and enjoyable. Truth be told, the students informed me that the usage of Arabic in EFL classes was common practice in Saudi schools. On the other hand, policy makers often argue that the use of Arabic was the cause of the low-proficiency levels in English; whereas Al-Abdan (1993) reported that it was rather the uninformed use of the practice that seemed to cause these poor results. Faced with these contradicting statements, I realised that only a systematic and methodically designed research would clarify the issue.

1.2.1 The Research Rationale

In addition to the experience narrated above, the present research was also motivated by the observation that students who shifted from the Arabic only approach in high school to an 'English only' approach in college become confused, shocked or entangled in what could be termed the revolving door syndrome whereby students start and fail and start again to eventually give up (Auerbach, 1993). It has indeed been noticed that only those students who attended private English courses or those who studied at privileged schools are able to cope with the monolingual approach. During the piloting phase of the students' questionnaire used by this research, some students reported that they did not always understand what took place in their English classes. This fact supported the perception that the findings of an investigation into the issue could inform EFL pedagogy.

Recently, most colleges and universities in Saudi Arabia have adopted English as the only medium of instruction in an attempt to implement globalization trends, and in order to align education and training with the needs of the local job market. However, the educational history as well as the learning styles and strategies of the Saudi students hinder their progress in post-secondary education; as they usually end up with a proficiency in English that is below the required level (Thomson-Panos and Thomas-Ruzic, 1983). The 'English only' approach suggests that these students' previous learning, which was entirely in Arabic, may as well not exist. Phillipson suggests that 'the ethos of monolingualism implies the rejection of the experiences of other languages, meaning the exclusion of the child's most intense existential experience' (1992, p. 189).

Due to the fact that EFL teaching in Saudi Arabia is growing every day, there is a pressing need for research projects that would inform its policy. The research projects related to the use of Arabic in EFL classes were limited in their scope and focused mostly on finding out either the amount or frequency of L1 use. Some studies were quantitative, others were qualitative, but none of the studies published so far went beyond describing the phenomenon, or tried to

explain the reasons behind the attitudes of the stakeholders. The present research is a contribution towards filling this gap, and it could arguably be considered an innovative study in its context for three main reasons.

To the best of my knowledge it is the first research investigating the use of Arabic in EFL classes that involved all stakeholders (students, teachers and policy makers). It is also the first known research to make use of a mixed methods approach to study the phenomenon from different perspectives, where each research method is informed by and builds on the one preceding it. Finally, this is the first known research to use AT as a conceptual framework to interpret the findings and establish the reasons behind the attitudes of all stakeholders towards the use of L1 in L2 classes. The use of such theory was inspired by the realisation that the phenomenon would be better understood if EFL classes are treated as activity systems, and if the socio-cultural environment of the research is taken into consideration.

1.3 The Research Context

According to Brown, there seems to be an inevitable relationship between a language and the society in which it is taught (2007). In fact, 'virtually every country has some form of explicit "official" or implicit, "unofficial", policy affecting the status of its native language(s) and one or more foreign languages' (ibid, p. 203). Being a global language, English enjoys a privileged status in Saudi Arabia; and its education is generating a lot of interest, judging by the number of EFL teaching positions advertised by various institutions in the country. However, although policy makers are usually influenced by the trends in ELT's pedagogies - as was the case with CLT for the Saudi context, these new methods should be linked to the socio-cultural and political environment in which they are to be used (Cummins and Davidson, 2007). CLT may have been and could still be relatively successful in some contexts; however, it hasn't yielded the desired results in the Saudi context (Jenkins, 2010). Naturally, ELT varied from one setting to another depending on the existing 'socio-political and economic contexts' (Cummins and Davidson, 2007, p. 3). Thus, the teaching theories 'must be interpreted in light of local sociopolitical and educational realities' (ibid, p. 11).

Most learners and teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) are found in countries like Saudi Arabia where English is not an official language. These countries are located outside the 'centre' that is made of countries like Britain, Australia and North America (BANA) (Graddol, 2006); from where teaching pedagogies, textbooks and somehow even teacher training are still exported to the rest of the world. The teaching ideas and pedagogies hailing from the 'centre' assume that EFL learners want to embrace the target culture and aim to gain native speakers' competence (Cook, 2001). In the case of Saudi Arabia CLT is a good example of this imported

idea that back-fired. This communicative approach to foreign language teaching was introduced to the kingdom and adopted in 1970s, based on the widely marketed assumption that it was the most appropriate approach for EFL education. One of the immediate consequences of this implementation was to ban the use of Arabic in EFL classes.

While Saudi Arabia does not fall into the colonial contexts that inherited English from the British empire, the power of English in relation to the Saudi economy, international trade and therefore education meant that the English language gained access to the 'sphere of dominant language' and has become a language with substantial 'educational and economic legitimacy' (Cummins and Davidson, 2007, p 4). Hence in order to comprehend the nature and realities of EFL education in Saudi Arabia, it is first necessary to get acquainted with its context.

The following lines provide a brief introduction of Saudi Arabia as a country, present an overview of its educational system, and discuss the extent to which the spread of English as a global language impacts its foreign language policy. Then, the objectives set for the teaching of English at the Saudi schools and college preparatory year programs are introduced. Furthermore, the section addresses the 'English-only policy' and the *'native speakerism'* as two key and controversial notions in EFL teaching in Saudi Arabia, and discusses their implications of the policy and pedagogy of EFL teaching.

1.3.1 Saudi Arabia as a Research Context

The relevance and importance of the present research can only be appreciated against the socio-cultural context in which it took place. The Saudi socio-cultural environment is both unique and challenging. Naturally, researching EFL education in this context would also be challenging for non-Saudi researchers, given that local contexts 'shape language education research' by impacting on 'the generation of global knowledge' (Gorsuch, 2006, p 1).

Figure 1.1 The Map of Saudi Arabia where the research took place

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a modern state was unified and founded in 1932 by King Saud. It is the largest country on the Arabian Peninsula; and it is bordered by Jordan on the northwest, Iraq on the north and northeast, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates on the east, Oman on the southeast, and Yemen on the south, with the Persian Gulf to its northeast and the Red Sea to its west (see Figure1.1). The kingdom is usually referred to as Saudi Arabia, KSA or SA.

In 2010, the population of Saudi Arabia was estimated to be around 29 million, including about 5.6 million foreigner residents. The country adheres to a strict interpretation of the Islamic religious law (Shari'a) which means that all public and cultural actions and activities must conform to a strictly defined set of standards and ethics based on the teachings of Islamic. Ethnically, most Saudis are Arab but some are of mixed ethnic origin and have descended from Turks, Iranians, Indonesians, Indians, Africans, and others. Except for western and Asian expatriates, nearly everybody in Saudi Arabia speaks Arabic.

Arabic, the official language in Saudi Arabia, is also the language of Islam and of the Quran as well as the language in which the rich literary and cultural heritage of the country is expressed. This fact may affect the attitudes of the students toward English as a foreign language. Arabic for them is not only an endeared official language, but a sacred one too. In addition, the spread of English in Saudi Arabia came about as a result of the failed Arabization efforts which started in 1960s, and which aimed to translate knowledge and its sources in foreign languages into Arabic (Zughoul, 2003). According to Al-Nofaie, 'the position of English as the world's prestigious language seems to place demands on citizens to be able to communicate with people from different parts of the world' (2010, p 65). In fact, English has improved its status in the Arab world to *become* 'admired by the Arabs and is highly desirable to be taught to children and to be spoken among the educated individuals' (Al-Shurafa, 2010, p 3).

1.3.2 English as a Global Language

According to Hasman (2000), over 1.4 billion people lived in countries where English enjoyed official status, over 70% of the world's scientists read English, over 85% of the world's mail was written in English and 90% of information in the world's electronic retrieval system was stored in English. These figures must have increased in the last ten years or so; and Hasman's prediction that by 2010 the number of the speakers of English as a second or foreign language (SL/FL) will far exceed that of its native speakers appears to have come true.

However, the spread of English has also been described as new-colonialism that uses English as its most efficient tool. English is believed to owe this power to factors like 'British colonialism, international interdependence, revolutions in communications and commerce, and because

English is the language of the USA, a major economic, political and military force in the contemporary world' (Phillipson, 1992, p 23). In fact, most countries came under economic, educational, cultural and social pressure to include English in their language policies in what Tollefson termed 'standard language ideology' (2007, p 26). According to Lippi-Green, standard language ideology is

> a bias toward an abstract, idealized homogenous spoken language, which is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc institutions and which names as its model the written language, but which is drawn primarily from the spoken language of the upper middle class. (1997, p 64)

Tollefson's comment on this definition advanced that an example of standard language ideology is the adoption of a language in tertiary education based on common sense and sustained *'through sanctions against those who do not speak the standard, rewards (e.g. good grades in school) for those who do'* (2007, p. 26). As a case in point, Saudi Arabia decided to teach English as a foreign language in schools and also adopted it as a medium of instruction in colleges and universities. This decision created a sense of favouritism towards those who enjoy good English proficiency; they get good grades in college and better jobs when they graduate.

1.4 English Language Teaching in Saudi Arabia

The teaching of English in Saudi Arabia is no exception to other countries in the Middle East. The educational environment in Arab countries is relatively similar; since English is taught as a foreign language in most of these countries and therefore does not affect their daily life practices. In Saudi schools and colleges, English is taught like any other subjects with the main aim of passing exams and moving on to the next stage. The 2004 ministerial report on the development of education in Saudi Arabia stated that Saudi higher education was facing fierce competition; and that there was a need *to* align educational programs in tertiary institutions to the needs of the globalized economy (The Ministry of Education, 2004). Part of this orientation was the adoption of English as a medium of instruction in higher education. In fact, according to Zughoul (1999) the spread of English has turned it into such a global language that any country aspiring to secure a place under the umbrella of globalization needs to adopt it in many walks of its life, ranging from education and employment to trade and economy.

The Saudi government has realized the importance of English as a global language and encouraged its teaching starting from the intermediate school level, and made it the medium of instruction in most colleges and universities. Prior to 1970, instruction in higher education in Saudi Arabia was carried out entirely in Arabic. When King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM) was established in the early 1970s, it became the first tertiary education institution to adopt English as its medium of instruction for all its courses except for Islamic

Studies and Arabic. Afterward, other universities and colleges followed suit. In the meantime, Arabic continued to be the medium of instruction in the primary, intermediate and high schools. Recently, there were discussions on the introduction of English at the primary school level in line with the worldwide response to globalization. One of the immediate results of the global nature of English is that a Saudi graduate has more chances of employment and promotion if she/he speaks good English; which is the lingua franca in most workplaces in Saudi Arabia. Due to its usefulness, 'English is less loved but more used. [It is] richer, more precise, more logical, more sophisticated, and more competence related... The real 'powerhouse' is still English' (Fishman, 1992, p 21).

According to (Pennycook, 2007), there is a close relationship between ELT and colonialism; as ELT developed in the colonial context and continues to the present day through teaching materials and the cultural components they contain. Tollefson (2000) (cited in Pennycook, 2007, p 17)) refers to English as the language of colonialism the use of which constitutes a paradox, given that 'at a time when English is widely seen as a key to the economic success of nations and the economic well-being of individuals, the spread of English contributes to significant social, political, and economic inequalities'. Tollefson added that on one hand English fulfils 'the perceived need for one language of international communication' and on the other hand 'the spread of English presents a formidable obstacle to education, employment and other activities requiring English proficiency' (ibid). This is gradually becoming the case in Saudi Arabia where English has started to hold the key to both academic and professional success.

According to Kachru's three circles model (1989) (see Figure 1. 2), Saudi Arabia falls within the expanding circle where English is taught as a foreign language (Crystal, 1997). The need to facilitate the mobility of Saudi students sponsored by the government to continue their education in foreign English mediated universities resulted in the adoption of English as the medium of instruction for many subjects such as science, medicine, dentistry, engineering and computers. Furthermore, the country is developing rapidly and requires an increasing number of English speakers in light of the global nature of its economy, education and various aspects of life. Due to the fact that the Saudi economy has achieved international recognition and interest, English has been adopted as the main language of communication with the rest of the world.

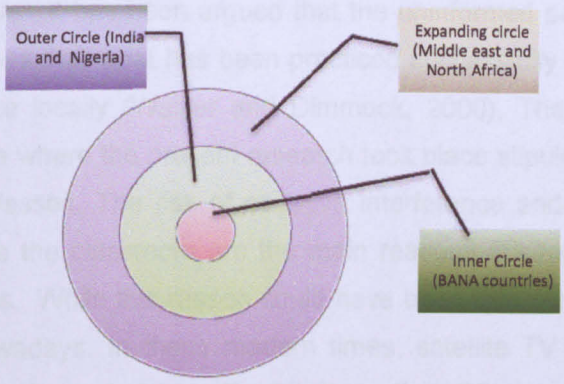

Figure 1. 2: The Three Circles' Model (Kachru, 1989)

1.4.1 College English Preparatory Programs

The teaching of English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia starts at the intermediate school level and is the medium of instruction in most post-secondary institutions. Hence it is taught intensively to preparatory year students to prepare them to continue their undergraduate education with success. For this reason, all English mediated colleges and universities have introduced a compulsory preparatory year program offering an intensive English program at the rate of 18 to 20 hours a week for 32 weeks. The main objectives of this program are:

- To teach students the mastery of all four skills of the English language (Listening, speaking, reading and writing), enhance competencies in grammar and vocabulary, and reshape their learning styles and strategies in order to enable them to continue their academic education with confidence and success
- To endow students with a language (English in this case) that will connect them to the rest of the world
- To allow students to broaden their knowledge through sources that use English
- To encourage students to read in English and therefore get exposed to new world views
- To prepare students for Higher education endeavours in English speaking countries

The college English preparatory year program is a very important stage in college education in Saudi Arabia. It is also a challenging gateway for the students and some of them sometimes struggle to get through it. New students join the program with extremely low proficiency levels in English. This has been demonstrated by the results of the placement test held at the beginning of each term. During their first EFL classes, they need to be assisted in their learning of English as they start acquiring the basics of the language. For this reason, a selected and justified use of Arabic as a pedagogical tool is made use of so as to render the teaching material comprehensible.

However, it has been argued that the uninformed policy advocating the English-only approach assumes that what has been practiced successfully in the West would also make a successful practice locally (Walker and Dimmock, 2000). The 'English only' policy implemented at the college where the present research took place stipulates that the use of Arabic is not allowed in EFL classes. The risk of negative interference and the lack of sufficient exposure to English outside the classroom are the main reasons advanced to proscribe the use of Arabic in EFL classes. While this reason could have been true some thirty years ago, it does not seem to be so nowadays. In these modern times, satellite TV channels and the Internet are formidable sources for materials in English that afford EFL learners with rich opportunities to get exposed to unlimited amounts of English content (Brown, 2007). It was precisely this contradictory situation that influenced the choice of the preparatory English program as a research context.

1.5 The Aim of this Research

Because the 'English only' policy reinforces the hegemony of English, it has been labelled 'linguicism' or 'linguistic imperialism' (e.g. Canagarajah, 1999; Phillipson, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, 1994; Scollon, 2004). In order to avoid this 'linguicism', Brown cautioned that as teachers of English 'one of our primary tenets should be the highest respect for the languages and culture of our students' (2007, p. 206). It is therefore the duty of EFL practitioners in Saudi Arabia or similar contexts to look for ways to include Arabic in their EFL classes; through the development of pedagogies and techniques that are culturally sensitive and practically useful. Currently, the learning outcomes of the EFL education in Saudi Arabia are not deemed satisfactory by the policy makers due to the poor results of the students. There are various reasons behind these poor results; among which we find the teaching methodology used and the EFL course books adopted, the characteristics of the Saudi learners and the teaching styles of the EFL teachers.

There have been calls from EFL teachers for a 'judicious' inclusion of Arabic at the beginner stages in the learning of English. Such inclusion would contribute to a pedagogy that is both context-sensitive and learner-appropriate as it would match the learning strategies and styles of the Saudi students. The need for pedagogy of this nature was also motivated by the fact that the teaching of English in Saudi Arabia is guided by untested assumptions and is influenced by teaching methodologies hatched in the West. For instance, the adoption of the 'English only' policy in the classroom and the use of the native speakerism criteria for recruitment are two notions that are of particular relevance to this research as they characterise EFL education in Saudi Arabia.

1.5.1 The 'English only' Policy

The extreme assertion that only English should be used in ELT classrooms stems from the one sided view of the world expressed usually by the monolingual few (Pennycook, 1994). One of the implications of this belief is that only English native speakers would make excellent teachers. This phenomenon, which Phillipson (1992) labelled a 'fallacy' and which seems to be held as an absolute truth by a number of stakeholders in the Saudi EFL education, appears to be in stark contrast with the fact that various varieties of English are being used in different parts of the world.

For instance, the variety that most speakers of English use as a lingua-franca in many parts of the world is International English. This could suggest that it is no more necessary to teach a specific variety, except for consistency and to avoid confusing students. Along the same lines, it is no more necessary to use the monolingual approach as English should be taught in a way that yields tangible learning outcomes. In the case of Saudi college preparatory classes, the use of Arabic could be used to facilitate and maximise the learning of English. Furthermore, non-native English teachers could also do the job that was supposedly reserved for the English native speaker teachers.

In many countries where English is taught as a foreign language, the native speaker has always been considered the model for students to emulate. However, research has shown that it is very hard to define a native speaker as there are many types of English native speakers just as there is a multitude of varieties of English. In addition, EFL students could not easily use English like its speakers do, and native likeness therefore seems more realistic and practical for these students. According to Widdowson (1992), a non-native English teacher could be more suitable to teach beginners, as he/she can understand their mistakes due to the fact that he/she shares the first language with them. Research has also shown that bilingual teachers are more suitable for L2 learners at beginner levels (Cook, 2002).

In the context of Saudi Arabia, EFL teachers who are classified as native speakers are preferred over non-native teachers. In fact, native speakers of English who are citizens of Britain, the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand or South Africa still get the highest salaries as they are seen as the most suitable teachers for EFL classes. However, warnings have been raised that native speakers will become less important as the majority of the world's English teachers will be non-native speakers. For instance, Graddol (2006) expected that non-native speakers will be increasingly used to teach English. So, new ELT pedagogical approaches that don't set the native speaker as a model for the learners and that take into consideration their L1 will also emerge.

1.6 Conclusion

In this introduction chapter, I have depicted a general picture of the socio-cultural context in which the research took place. I have also introduced Saudi Arabia as a research context and presented an overview of EFL education in view of the impact that English as a global language has on it. I have also listed the objectives of the teaching of English in Saudi Arabia and shed some light on the preparatory year English program. Finally, the section concluded with the discussion of two notions that are very salient in EFL education in Saudi Arabia and which are also inter-related; i.e., the English-only policy and the native speaker notion and their impact on the policy and pedagogy of English. The research context has been introduced in order to highlight the relevance of the research background in understanding the attitudes of the stakeholders towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes. Policy makers in this context are remarkably moving towards associating English with education, employment, trade and economy. However, faced with the unsatisfactory results of the students' learning outcomes, it has to be cautioned that the 'English only' policy should be re-examined based on research findings instead of perceptions drawn from conventional wisdom and common sense.

In the following chapter, I situate the study within its field and show the gap of knowledge it aims to contribute to filling by surveying the literature and reporting the findings of research studies carried in various parts of the words. I also introduce the various positions as expressed by a number of scholars who expressed their positions on the issue.

Chapter Two

The Literature Survey

2.1 Introduction

Researching the use of the first language in the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) is not a straightforward task as it involves drawing on many subjects across the field of applied linguistics; including teaching methodology, psycholinguistics (e.g. learner differences and learning strategies), as well as sociolinguistics (e.g. code-switching and language policy). In addition, such study needs to explore the views expressed by both scholars and researchers with regards to the use of L1 in L2 classes. Accordingly, this literature survey chapter introduces some of the main aspects that are relevant to foreign language education and discusses the relevance of L1 as one of the very important factors that need to be considered, especially in the case of the EFL classes that take place in countries where exposure to English is confined to the EFL classrooms. The chapter also reviews some of the teaching methods used in L2 education and mentions the eclectic approach as symptomatic of the post method era. It also discusses the input theory and the prior learning theory as two learning paradigms relevant to this research; as well as the individual learning differences in L2 education as equally important factors that are of relevance to this study. The second part of this chapter covers the views and attitudes of various scholars toward the use of the learners' L1 in L2 classes and explores some of the research studies that focussed on this issue.

Prior to delving into the exploration of some teaching methodologies in the area of second and foreign language education and their positions vis-à-vis the use of L1 in L2 classrooms, some definitions are appropriate at this juncture. In addition, a brief discussion of key terms used in this study, such as acquisition vs. learning and second vs. foreign language, is required. Other terms will be defined as they are mentioned. However, while the introduction of the language teaching methods will not be detailed and comprehensive, the positions adopted by these methods toward the use of the L1 in the L2 classroom will be highlighted.

2.2 Defining Key Terms

According to Harmer (2007), there are four levels of methodology involved in the teaching of foreign languages. Approach, which figures at the top of the '*hierarchy*' (Antony, 1963) cited in (Richards and Rodgers, 2001), refers to 'theories about the nature of language learning which are at the source of the way things are done in the classroom and which provide the reason for doing so' (Harmer, 2007, p 62). This definition is quite similar to the one proposed by Richards

and Rodgers who define *approach* as 'theories about the nature of language and language learning that serve as the source of practices and principles in language teaching' ((2001, p. 20).

At the second level of this hierarchy is the method which 'constitutes an interpretation of a given approach or 'the practical realization of an approach' (Harmer, 2001, p.78). Ultimately, the realisation of a method manifests through a selection of classroom procedures and a set of teaching techniques. An example of a technique in an EFL lesson could be scanning or skimming in a reading activity or the silent viewing of a movie in preparation for a speaking activity (Harmer, 2007).

In this study approach is used to mean the theoretical and philosophical set of principles put into practice in a manner that is both appropriate and relevant to the context in which these principles are implemented. This application comes in the form of methods, procedures and techniques. A pedagogical method on the other hand means the classroom activities, the role of the teacher and the teaching materials to be used for the implementation of a syllabus (Harmer, 2007; Richard and Rogers, 2001). Finally, a method manifests itself in the classroom through teaching procedures and techniques. Figure 2.1 below shows this hierarchical relationship based on the model set by Antony (1963) cited in (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p 19).

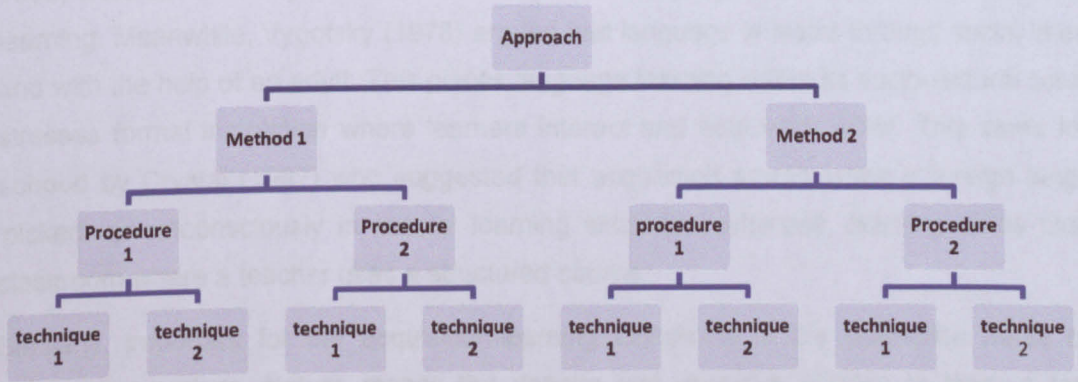

Figure 2.1 Methodological Hierarchy

It is worth mentioning at this juncture that in the post method era the word method has become elusive and thereofre not easy to define. While the word method could be used to refer to the established metods developed by language pedagogy specialists,it fails to describe what the practioners in the classrooms follow in their daily teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). This is so

because teachers in the postmethd era have grown confident enough to develop their own teaching approach and methodology. This approach is refered to as the eclectic approach.

2.2.1 Acquisition versus Learning

This dichotomy has been long standing in the field of Applied Linguistics. While for some scholars the two terms could be used distinctively from each other, others argued that they are interchangeable. For instance, Ellis made no difference between language acquisition and language learning as far as second language is concerned and used these terms "interchangeably" (1994, p. 6). In fact, although language acquisition and language learning refer to two different processes, based on the presumption that acquisition is naturally occurring while learning is formal and planned they are used interchangeably; '... we use the words learning and acquisition interchangeably, although they are sometimes used in the L2 literature to distinguish between conscious and subconscious language development' (Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982, p 11).

In addition, the 'acquisition-learning' dichotomy is an important distinction drawn in the 'monitor model' where acquisition is considered 'subconscious and guided by the learner's innate mechanisms along natural developmental sequences' (Littlewood, 2006, p 516), while learning is seen as 'conscious and often occurs through instruction and error correction' (ibid). The theories of Language Acquisition Device (LAD) and the Universal Grammar (UG) (Chomsky, 1962) were advanced by the mentalist's emphasis to highlight the importance of acquisition over learning. Meanwhile, Vygotsky (1978) argued that language is learnt through social interactions and with the help of an adult. This places language learning within its socio-cultural context and stresses formal instruction where learners interact and help each other. This same idea was echoed by Crystal (1987) who suggested that acquisition occurs when a foreign language is 'picked up' unconsciously in natural learning situations; whereas, learning takes place in a classroom where a teacher uses a structured course.

Similarly, important for the acquisition-learning dichotomy is the distinction made between nature and nurture. Nature means the genetic and cognitive abilities to learn a language; whereas, nurture refers to the role of practice and active learning in the acquisition or learning of a language. Chomsky adopted a nativist view towards the issue and contended that a child is born with a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) and in possession of a Universal Grammar (UG) that makes her/him predisposed to learn any language (Chomsky, 1975). Chomsky's theory came as a reaction to the behaviourist contention that 'language is a set of habits that can be acquired by the process of conditioning' (Brown, 2007, p.39). The innateness hypothesis

was criticised partly for the implication that without much effort, any one could learn any language.

Lightbown and Spada suggest that a distinction should be drawn between a 'natural' language learning setting and a 'traditional' one (1993, pp. 71-2). The natural acquisition results from a natural language learning setting, where there are no formal instructions or direct corrections. The learner in this situation interacts with the users of the target language and acquires, perhaps, unconsciously, how that particular language is used in various situations and for different purposes. In this case, the language the learner is exposed to is natural as it is used by its native speakers. In addition, there is no obvious external pressure on the learner to master specific skills of the target language. In a traditional language learning context, errors are corrected as accuracy is valued over fluency. In addition, the learner is exposed to modified or simplified language input and the interaction of native speakers is not similar to that encountered in the natural language learning context. Besides, teachers usually exert pressure on the learners to meet certain standards within a specific period of time.

In his critique of this traditional distinction drawn between language acquisition and language learning, Rampton considers this dichotomy to be 'part of a larger language ideology' (1999, p. 316). The author is of the view that the classification presented in (Lightbown and Spada, 1993) is too narrow to cover all possible language learning situations. Indeed, there are many other language situations with varying degrees of social interaction, discourse and exposure to the target language as is the case of the situations where code switching is used to interact. Rampton argues that language learning, and not just acquisition, can also occur in contexts that have been labelled as natural situations; citing play grounds that involve interlocutors from different ethnic and language backgrounds as a case in point. Seemingly in Rampton's view, it is not a straightforward task to distinguish between 'natural' and 'instructional' language learning as the two are interwoven and may take place both at the same time; although the social dynamics have some influence on the overall learning process. In fact, Rampton suggests that "instead of talking about 'guided' versus 'spontaneous', 'formal' versus 'informal', or 'classroom' versus 'natural' settings, more progress towards understanding the sociolinguistics aspects of the second language learning could be made if we 'distinguish between language learning situations where the ideological emphasis is on social differences ('other-language learning'), and language learning situations where ideologies stress social similarities ('additional-language learning')' (ibid, p. 327).

In my view, while the distinction between natural and traditional language learning drawn by Lightbown and Spada (1993) may be true for contexts where the learner is exposed to the

target language in its natural context as is the case with immigrants or refugees, this may not be so true for contexts where the target language is a foreign language. In this context, acquisition may also take place but through different parameters. The learner's interactions may not always be with the native speakers of the target language, especially if that language is used as a lingua-franca as is the case with English in many parts of this world. Second, the language itself may not be all natural as it could come in the form of movies or internet content which may not necessarily be in natural language since it could have been modified. Rampton's emphasis on the socio-cultural dynamics, in distinguishing between language acquisition and language learning or both, has made this decision even more challenging given that these dynamics are forever changing. As the world gets globalised further, interactions between various communities are facilitated through migration or through the use of pervasive social media which could result in the emergence of new language learning situations.

In this research, language learning refers to both learning and acquisition. In my view and as far as foreign languages are concerned, both acquisition and learning take place interchangeably and in varying degrees as language could be both acquired and learnt. For instance, when language items are naturally 'picked up' without outside help, that could be called acquisition, but when language is learned with the help of another person who instructs and corrects mistakes, it's a case of language learning. In addition, learners acquire or 'pick up' words unconsciously on their own while watching movies or through chatting over the internet. At the same time, they learn in the classroom through structured and formal instruction. For the sake of this research, EFL learning as well as acquisition both take place within the classroom as well as outside of it whenever learners are exposed to English language content.

A further distinction is that acquisition is usually associated with L1; whereas L2 may be acquired, learnt or both as explained above. For the purpose of this research, L1 refers to the first language acquired by the students which is usually their mother tongue. Any language or languages acquired or learnt subsequent to L1 are treated as L2. In turn, L2 could stand for either a second or a foreign language.

2.2.2 Second Language versus Foreign Language

Second language (SL) and foreign language (FL) can be perceived of as different in terms of their educational purposes in two ways; based on the geographical location of such language education and also with reference to the socio-political function the language in question plays in its environment. According to Littlewood, a 'second language' enjoys 'societal functions' in the country or community where it is taught/learnt (2006, p. 502); such as the case of English in Britain, Australia and North America (BANA) where English is taught to immigrants, or the

teaching of English in most countries that once made up the British Empire. The teaching of English as a second language is referred to as ESL whereas a 'foreign language' is learnt outside its original context, as is the case with ELT in the Gulf and North Africa. This is known as the teaching of English as a foreign language or EFL. Further details on the relevance of the socio-cultural context in defining language policy have been discussed in the previous chapter.

2.3 Language Teaching Methodologies and the Use of L1 in L2 Classes

Literature on foreign or second language education abounds with different views regarding the use of (L1) in L2 classrooms. The use of L1 was the norm during the period known as the pre-reform era when Grammar Translation (GT) was in use (Howatt, 1984, 2004; Richards and Rodgers, 2001). This attitude changed with the reform in foreign language education that took place after the First World War (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). From that time on, most popular English language teaching methods either discouraged or abolished the use of L1 in L2 (e.g. Cole, 1998; Cook, 2001 and 2002; Prodromou, 2000 and 2002). In fact, some curricula, syllabi and teaching materials reflected this attitude (e.g. Atkinson, 1987 and 1993; Buckmaster, 2002; Cook, 2001 and 2002; Hawks, 2001; Swan, 1985).

In the following lines, I will introduce a number of language methodologies and focus on their positions towards the use of L1 in EFL classes. I will also discuss the two diverging views regarding the use of L1 in L2 classes, and shed some light on the post method era.

2.3.1 Methods in Favour of L1 Use in EFL Classes

At the time when GT was in use, the goal of foreign language education was to allow its learners to be able to read foreign literature and benefit from the intellectual development that could result from foreign language study (Richards and Rogers, 2001). For this purpose, GT 'emphasised the provision of explicit knowledge through rule explanation and of learning simultaneously through all four skills' (Ellis, 1994, p. 569), and grammar was taught deductively through the presentation of its rules during translation exercises. GT was mostly associated with the excessive use of L1 to teach L2, hence the word 'translation' contained in its name. L1 was the medium of instruction for GT, but the Reform Movement which came as a reaction to GT, abolished the use of L1 in L2 education (Richards and Rogers, 2001).

The issue of L1 presence in L2 classes has since then become controversial and has therefore given rise to two major approaches. On one hand, a view known as the monolingual approach or in the case of this research the 'English only' position claims that there is no role for L1 in L2 classes. On the other hand, a different view suggests that the use of L1 in L2 classes is useful and may even sometimes be necessary.

The use of the learners' L1 in L2 education has been a matter of controversy for quite some time (e.g. Atkinson, 1987; Auerbach 1993, Cook, 2002; Cummins, 2009; Duff and Polio, 1990; Macaro; 2005). It was an issue when calls to abolish GT were voiced, it was an issue when L1 use in L2 was abolished, and it has once again become an issue as research findings started suggesting that the use of L1 in L2 classes could be useful (Butzkamm, 2003). Up until recently, the use of L1 is hardly tolerated and is only used with a sense of guilt. Prodromou compared the use of L1 to 'a skeleton in the cupboard', 'a taboo subject', and 'a source of embarrassment' (2002, p. 6). In light of the research findings bearing on the topic, many scholars have recently called for a re-examination or even a re-evaluation of the monolingual approach to foreign language teaching, especially of the 'English only' policy (e.g. Auerbach, 2003; Cook, 2001; Butzkamm, 2003 and 2007)

In addition, various pedagogical methods such as the Bilingual Method, the Community Language Teaching Method and the Concurrent Method called for the use of L1 in L2 classes in different ways and for different reasons. These methods, which came as reactions to the monolingual paradigm, suggested that the use of L1 could be beneficial to L2 teaching-learning process. In particular, its proponents maintained that such practice helps in leading foreign language learners towards a satisfactory degree of communicative competence through the combined use of both L1 and L2. Nonetheless, the idea was not to revert to the GT, but merely to use L1 as a learning aid when the situation in the classroom calls for such use. Dodson clarified this point stating that

> the model for L2 or FL teaching methods should be the natural second language learning process of the young bilingual, not the language learning process of the young monolingual, who by definition, has no experience whatever of acquiring a second language. (1985, p. 29)

The adoption of the bilingual method allows foreign language learners to take shortcuts in foreign language learning by reverting to their first language when they need to ask about how to say the equivalents of L1 words in L2. The use of the mother tongue is a form of scaffolding (Bruner, 1982), or a tool to progress through the learners' zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). In fact, the practice affords foreign language learners the opportunity to ask their classmates who are more proficient for help. This learning strategy is in line with the social and interactional aspect of the language learning process. Indeed, Vygotsky suggested in his theory of learning that learning in general is socially based and that language acquisition is facilitated through social interactions with others (1978).

Similarly, the New Concurrent Method promoted the simultaneous use of L1 and L2 and suggested that L2 teachers should be able to strike the right balance between the uses of these

languages (Brown, 2007). In the same vein, the Community Language Learning method, which derived its ideas from Curran's Counselling Learning Approach, maintained that language learning is socially based and social interactions are essential for language acquisition (ibid). The teacher for this method is seen as a Language counsellor who understands the students and assists them in overcoming their fears regarding the learning of a foreign language. Thus, once a student has decided on what to say in the foreign language, she/he would privately communicate the idea to the teacher using L1 and the teacher would translate it for her/him into the foreign language.

More recently, the Functional Translation Method too called for the appropriate use of L1 for brainstorming and warm-up activities (Weschler, 1997). The method was a hybrid of the Communicative Language Teaching approach and the Grammar Translation method. Weschler also suggested that L1 should be used to explain the abstract words or expressions that cannot be easily explained especially at beginner levels, indicating that translation may save time. In addition, he proposed that L1 can be used to discuss the aims of a course which might result in motivating L2 learners.

2.3.2 Methods that Banned the Use of L1 in L2 Classes

Following the demise of GT, most of the foreign language methods that followed were mostly against the use of L1 in L2 classes. The Audio-Lingual Method, the Direct Method and the Communicative Language Approach are examples of these theories. They are discussed in the following lines with a focus on their positions towards the use of L1 in L2 classes.

The audio-Lingual Method (ALM) was mostly known for its abolition of L1 in L2 classes. Its proponents advanced that L1 interferes with and hampers the learning of L2 through negative transfer. In fact, Lado (1957), cited in (Gass and Selinker, 2008, p 89), explained that learners transfer both the forms and meanings of their first language and culture to the forms and meanings of the second language and culture. Followers of ALM maintained that whether language transfer is to be described as positive or negative would depend on the degree of similarity shared by the first and the second language. For instance, an Italian person learning Spanish would make use of positive transfer as the two languages are relatively similar both structurally and lexically. However, transfer from Italian to English would constitute a case of negative transfer as the two languages are quite dissimilar (Gass and Selinker, 2008).

ALM also considered language as a set of habits to be learned through imitations, repetitions and drills. While behaviourism valued prior knowledge and argued that as children we 'continue our linguistic growth by analogizing from what we already know or by mimicking the speech of others, ALM went against that principle by completely abolishing L1 from L2 classrooms and by

considering that the learning of L2 is a completely different 'task' from that of learning L1 Fries (1957) cited in (Gass and Selinker, 2008, p 95). In addition, this method brought about the idea that L1 was a major source of errors in L2 education. Research has established, however, that errors are always transferred (e.g. Duskove, 1984 and Zobl, 1980 cited in (Gass and Selinker, 2008)), and that L1 negative interference with L2 learning is only one factor among many that impact foreign language acquisition as is suggested by the following citation:

> There are other factors that may influence the process of acquisition, such as innate principles of language, attitude, motivation, aptitude, age, other languages known, and so forth...Suffice it to say that the acquisition of a second language is far too complex a phenomenon to be reduced to a single explanation. (Gass and Selinker, 2008, p 100)

Some of the individual differences mentioned in this citation and other influencing factors relevant to foreign language education are discussed further on in this chapter. In short, L1 for the ALM was nothing more than a source of negative interference that hampers L2 education.

The Direct Method (DM) as well came about as one of the pedagogical reactions to the unpopularity of GT (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). For DM, classroom instruction should be conducted exclusively in the target language and only everyday vocabulary and sentences ought to be taught. In addition, a greater focus was put on oral communication; skills were built up around question-and-answer exchanges between teachers and students. Grammar was taught inductively while concrete vocabulary was taught through demonstrations, the use of real objects (realia), pictures and drawings excluding therefore any use of L1. With the influence of Krashen's input hypothesis, the L2 input was highly refined in order to be comprehensible and the classes were teacher-centred and relied mainly on drills (Krashen, 1982). But most of all, L1 was completely abolished from L2 classrooms.

2.3.2.1 Communicative Language Teaching

Since its inception, Communicative Language Teaching or CLT has gained popularity especially in the contexts where English is considered a foreign language. However, CLT's adoption in the Saudi Context has led to the development of negative attitudes towards the use of Arabic (L1) in EFL classes. For this reason and because CLT is the teaching methodology currently used in EFL classes in Saudi Arabia and therefore the pedagogical approach that matters the most to this research, it is here discussed in more details.

CLT draws on various pedagogical ideas and from a wide range of methodological approaches, a fact that makes it adaptable to a range of different learners' needs, styles and contexts. The approach started from a theory of language as a means of communication and draws on Michael Halliday's account of language as 'functional'; the instrumental function which means

using language to get things done and the representational function which refers to using language to communicate information (Halliday, 1973). But what makes CLT the favoured teaching methodology in EFL classes?

According to Larsen-Freeman foreign language teachers have realised that

> 'being able to communicate required more than linguistic competence; it required communicative competence, which is knowing when and how to say what to whom (Hymes, 1971). Such observations contributed to a shift in the field in the late 1970s and early 1980s from a linguistic structure-centered approach to a Communicative Approach (Widdowson, 1990).' (2002, p 121)

Larsen-Freeman also listed the following as CLT principles:

- The goal is to enable students to communicate in the foreign language.
- The teacher is a facilitator and not just a source of information.
- CLT focuses on activities that seek to enhance communication.
- The teacher encourages communication to take place among students.
- Communication activities increase students' motivation.
- Language is to be used for communication and for this purpose both linguistic and communicative competences need to be learned.
- Language functional aspect is more important than its form.
- Students' L1 is allowed in very small quantities, however L2 should be the language used for communication and throughout class activities.
- Fluency is valued over accuracy and teachers take this into consideration when evaluating their students' productions.

Although some limited use of L1 is allowed, it is not advised or encouraged as it is to be used only as a last resort. The focus for CLT is mainly on developing communicative competence, but it is not quite clear which communicative competence is meant.

Foreign language research was influenced by many disciplines enjoying mostly linguistic and psycholinguistic bias. With the widespread of CLT, the sociolinguistic notion of communicative competence was set as the goal of second and foreign language teaching and learning (Mitchell and Myles, 2004, p 3). It is necessary to discuss this construct at this juncture, given the importance of CLT in EFL teaching in Saudi Arabia and because of the significance of developing students' communicative competence. This requires us to define communicative competence and show the meaning it carries in this paper.

Perhaps the most widely circulated definition of communicative competence is the one suggested by Canale and Swain who clarified the aims of the communicative approach:

> The communicative approach ... is ... an integrative one in which emphasis is on preparing second language learners to exploit — initially through aspects of sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence acquired through experience in communicative use of the first or dominant language — those grammatical features of the second language that are selected on the basis of, among other criteria, their grammatical and cognitive complexity, transparency with respect to communicative function, probability of use by native speakers, generalisability to different communicative functions and contexts, and relevance to the learners' communicative needs in the second language. (1980, p. 29)

Communicative competence presupposes other competencies such as linguistics competence, discourse competence, pragmatic competence, sociolinguistics competence and sociocultural competence (Littlewood, 2006, p 503). As a matter of fact, the central aim of the communicative approach is to help language learners to communicate effectively and appropriately in a way that enables them to convey their ideas to others as well as understand what others say in the context where the conversation takes place. Nevertheless, the target for young and adult EFL learners should not be reaching native speakers fluency level as L2 users are different from L1 users. Indeed and as it has already been mentioned in the Introductory Chapter, 'it is impossible for any L2 learner ever to become a native speaker without going back in time to their childhood: nothing learned in later life could qualify you as a native speaker' (Cook, 2005, p 49).

2.3.2.2 Communicative Language Teaching and the EFL learner

The purpose of CLT is to assist L2 students to communicate properly and effectively in the target language; since the objective for these learners is to express their ideas and needs in a clear and fluent fashion and understand other L2 speakers. This very outcome is fundamental to the objectives of the preparatory year English program at the Saudi college where the present study took place. Wilkins summarised the purpose and rationale of CLT as an approach that focuses on the function of language and stated that 'the whole basis of a notional approach to language teaching derives from the conviction that what people want to do through language is more important than mastery of the language as an unapplied system' (1976, p. 42).

While this assertion sounds reasonable and would generate agreement across the board as it stresses the functional aspect of the language above its form, the definition fails short of mentioning that practice and interactions in specific contexts are essential prerequisites for communication to take place (Widdowson, 1984). I would like to argue that communication in an EFL classroom would usually take place among students in L2 only if they feel confident that they possess the minimum amount of language required to interact with their classmates and teacher. Naturally, at the beginners' level, students do not yet possess the required knowledge of English to conduct their conversation entirely in L2. Hence, a justified use of L1 may well be

advised or perhaps even encouraged as a strategy for both learning and communication in as it would probably increase self-confidence and motivation. Most of all, providing comprehensible input is essential for learners to learn. It could be suggested at this point based on the reality lived in the classroom that CLT's failure to incorporate L1 use as a pedagogical tool could end up being identified by this research as one of its shortcomings.

2.4 Post Method, Eclectic Approach or Critical Pedagogy?

Many foreign language teaching methods emerged and disappeared during the last century. In recent years, the role of methods in foreign language teaching classes has started to give way to a new teaching approach labelled the eclectic approach. This 'post method era' (Kumaravadivelu, 1994), also labelled as the 'beyond methods' era (ibid), is characterized by the engagement in language teaching without reference to a specific method or approach. In fact, the term eclectic approach is what most language teachers would use to describe their approach to teaching. Although most of these teachers learned about the various existing methods during their teacher training programs, evidence suggest that the classroom reality determines what practice to adopt (Liu, 2004). Still, language teachers continue to draw on various methods and approaches to come up with their own approach as a response to the learning needs of their students and to the socio-cultural contexts in which their practice takes place. Thus, teachers learn about different methods and approaches to develop pedagogical consciousness and awareness and to develop their own approaches. Indeed, 'teachers can choose to teach differently from the way they were taught' (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p ix).

Thus, many teachers have adopted the eclectic approach which consists of moving away from using one specific teaching methodology in favour of a variety of techniques and activities drawn from a variety of language teaching approaches and methodologies. Most EFL teachers have taken ownership of their teaching and have become confident enough to decide what methodology or approach to use, informed by their learners individual differences, learning styles and strategies as well as the learning objectives of the course they are in charge of. Hence, most current EFL course books have been designed in a flexible way to fit in with the post method era.

These teachers, who adopted the eclectic approach, have resigned to doing so through a process of reflective teaching. They have thus evolved from the passive technicians to transformative intellectuals (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). They have become agents of change in the profession of language teaching as they must have realized that the usual way of teaching that drew on pre-set principles of methods and methodologies does not fulfil the requirements of their specific teaching context. These contexts are usually different to those that led to the

development of specific and sometimes rigid teaching methodologies. The classroom reality seems to have the final say in deciding which approach or range of approach to implement, and this attitude seems to be one of the distinctive features of the post method era.

This state of mind whereby teachers have their principles grounded in the prevalent methods and approaches and take the freedom to adopt their principles as befits their classes has been eloquently described by Rivers (1992), cited in (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p 26).

> As fashions in language teaching come and go, the teacher in the classroom needs reassurance that there is some bedrock beneath the shifting sands. Once solidly founded on the bedrock, like the sea anemone, the teacher can sway to the rhythms of any tides or currents, without the trauma of being swept away purposelessly.

In summary, the post method era position (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) has come about as the practitioners search for the best, due to their dissatisfaction with the language teaching methodologies that are available to them. In fact, teachers do not abide by one method or another. They usually adopt an eclectic style of teaching through the use of the most appropriate techniques to develop their own approach. Thus the established methods and methodologies are no more as relevant as they used to be, in view of the wide range of teaching contexts that exist around the world. This reality has become even more prominent in ELT due the global nature of English and the growing need to learn it

In addition, the post method condition implies three characteristics. First, it refers to the dissatisfaction with the existing method and the search for an 'alternative to method'. Second, it also entails 'teacher autonomy', which allows language teachers to take ownership of their teaching. Third, the post method condition is based on what works in the classroom or the application of 'principled pragmatism' towards language teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p 33).

Finally, the critical discourse adopted towards the established methods, especially in the teaching of English as a foreign language, resulted in what is also known as 'critical pedagogy' (Kumaravadivelu, 2006a). Critical pedagogy consists of recognising that language is a system that goes beyond the classroom as it is closely linked to the ideological, cultural, social and political context in which it is being taught. Its education also needs to draw on the learners' individual differences, their psychological make-up as well as their learning styles and strategies. In short, it is 'connecting the word to the world' (Kumaravadivelu, 2006a, p 70) and teaching therefore the world and not simply the word (Freire, 1970).

2.5 Learning Theories and Foreign Language Education

2.5.1 The Input theory

It goes without saying that for learning to take place, there should be some kind of input. This reality applies even more to EFL classes where it is additionally needed to observe the comprehensibility of such input. Making teaching content comprehensible would usually depend on the language items taught, the proficiency level of the students as well as their prior knowledge. Krashen argued in his input theory that for L2 acquisition to occur the input should be comprehensible, but he did not clearly demonstrate how to make such input comprehensible then (1982). Later on however, in an article about the bilingual education in the United Sates, (Krashen, 1999b), he explained this point in detail suggesting a period of gradual exit where L1 is used and slowly phased out. The usefulness of the learner's first language became useful for Krashen as he accepted that 'there is strong evidence that literacy transfers across languages, [and] that building literacy in the primary language is a short-cut to English literacy' (1999, p.111). Thus, Krashen recognized the importance of prior knowledge gained in the first language and acknowledged the existence of a high correlation between literacy in L1 and literacy in L2.

On the other hand, the mentalist approach does not consider language input to be that important since its proponents propose that we are all born with a language acquisition device that makes us predisposed to learn any language. They also suggested that humans come with an innate knowledge of the universal grammar; a device that works for acquiring world languages if a proper environment is made available (Chomsky, 1981). This theory has been criticized for not providing explanations for the varying rates with which people acquire languages and progress in their learning (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

Recently however, the issue of input and how it contributes to the acquisition and learning progress of languages both L1 and L2 has been generating further interest. Van Patten came up with the notion of 'Processing Instruction' (PI) and suggested the following facts about input and its role in language acquisition:

> '- Learners need input for acquisition.
>
> - A major problem in acquisition might be the way in which learner's process input.
>
> - If we can understand how learners process input, then we might be able to devise effective input enhancement or focus on form to aid acquisition of formal features of language.' (2009, p. 48).

Research findings point towards the fact that L1 is useful in understanding L2 input as it mediates its learning (Macaro, 2009). It would be safe to suggest that local as well as global EFL classroom methodologies ought to promote using L1 to facilitate L2 input comprehension.

Van Patten also stressed that input should be modified in order to be processed and turned into intake. This intake is then turned into knowledge which in turn manifests through output. In addition, Van Patten (2000) argued that the input should be more than just 'comprehensible'; it should be modified or at least simplified in order for it to become intake. The facilitating role of L1 in the process of L2 learning, in making input comprehensible and therefore learnable, has already been established by Turnbull and Daily-O'Cain who propose that 'the target language input must be understood by students and internalized, and judicious and theoretically principled first language use can facilitate intake and thereby contribute to learning' (2009, p. 5).

Equally, Swain (1995) argued for the consideration of output as a sign of L2 learning. In her Comprehensible Output Hypothesis, the author argued that the way to evaluate learning is via the assessment of output. This implies that the presence of input alone is no guarantee for learning to take place even though such input is comprehensible as there are various individual and contextual factors that come into play. As mentioned earlier, one of these key factors is prior knowledge or prior learning.

2.5.2 Prior Learning

The role of prior learning in acquiring new knowledge cannot be stressed enough. In fact, prior knowledge, which forms part of the learner's cognitive capabilities, is impacted by learners' interests, self-education, previous education and other life experiences. These factors affect the degree to which prior knowledge acquired in previous classes facilitates the learning of the new content, bearing in mind that 'students differ in the speed and facility with which they can learn what is usually taught in those grades. Students eventually succeed if they are not too far below the average level of cognitive capabilities for their age' (Gage, 2009, p 103). Equally, Butzkamm proposed that through L1 learners acquired most of their knowledge and stressed that the mother tongue 'has always been good educational practice to build on a learner's existing skills and competencies' (2007, p. 71).

It has long been argued that the role of prior knowledge is significant in acquiring new knowledge (e.g. Fries, 1957, Ausubel, 1968 and Brown, 2007). Based on Ausubel's 'subsumption' theory (1968), which describes learning as a process of relating new knowledge to the old one, Brown put forward that a learning situation can only be meaningful to learners if they can 'relate the new learning task to what they already know' (2007, p. 90). In addition, Ausubel postulated that if he had 'to reduce all of educational psychology to just one principle',

he would say that 'the most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach him accordingly.' (ibid) p. IV) cited in (Gage, 2009). Vygotsky (1978) also argued that prior knowledge mediates the acquisition of new knowledge.

Hence, it follows that prior knowledge in foreign language classes should be made use of as it is inevitable given that many 'learners bring the conceptual system that they have developed while learning their L1 into the learning of an L2, assuming that every single unit of conceptualization in their repertoire has an equivalent in the conceptual system associated with the L2' (Sharifian and Palmer, 2007, p 33). Additionally, welcoming students' L1 in L2 classes was found to facilitate not only foreign language learning but learning in general since 'by welcoming a student's home language, schools facilitate the flow of knowledge, ideas and feeling between home and school and across languages' (Cummins et al, 2005, p 42).

Young adult and adult learners join L2 classes after they have already acquired a great deal of procedural knowledge of the grammar and lexicon of their native language. In fact, it has been suggested that through L1 people learn a lot more than just grammar and by the time they get into a foreign language class;

> they have learnt to conceptualize their world and have fully grasped the symbolic function of language; (2) they have learnt to communicate; (3) they have learnt to use their voice and to speak; (4) they have acquired an intuitive understanding of grammar and have become aware of many of the finer points of language; (5) they have acquired the secondary skills of reading and writing. The mother tongue is therefore the greatest asset people bring to the task of foreign language learning and provides an indispensable Language Acquisition Support System. (Butzkamm, 2007, p. 71)

Learning a foreign language should not be subjected to a formula based solely on exposing learners to comprehensible input and creating an environment conducive to learning, or the use of their prior learning to help them acquire a foreign language. In fact, there are various other factors that are specifically related to the learners themselves and which need to be considered as well. Foreign language learners bring along to the L2 classroom not only their prior knowledge and their L1 but they also bring in their individual differences as learners. These factors are referred to in the literature as learners' individual differences (IDs).

2.6 Key Factors in Language Learning

2.6.1 Learners Individual Differences

It is important for this research to take into consideration learner individual differences in terms of learning styles and strategies, given that the students involved in this study belong to a specific socio-cultural context, and quite expectedly display varying IDs. Similar to most other

contexts where English is a foreign language, EFL classes in a preparatory year program in Saudi colleges and universities usually deal with individual learners with different learning styles, learning strategies and learning experiences. These differences can contribute to explaining why some students do better than others in terms of the level of proficiency achieved in English.

IDs were defined as 'characteristics or traits in respect of which individuals may be shown to differ from each other' (Dornyei, 2005, p 1). In language education, and more specifically in L1 education, IDs have not been found to play any significant role. On the other hand, in L2 education there have been a lot of attention paid to IDs in relation to proficiency levels because 'the acquisition of L2 is significantly more diverse than that of an L1...and a great deal (not all) of this outcome variance is attributable to the impact of IDs' (Dornyei, 2005, p 2). While the purpose of this research is not to fully investigate these IDs, they are somehow relevant in justifying the need for a methodology that would accommodate learners with varying learning styles. For instance, the use of Arabic could help low-level students to understand the content of the lesson while still affording the top achievers the opportunity to test and sharpen their translation skills.

As educational psychology developed, the theory of Multiple Intelligences (MIT) (Gardner, 1983) and other multi-factorial theories became gradually accepted by both researchers and practitioners in foreign language education. It became clear to most that a more holistic approach to education would be to accommodate learners' individual differences, in terms of learning styles, strategies and preferences. As far as foreign language education is concerned, research has shown that learners with a variety of intellectual abilities can be successful (Lightbown and Spada, 2006). This leads to the following question: What really makes a good foreign language learner?

The characteristics of a good language learner could vary from one context to another; however, there are universal learning behaviours common to most learners. Nunan (2005) summarises these characteristics as autonomy, organization, creativity and use of prior knowledge of languages including their mother tongue. Equally, Lightbown and Spada (2006) suggest characteristics such as motivation, intellectual abilities and learning preferences as the most important learning variables that should be taken into consideration when attempting to establish what really makes a good learner. Harmer (2007), on the other hand, considers that these variables are culturally bound and suggested that it is important to accept that a foreign language learner maybe successful even if he does not meet the requirements mentioned in the

literature. These individual differences are also discernible through learning styles and strategies that L2 learners use.

2.6.2 Learning Styles and Strategies

The fact that there are different learners with different learning styles and strategies is not in dispute. However, developing a theory that caters for all these styles and strategies without discrimination still remains a challenge. According to Wright (1987) cited in (Harmer, 2007), there are four different learner styles. The 'enthusiast' learner who considers the teacher to be the point of reference, the 'oracular' learner who is more self-absorbed, the 'participator' learner who focuses on the group's goals and the 'rebel' learner whose interest is to focus more on reaching his own goals. Equally, willing (1987), cited in (Harmer, 2007, p 88), came up with four learner categories that resembled Wright's classification:

1. convergers who are independent, confident and pragmatic learners;
2. conformists who prefer to learn about the language, other than learning to use it, and who are usually non-communicative;
3. concrete learners who like to learn from direct experience and focus more on communication; and
4. communicative learners who focus only on the use of language and the social interaction that involves its use, but who prefer to work without guidance.

The above classifications were attempts to explain different learning styles and strategies but there are many other IDs that were not listed (ibid). In fact, Coffield et al (2004) carried an extensive study of the relevant literature and listed 66 characteristics and warned against the use of a pedagogy based solely on learning styles.

Individual variations in learning have mostly been the focus of psychological theories such as Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and MIT (Harmer, 2007, pp. 89-90). NLP learners use various senses to learn in different ways and with varying intensity, resulting in various degrees of learning (Revell and Norman, 1997); while Gardner's MIT (Gardner, 1983) suggested seven different intelligences instead of the traditional two, measured by the IQ test, and considered that intelligence is 'a collection of potentialities or abilities that permits people to solve problems or make products which are of value in a particular cultural setting' (ibid) cited in (Jordan et al, 2008, p 105). Gardner also argued that differences in degrees of intelligence in various fields will result in differences in learning outcomes from one learner to the other. This discussion of learner differences wouldn't be complete without mentioning the learning strategies used by different language learners.

Discussing the role of learning strategies in foreign language learning is of importance to this research in order to understand the use of Arabic as a key learning strategy used by Saudi college students learning English. Learning strategies are 'behaviours or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable', (Oxford, 1990) cited in (Ellis, 1994). Ellis proposes that these strategies could be used in a conscious or probably in an unconscious manner, which may imply that some learners may not be aware of what strategies they use (ibid). Similarly, (Takač, 2008) considers that language learning strategies are what learners do in order to render their learning efficient and manageable. Hence, the role of the teacher to discover and sometimes correct these strategies is paramount.

Additionally, teachers should try to teach individuals as well as groups (Harmer, 2007). Hence, banning a pedagogical tool that has long been part of the learning strategies of foreign language learners would amount to ignoring these differences in L2 classroom. As a case in point, the students targeted by this research have been used to Arabic as their main medium of learning throughout their pre-college education, and more particularly as an important part of their learning strategies in EFL classes, which highlights the importance of Arabic as a pedagogical tool for these learners.

Learning strategies were also defined as 'learning processes which are consciously selected by the learner' (Cohen, 1998) cited in (Dornyei, 2005, p 162). This definition is open to the criticism that some learners may not be conscious or aware of which strategy to select and use, as mentioned above, as this choice might be made on the basis of habit formation. In fact, according to Gardner's MIT, learning styles and strategies are influenced by the intelligence that each learner enjoys (Gardner, 1983). The existence of multiple intelligences could also reflect in the use of learning strategies that vary from learner to learn. Thus, the individual variations among learners in general and language learners in particular could be partly due as well to variations in types of intelligences that learners possess.

However, the definition of learning strategies has not generated clear consensus among scholars. The most relevant working definition to this paper is found in White (2008, p 9), who proposes that 'language learning strategies are commonly defined as the operations and processes which are consciously selected and employed by the learner to learn the TL [target language] or facilitate a task'. This definition is the one that is used in this research and the focus will be on the use of L1 as a cognitive and a meta-cognitive strategy to learn English and facilitate EFL classroom tasks.

When applied linguists zoomed on foreign language learners to find out how they 'process, store, retrieve and use' teaching material in the mid-1970s, inquiries into learning strategies

emerged (White, 2008). Since then, various taxonomies for learning strategies have been suggested. For instance, Oxford (1990) developed the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) which included 'direct strategies (memory, cognitive and compensation strategies) and indirect strategies (metagognitive, affective and social)'; while O'Malley and Chamot (1990) proposed 'metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective strategies' (White, 2008, p 8). These taxonomies were later elaborated upon by other scholars and became more specific, through the focus on listening (Vandergrift et al, 2006) and the emphasis on reading (Sheorey and Mokhtari, 2001). Besides, the importance of learning how to learn was already highlighted in previous other works (e.g., Ellis and Sinclair, 1989; Weaver and Cohen, 1997).

Earlier works in psycholinguistics suggested that after puberty LAD diminishes or dies due to the intervention of cognitive and affective factors (e.g., Lenneberg, 1967). Incidentally, the students who took part in the present study were all young adult learners. According to Harmer (2007), young adult learners or adult learners have characteristics of their own which could be summarized in three points; age, previous success or failure and the eagerness to learn. As far as age is concerned and due to their experience in learning, adult learners could be critical of the teaching method in use. This characteristic can explain the hostility some students develop to certain learning activities and teaching styles. As well, previous failures or negative experiences in education could result in the learners' low-confidence levels. Finally, the degree of motivation or the eagerness that these learners bring to the foreign language classrooms affect their learning achievements, and some adult learners might not be that motivated as they feel that their intellectual powers are dwindling, which usually has a negative impact on their overall motivation to learn.

2.6.3 Motivation

Motivation is considered one of the key affective factors that impact on learning a foreign language. It is precisely because motivation is a crucial factor in second and foreign language education that it has received a lot of attention (Brown, 2007). The construct of motivation in L2 education could be defined as a set of internal factors that arouse the need to learn as 'it provides the primary impetus to initiate L2 learning and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning progress' (Dornyei, 2005, p 65). However, it is still not clear what motivation really is. According to Mitchell, 'motivation becomes those psychological processes that cause arousal, direction, and persistence of voluntary actions that are goal-related' (1982, p, 81). Based on this definition, motivation is seen as an internal factor that is not tangible or visible; but students' actions may reflect the degree of its presence. The issue of motivation may not be a problem for ESL learners living in English speaking countries; however, it is definitely a

significant factor for EFL learners the lack of which may result in 'wastage and low productivity in foreign language courses' (Wigzell and Al-Ansari, 1993, p 303)

Literature suggests that there exist two main types of motivation:

1- Integrative motivation which is exemplified by an 'interest in learning an L2 because of a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other language group' (Ellis 1996, p 509).
2- Instrumental motivation refers to what 'a learner has because knowledge of the target language will help achieve some other goal' (Finegan, 1999, p 567).

Instrumental motivation can further be divided into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation makes a learner perform an activity for the sake of doing it and in order to learn; while extrinsic motivation is illustrated by a learner's engagement in a task in order to get a reward or to avoid a punishment. For instance, a learner may develop 'a concern about grades, pleasing others, or besting others (e.g. Dweck and Leggett, 1988; Harter, 1981)' (Pintrich et al, 1994, p 141). Dornyei further suggested that without sufficient motivation learning goals cannot be met since the 'motivational factor can override the aptitude effect' (2005, p. 65). Prior to this, it was stipulated that any achievement in foreign language learning is influenced by internal motivation (Gardner, 2001) cited in (Dornyei, 2005).

In addition to the above, what happens in the classroom in terms of teaching styles, teaching materials and the amount of positive feedback may also contribute to creating an environment that results in motivated learners (Pintrich and Schunk, 1996). It also is the view of some scholars that the use of L1 in EFL classes helps students to understand newly presented teaching material, and thus affects their levels of motivation (Atkinson, 1993). Without the comprehension of L2 input, there would not be much learning or progress. Furthermore, the lack of comprehension may result in frustration and the development of low self-esteem, if not negative attitudes towards the foreign language.

As a case in point, teachers participating in this research have reported instances where they noticed that students displayed signs of relief after the use of Arabic to explain vocabulary items or language structures.

2.7 Perceptions of L1 Use in L2 Classes

Whether to use L1 in L2 education or not is a question that does not require an answer any longer; as it has been established that the widely publicised 'English only' fallacy is now being questioned more and more (Cook, 2002). Emerging evidence from studies carried out around the world suggest that the positive impacts of the use of L1 in L2 classes far outweigh its

claimed negative impacts. Up until recently, foreign language education policies stressed the monolingual approach and only permitted the use of L1 in extreme situations (Butzkamm, 2003). Slowly-emerging voices suggested that there is no benefit in trying to ban L1 completely (Harmer, 2001).

2.6.1 The use of L1 in L2 Classes as a Controversy

Cook described the post reform attitudes towards the use of L1 in L2 stating that;

> a door has been firmly shut in language for over a hundred years...however the assumption is phrased, the L2 is seen as positive, the L1 as negative...recent methods do not so much forbid the L1 as ignore its existence. Most teaching manuals take the avoidance of L1 as so obvious that no classroom use of L1 is ever mentioned. (2001, p. 1)

The traditional stance that proscribed the use of L1 in FL teaching in general and in EFL teaching in particular was prompted by Makere's report in 1961 (Phillipson, 1992, p 185). The conference stipulated that:

1. English should be taught in a monolingual classroom.
2. The ideal teacher should be a native English speaker.
3. The earlier English is taught the better.
4. The more English is used in the classroom the better.
5. If other languages are used, English standards will drop. (ibid)

Since then, the use of L1 has been labelled taboo (Cook, 2002; Deller, 2003), a skeleton in the closet (Prodromou, 2000), a bone of contention (Gabrielatos, 2001), a source of guilt (Auerbach, 1993; Frankenberg-Garcia, 2002), a sign of teachers' weakness (Cook, 2002; Buckmaster, 2002) and a waste of time (Janulevičiene, and Kavaliauskienė, 2002). The monolingual approach gained momentum and became the model for good language teaching in various parts of the world (Atkinson, 1993). This influenced the public belief or conventional wisdom that associates good language teaching only with its native speakers and the exclusive use of L2 only (Frankenberg-Garcia, 2002).

Hundreds of years prior to Makere's report, foreign language teaching was mostly if not totally bilingual; foreign languages such as Latin and Greek were learnt via the use of translation. A lot has been written on the various instances and purposes for which L1 proves useful and many research endeavours have been undertaken to put these claims to test (e.g. Atkinson, 1987, 1993; Auerbach, 1993; Macaro, 2001, 2005 and Tang, 2002). Some of these uses have been

listed in (Atkinson, 1983; Rinvolucri, 2001; Harmer, 2001). A list of some of these uses is included in Chapter Eight.

Macaro (2009) mentioned the existence of three varying positions related to the use of L1 in L2 classes along a continuum that stretches between two extremes as shown by figure 2.2 below. At the time when GT was in use, the use of L1 was unconditional and formed a major chunk of the language used in the L2 classroom (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). As a reaction to the perceived failure of GT, post-reform methods took an extreme stance through abolishing L1 completely from L2 education (ibid). Recently, there have been many calls, based both on classroom practice and research findings, to allow the use of some amount of L1 at certain levels of L2 education (Cook, 2001; Harmer, 2007).

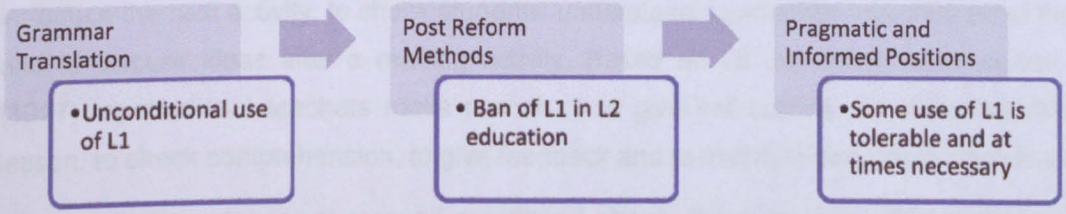

Figure 2.2 The developmental line of the attitudes towards the use of L1 in L2 classes (Macaro, 2009)

The amount of literature that suggests that the use of L1 in L2 classes is productive, useful and even at times necessary is quite considerable (e.g., Atkinson, 1987; Deller, 2003; Auerbach, 1993, Harmer, 2001; Cook, 2002; Nation, 2003; Butzkamm, 2007). These findings have marked a real shift from the 'English only' fallacy in EFL education (Harbord, 1992; Linder, 2002; Janulevičiene, and Kavaliauskienē, 2002). In fact, results emanating from these studies mostly challenge the 'English only' orthodoxy and argue for the usefulness of L1 in L2 classes. The stance was marked by the emergence of the view that the use of L1 in L2 classes has many advantages that need to be taken into account (e.g. Cole, 1998; Deller, 2003; Frankenberg-Garcia, 2000; Harmer, 2001; Hawks, 2001; Cook, 2002; Butzkamm, 2007).

Over all, most studies carried out on this issue have yielded findings that seem to suggest that there is a change in attitudes towards the use of L1 in L2 classrooms; from complete opposition suggested by the audio-lingual, direct or communicative approaches to a partial acceptance of the practice by other approaches (e.g., Burden, 2000; Schweers, 1999; Tang, 2002). The change towards the inclusion of L1 in EFL is also evident in some course books such as the Headway series (Soars and Soars, 1996) held as the 'most successful-if eclectic–communicative text book of all times' (Prodromou, 2002, p 2). This textbook uses translation

and contrastive analysis to compare L1 grammar to that of L2 (Cole, 1998; Frankenberg-Garcia, 2000).

Proponents of L1 use in L2 classes suggest that there are many instances in L2 where L1 is appropriate. One of the pioneering studies in this regard was by Atkinson who claimed that 'the potential of mother tongue, as a classroom resource is so great that its role should merit considerable attention and discussion in any attempt to develop a 'post-communicative Approach' to TEFL for adolescents and adults' (1987, p. 242). Atkinson suggested three main reasons for allowing a limited use of L1; it is the preferred strategy for learners, it is a humanistic approach and it allows for an efficient use of time. On her part, Willis (1981) suggested that there are times where English in ESL or EFL classes can be dropped to allow L1 to be used especially to explain the meaning or the use of new words, to explain the aim of the lesson or to introduce the next activity, to check students' understanding after the presentation of the lesson, and to discuss ideas after a reading activity. Based on L2 classroom observations, Macaro (1997) reported that teachers make use of L1 to give instructions about the activities of the lesson, to check comprehension, to give feedback and to maintain classroom discipline.

In addition to pedagogical reasons mentioned above, there are two other reasons that have been mentioned to justify the use of L1 in L2 classes. According to Piascecka (1988), cited in Schweers, 1999), 'if a learner is encouraged to ignore his/her native language, he/she might well feel his/her identity threatened'. This psychological factor was also hinted at by (Echevarria and Grave, 1998) who argued that the acceptance of students' L1 in the L2 classroom is interpreted by the students that their L1 is respected and valued. On the other hand, the abolition of L1 from L2 classrooms has negative effects since 'the degradation of the mother tongue has harmful psychological effects on learners' (Nation, 1990), cited in (Tang, 2002, p 7).

The second justification for the inclusion of L1 in L2 education has a socio-cultural perspective. In fact, Kramsch (1993) argued that the methodologies that allow for the use of L1 seek to create interactions between cultures. Naturally, L1 embodies a culture that teachers could use to facilitate the learning progress of their students through exposure to the L2 culture and language. Actually, the socio-cultural justification for the use of L1 in L2 classes is at the heart of the theoretical framework used by this research to interpret its findings. An extended and detailed discussion of this theoretical framework is covered in Chapter Three.

2.7.2 The Role of L1 in L2 Learning from a Socio-Cultural Perspective

Language plays a very important role in every classroom (Hickey and Williams, 1996; Tollefson, 2002a). When acquiring L1, self-talk and inner speech mediate and regulate the learning process; while 'private verbal thinking plays a crucial role in the case of L2 speakers engaged in

problem-solving, and therefore it should be recognized as very important in the process of learning' (Centeno-Cortés and Jiménez, 2004, p 31). This private verbal thinking usually takes place through L1 for beginners learners of L2. Perhaps that is why Swain and Lapkin proposed that L1 is a meditational tool that is always 'fully available to [learners], to regulate their own behavior, to focus attention on specific L2 structures, and to generate and assess alternatives' (1995, p. 333).

Language learning occurs more in a context where social interactions take place, and learners acquire their native language spontaneously by participating in everyday social activities; but they are usually quite unaware of this and thus find it difficult to exteriorize their L1 rules or forms of the explicit knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). Their goal is not to learn the language, per se, but to participate in the community (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). In foreign language classes, the role of the new language is different to that of the first language. Unlike the mother tongue, foreign languages may be taught consciously and intentionally often through the use of written texts (see the difference between acquisition and learning in Chapter One). Lantolf and Thorne suggested that alongside the spontaneous language learning processes, conscious forms and uses of the foreign language may also be taught, especially to older students (ibid). In the same context, Holme pointed out that 'language provides us with the means to think about the language' (2004, p. 209), while Vygotsky (1986) proposed that the process of learning a foreign language is mediated by the native language. This mediation is achieved overtly through verbal utterances or silently through inner speech.

At the beginning of their learning, all learners' inner speech is believed to take place in their L1 (de Guerrero, 2005). It was also argued that a person can only have a single inner speech, the one that was developed in the mother tongue (Ushakova, 1994), and Vygotsky (1986) distinguished inner speech from the verbal expression of thought and suggested that inner speech is 'a function itself', cited in (De Guerrero, 2005, p 30). On the other hand, anecdotal evidence indicate that this may not be totally true; my personal experience and that of the colleagues I spoke to suggest that people can think and even dream in a second or foreign language when they reach an advanced proficiency level. In fact, advanced learners are able to apply L2 forms not only to regulate and carry out learning tasks but during interactions with others and for their inner speech (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006; Swain and Lapkin, 2000).

Based on my personal experience as an EFL teacher, I would propose that it is highly unlikely that foreign language learners at a beginner or elementary level would use L2 for their inner speech, all be it for a short period of time. The available research evidence is not conclusive on this point, but if these pupils use their mother tongue to think and to silently 'talk' to themselves,

then barring them from using it may not help their learning of the f language. Swain and Lapkin, (2000) argued that language derives its mediating cognitive functions from its use in social activities. The authors point out that this may be a different approach from the usual view that L1 is a mere source for negative transfer in L2 learning (Kellerman, 1995; Odlin, 1989). Swain and Lapkin (2000) as well suggested that it may be possible that the use of L1 during L2 activities as a mediating tool could be part of the learning process.

2.7.3 Examining the 'English only' ideology

The issue of L1 use in L2 classrooms has generated a lot of controversy that does not seem to have settled yet. According to Turnbull and Daily-O'Cain (2009), educators as well as researchers seem to have developed strong views about the best and most effective method to learn and master a language; however, these 'beliefs are not always grounded in theory or research' (p. 2). Macaro (2005 and 2009) suggests that there seems to be a 'continuum of perspectives' on the use of L1 in L2 classes, and distinguishes between the virtual, the maximal and the optimal positions

Proponents of the virtual position call for the exclusive use of the target language as they see no pedagogical or communicative use for L1 in L2 classes. These views are influenced by the (L1=L2) hypothesis (Ellis, 1985; Krashen, 1982). Such theory claims that during the acquisition of L1 there is no other language available for children to use, and similarly the same should be true for the acquisition of L2. It is important to stress the use of acquisition as opposed to learning; a discussion of the difference between acquisition and learning could be found at the beginning of this chapter. Subscribers to the virtual position also refer to the comprehensible input hypothesis as a basis for their argument (Krashen, 1982). Krashen suggested that exposing learners to great amounts of comprehensible L2 input would create favourable conditions for its learning (ibid). This position was also influenced by the output hypothesis (Swain, 1985), where the author argued that while comprehensible input is vital to foreign language learning, by itself it is not enough since learners need to use a language to master it. Hence, speaking and writing should be carried out in the target language. In my view, the output hypothesis makes more sense as it allows the evaluation of the learning outcomes, and as it is as well in line with the ultimate purpose of learning a language which is communication.

In addition to the above theories underpinning the virtual position, other studies are often cited to make the case for the extreme position (e.g. Larsen-Freeman, 1985; Lightbown, 1991; Liu, 2008; Turnbull, 2001). Additionally, other studies pointed out the positive impact of the exclusive use of L2 on learner's achievements (e.g. Brustall et al, 1974; Caroll, 1975; Wolf, 1975). A similar line of argument found that the use of the target language resulted in higher levels of

motivation as the students realise the practical use of what they are learning (e.g. Calvé; MacDonald, 1993; Wong-Filmore, 1985a).

The works above encourage the adoption of the virtual position that sought to abolish L1 in L2 classes as one of the best practices in L2 education (Turnbull and Daily-O'Cain, 2009. p 4). This blind acceptance of the monolingual approach as a policy and as the most efficient way to teach L2 resulted in a 'hegemonic status' of the monolingual approach (Atkinson, 1993; Phillipson, 1992). Nonetheless, this view is just one side of the coin as literature abounds with evidence that suggest that the use of L1 in L2 classes is useful.

2.7.4 The Argument for L1 in L2 Classes

The belief that 'English is best taught monolingually' was challenged as a fallacy that reflected language policies under colonialism; this paved the way for another fallacy that 'the ideal teacher of English is a native English speaker' (Phillipson, 1992. p 192).The implication of these two fallacies is that monolingual teachers don't have to learn their students' L1, and this empowers English further while it dis-empowers the local languages. According to Phillipson, the 'ethos of monolingualism implies the rejection of the experiences of other languages, meaning the exclusion of the child's most intense existential experience' (1992, p 189).

In a similar tone and based on her study of the findings of relevant research projects, Auerbach, argued for the effectiveness of the L1 use in ESL education in the U.S, and added that her study

> is meant not as an attack on those who advocate the monolingual use of English, but rather as an invitation to reexamine these practices in light of their often invisible ideological roots, their pedagogical effectiveness, and their implications for the ESL profession as a whole. (1993, p.12)

While some researchers reported that learners use L1 in the form of code-switching even when it is not really needed as is the case with advanced learners and bilingual native speakers (e.g. Daily-O'Cain and Liebscher, 2006; Liebscher and Daily-O'Cain, 2004; Ustunel and Seedhouse, 2005)); (Macaro, 2001) for instance concluded that the majority of second language teachers are of the view that code-switching is necessary, even though they still regret its use. In another research, Macaro reported that his participants indicated that L2 should be the 'predominant language of interaction in the classroom' (2006, p. 68). At the same time, he declared that he could not find any research-based evidence to establish a causal relationship between L1 ban and improved L2 learning.

2.7.5 The Use of L1 as a Cognitive Tool

As far as pedagogy is concerned, research also found that the use of L1 can be of benefit to L2 students as a cognitive tool that helps their learning (e.g. Anton and DiCamilla, 1998; Swain and Lapkin, 2000). In fact, while it was recognised that any overuse of L1 will result in less exposure to L2; it was mostly established that the use of L1 can help in processing L2, due to the fact that learners refer to their L1 throughout the L2 learning process (Atkinson, 1995; Calve, 1993; Ellis, 1984). On the other hand, while L2 exposure is necessary, it is not by itself sufficient (e.g. Cook, 2001; Ellis, 1994; Van Lier 2000) because the comprehensibility of the input is required as well.

The idea that L1 proficiency contributes to L2 proficiency was the centre of Cummins' Language Interdependency Model (1996, 2001). This connection between L1 and L2 was also found in (Skinner, 1985), cited in (Macaro, 2001), where the author suggested that the use of L1 can help in creating a connection between the target language and the prior knowledge acquired through L1. In addition, it is a widespread view that 'the language of thought for all but the most advanced L2 learners is inevitably his/her L1' (Macaro, 2005, p 68). L1 use was also found to consolidate memory and prevent loss of meaning of new words, language items or syntactical structures (Kern, 1994). Incidentally, the cognitive benefits of L1 use were also extended to helping students with learning disability (Arnett, 2001).

The socio-cultural theory highlighted the importance of making use of prior knowledge and L1 as a pedagogical tool that supports learning. This was observed in low proficiency learners engaged in collaborative tasks who made use of their L1 to help progress a challenging task (Brooks and Donato, 1994). The authors concluded that the use of L1 in classroom interactions 'is a normal psycholinguistic process that facilitates second-language production and allows the learners both to initiate and sustain verbal interaction with one another' (Brooks and Donato, 1994, p 268).

L1 was also found to serve as a learning scaffold in L2 classes when learners or teachers used it to help other students (Anton and DiCamilla, 1998), or in order to maintain 'cooperation and to externalise their inner speech' (Turnbull and Daily-O'Cain, 2009, p 6). In the same vein, Behan et al (1997) concluded that L1 use can support and help progress L2 learning as it helps in dealing with challenging content. The facilitating role of L1 was also reported by Swain and Lapkin who concluded that L1 helped completing collaborative tasks with noticeable success. This led the authors to suggest that responsible and principled use of L1 supports L2 learning and use (2000). They also argued that 'to insist that no use be made of the L1 in carrying out tasks that are both linguistically and cognitively complex is to deny the use of an important cognitive tool' (ibid, p 268)

Storch and Wigglesworth suggested that L1 provides 'cognitive support' during language analysis and in the completion of cognitively demanding tasks. They propose that L1 allows students to work at cognitively higher levels, and that its use is a 'normal psychological process' (2003, p.768). Equally, Butzkamm proposed that L1 in all subjects including foreign language education is the learners' 'strongest ally', that through the mother tongue 'we have learnt to think, learnt to communicate and acquired an intuitive understanding of grammar', and that the mother tongue is 'the master key' to learning foreign languages (2003, pp. 30-31).

In the same line of argument, Herman et al (1998) questioned whether language learners should be expected to or are even capable of suppressing L1 during L2 retrieval tasks. In their research, Scott and De laFuente concluded that students who were not permitted to use L1 during a grammar group or pair activity displayed reduced and fragmented levels of interaction, imposing difficult cognitive demands, which will 'hinder the use of meta- talk, and impede 'natural' learning strategies' (2008, p. 10).

The above research findings seem to support the view that the use of L1 is useful to L2 learning as it facilitates the comprehension and understanding of L2 input. They appear to undermine view that promotes the exclusive use of L2 as well. In fact, Macaro (2000, p 184) warned that over-teaching with a focus on L2 would result in teacher-fronted classrooms that limit students' participation or interaction, and may flout the goal of communicative classrooms. On the other hand, the use of L1 would help teachers carry many pedagogical activities in a shorter time, which will spare useful time for discussion in L2 based on prior understanding and comprehension (Macaro and Mutton, 2002).

2.8 Documented Uses of L1 in L2 Classes

It has already been mentioned that L1 can contribute to making foreign language teaching content more comprehensible for L2 learners. It may therefore serve as a mediating tool to L2 learning in various ways. In fact, L1 could be used as a short cut to providing clear instructions and straightforward information regarding managerial, instructional or classroom policies as an instrument for discipline enforcement. For instance, Mee-Ling (1996) reported findings by Lin (1990) and Pennington (1995) who concluded that Cantonese (L1) was used to keep discipline and to draw the pupils' attention. The unexpected use of Cantonese shocked these students and caused them to keep quite. In the same vein, Cook suggested that the use of L1 could prove quite useful for classroom management; 'saying 'shut up or you will get a detention' in the L1 is a serious threat rather than practice of the imperative and conditional constructions', (2001b, p. 15). Classroom instructions and rules could therefore be made clear to the students through the use of L1 to maintain their discipline (Nation, 2003). Thus, the first classes should

allow for some L1 use to facilitate comprehension and to make the students feel comfortable. Through time, the amount of L1 used can be reduced gradually until it is removed completely when it is no more needed.

Code-switching (CS), or 'the use of several languages or dialects in the same conversation or sentence by bilingual people' (Gardner- Chloros, 2009, p 4), can also be used by teachers to stress a conceptual point or gain the attention of the students and to explain vocabulary through the use of L1 (Cook, 2001b, Macaro, 2005). Although the issue of CS in second language learning has not been researched fully (e.g. Poulisse, 1997; Dewale, 2001; Poulisse and Bogaerts, 1994) cited in (Gardner-Chloros, 2009), available studies found that CS triggered various reactions, and that it is sometimes seen as a necessary evil. For instance, CS could be used during learners' spoken or written productions as low proficiency learners may feel more comfortable using an L1 word with which they are familiar than an L2 vocabulary item they are not completely used to. L2 learners of unequal levels of proficiency resort to code-switching (e.g. Poulisse and Bogaerts) cited in (Gardner-Chloros, 2009). In addition, research indicates that CS is widely used as a communicative strategy by non-native speakers who resort to their mother tongue to circumvent communication obstacles in what is known as 'translinguistic wording' (Lüdi, 2003, p 176).

L1 can also be used to check for content comprehension after new or challenging items have been introduced and explained. Atkinson recommended using L1 to check comprehension by making small talk through simple questions about the students name, age or state (1987, p. 243). According to Harbord, while L1 use is recommended for comprehension checks, the presentation of new structures should be carried out in the L2 (1992, p 354). He also proposed that good training and proper class preparation will enable L2 teachers 'to communicate the meaning of a structure unambiguously without recourse to the mother tongue' (ibid, p. 353). However, it still cannot be stated with certainty whether any L2 teacher can 'unambiguously communicate the meaning of a structure without recourse to the mother tongue'.

The use of L1 in EFL classes also implies the use of translation, and naturally translation for L2 students implies the use of L1. If teaching languages is a very old profession, translation that was associated with it for a very long time 'must be the oldest language-teaching tool of all' (Owen, 200, p 2). Equally, L1 could be the students' preferred learning strategy. Learners in general and adult foreign language learners in particular, usually develop a preferred style for learning (Lightbown and Spada, 1999), and most L2 beginner students adopt translation as their favourite learning strategy. According to Atkinson, '...discussions of methodology at early levels are best conducted either in a mixture of both languages or exclusively in the students' mother

tongue' (1987, p. 244). Through L1, weak students are afforded the opportunity to ask questions and clarifications about issues that they have failed to understand in L2. For students emanating from certain cultures, it would be embarrassing to make mistakes while trying to communicate in English and this is true even more for adults. Nation suggested that 'using the L2 can be a source of embarrassment particularly for shy learners and those who feel they are not very proficient in the L2' (2003, p.1).

2.8.1 Research on the Role of Arabic in EFL Classes

As seen throughout this chapter, research literature abounds with a number of empirical studies carried out around the world to research the use of L1 in foreign language teaching. The researchers used various methods and methodologies depending on the purpose and context of the study; some were quantitative and others were qualitative studies. Few of these studies are listed in Table 2.1 on the following page.

Table 2.3 L1 use in L2 research studies carried in various parts of the world

Country	Author and Date	Research Method(s)	First Language(s)	Foreign Language(s)
Australia,	Keselly, R. 2008	Qualitative	Chinese & Japanese	English
Australia	Stotrch. N. & Wigglesworthh, G.2003	Qualitative	Multiple L1s	English
Canada	Thomas et al 2005	Qualitative	English	German, Spanish &
China	Song, Y.2009	Quantitative	Chinese	English
China	Tang, J. 2002	Quantitative	Chinese	English
Estonia	Kemppainen, R. et al 2004	Quantitative	Russian	Estonian
Greece	Prodromou, L. 2000	Questionnaire	Greek	English
Indonesia	Zacharias, N. T. (2004)	Mixed methods	Bahasa Indonesia	English
Iran	Talebi, S. 2007	Quantitative	Farsi	English
Iran	Nazary, M. 2008	Quantitative	Farsi	English
Iran	Vaezi, S. &Mirzae, M. 2007	Quantitative	Farsi	English
Japan	Burden, P. 2000	Questionnaire	Japanese	English
Japan	Critchley, M. P. 1999	Qualitative	Japanese	English
Japan	Shimizu, M. 2006	Quantitative	Japanese	English
Japan,	Von Dietze et al 2009	Quantitative	Japanese	English
Lithuania	Januliene, A. 2008	Quantitative	Lithuanian	English
Lithuania	Kavaliauskien, G. 2009	Quantitative	Lithuanian	English
Malaysia	Seng, G. H. & Hashim, M. 2006	Qualitative	Bahasa Malayeu	English
Malaysia	Nambiar, R. 2009	Qualitative	Bahassa Malayeu	English
Nigeria	Oluwole, D. 2008	Quantitative	Nigerian Dialects	English
Oman	Al-Hinai, M. K. 2006	Qualitative	Arabic	English
Oman	Al-Shidhani, A.N.2009	Quantitative	Arabic	English
Oman	Al-Alawi, T. M. 2008	Quantitative	Arabic	English
Oman	Al-Hadhrami, A. H. (2008)	Quantitative	Arabic	English
Puerto Rico	Schweers, W. Jr. (1999)	Quantitative	Spanish	English
Saudi Arabia	Al Abdan, A. (1993)	Quantitative	Arabic	English
Spain	Bawcom, L. (2003)	Action Research	Spanish	English
Spain	Ferrer, V. (no date)	Qualitative	Spanish	English
Taiwan,	Cheng, L. (2006)	Quantitative	Mandarin	English
The	Van Weijen et al (2008)	Qualitative	Dutch-	English
UK	Miles, R. (2004)	Experimental	Japanese	English
USA,	Cabrrera, M.& Zubitzaretta, M .L. (2000)	Quantitative & Error Analysis	Spanish	English
USA	Crossley ,A. & MacNamar, D. 2009	Qualitative	Spanish	English
USA	Sparks, R. et al 2009	Quantitative	English	Spanish, French & German
USA	Scott, V. & J. A. Huntington (2007)	Qualitative	English	French
USA	Scott, V. & De La Fuente, M. (2008)	Qualitative	English	French & Spanish

On the other hand, the literature survey conducted between 2008 and the end of 2010 for this research has yielded a limited number of studies that researched the use of Arabic in EFL classes; three studies in Saudi Arabia and four in Oman. This is an indication that not enough attention has been paid to the use or the role of Arabic in EFL, which therefore calls for more studies to contribute further to the understanding of the role of the practice in L2 classes.

In the Gulf region, most studies are recent and focus mostly on researching either the attitudes of the teachers and/or students, or the quantity and frequency of such practice. In Oman for instance, Al-Hinai (2006) investigated the use of Arabic in EFL classes in elementary schools, through a quantitative study that concluded that Arabic was widely used in all English classes. He also reported that teachers' attribute this widespread use to the students' low proficiency in English. Alawi (2008) in another study surveyed the teachers' use of Arabic during EFL classes in Omani schools and found that while some teachers used Arabic extensively, others avoided it completely. Nevertheless, teachers in this study agree that the use of Arabic had some benefits in the EFL classes. In his study, Al-Hadrami (2008) reported that all surveyed teachers agreed that Arabic can be useful in EFL; however, some of them were opposed to its excessive use. Recently, Al-Shidhani (2009) carried out another study to establish the teachers' beliefs regarding the use of Arabic in EFL classes. He concluded that while the teachers felt that the use of Arabic in communicative classes went against the principles of the communicative approach; their learners expected them to use some Arabic, which created a major misunderstanding for the students.

In Saudi Arabia, only three relevant studies have been published. The first study was carried out by Al-Abdan (1993), who surveyed the use of Arabic in EFL classes in Saudi Arabia and reported that 75% of the surveyed 451 teachers used Arabic to teach English for about 10% of the class time. More recently, Al-Nofaie (2010) researched the attitudes of both students and teachers in a Saudi intermediate school. It surveyed 30 students and 3 teachers, and found out that their attitudes towards the use of Arabic are generally positive. Similarly, Storch and Aldosari (2010) investigated the effect of learning proficiency pairing and task type on the amount of L1 use in EFL classes. The study took place in a Saudi college and involved 30 students divided into 15 pairs based on 3 proficiency levels; high-high (H-H), high-low (H-L) and low–low (L-L). Conversations between students were recorded and the analysis showed that the use of L1 was modest in general, and that the task type had a greater impact on the amount of L1 used.

The common denominator for all the above studies is that they were mostly quantitative in nature relying on descriptive statistics without digging deep into the reasons behind the

participants' attitudes or the use of L1 and L2. In addition, some of these studies surveyed teachers but did not include students' perspectives.

2.9 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have surveyed a number of foreign language teaching methods and discussed their positions towards the use of L1 in L2 classes. I have also examined how students learn a foreign language and mentioned research which suggests that students could learn a lot through their mother tongue, and that the experience and knowledge acquired through L1 could be made use of when students embark on learning another language. I have also discussed that learning a foreign language is characterised by the influence of many social and individual factors and suggested that these factors have an influence on the success of foreign language education. The learning strategies, attitudes and motivation of the students - which could be either external, internal or both- are only few of these factors. These factors could equally be related to teachers, learners, the learning context and the nature of the language itself.

In addition, I have introduced two key learning theories that are of relevance to this research, the Input theory and the Prior Learning theory. I have as well mentioned that research findings suggest that L2 teachers in different contexts around the world use their students' L1 with varying levels of frequency, and I have presented a survey of the relevant literature to this effect. Most research endeavours that focused on the use of L1 in L2 classrooms suggest that L1 has an important role to play in EFL classes. In fact, it has been established that L1 facilitates L2 learning rather than hamper it, and it has become evident that there is a place for L1 in L2 classes.

On the other hand, the teaching of English Saudi Arabia seems to be influenced by a major trend that aims to adopt English as a medium of instruction in colleges and universities. However, there is a scarcity in research related to the role of Arabic in EFL education; notwithstanding the apparent dissatisfaction with the results of the current approach that bans the use of Arabic in EFL classes. The poor results could be attributed partly to the 'English only' policy that requires EFL teachers to use only L2. The fact of the matter is that there is very little empirical evidence on the role of Arabic in EFL classes in Saudi Arabia. The present study is an attempt to reduce the gap in knowledge about the issue, as it provides empirical evidence to determine the role that Arabic plays in the EFL classes.

The following chapter is dedicated to the introduction of the theoretical framework adopted for this research. It introduces activity theory and how its principles of mediation, expansion and contradictions have been instrumental in interpreting the finding of this research.

Chapter Three

The Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

Grounded in the socio-cultural philosophical approach to learning and looking through the AT lens, the present research has sought to explain the tenets of a pragmatic EFL pedagogy that involves the actual use of Arabic in the EFL classrooms. The study was motivated by the pressing need to adapt EFL teaching to its Saudi socio-cultural context, in lieu of adopting incompatible pedagogies developed for contexts that are dissimilar to the one the research studied. It was based on the belief that a better understanding of the pedagogical realities in the classrooms would inform both EFL policy and pedagogy, and would as well help generate practices and instructions that are more suitable to college preparatory year English programs in Saudi Arabia.

The chapter focuses primarily on presenting the theoretical background adopted by this research. It starts with a short discussion of the philosophy of education and a survey of the three learning theories that have, in my view, influenced language learning and EFL education the most, with more focus on the socio-cultural theory. Then it introduces, defines and describe AT as a sub-theory rooted in social constructivism. It also demonstrates how its application might contribute to defining the role of Arabic in EFL classes, helps in understanding the attitudes of the research participants vis-à-vis the phenomenon, and uses the notions of mediation, expansion and contradictions to interpret the findings of the study.

3.1.1 The Philosophy of Education

The philosophy of education is the key to understanding the process of learning. It explains how theories of education emerge, and how they relate to each other. Based on the works of prominent philosophers who tackled the issue of knowledge and how it is collected (Plato, Aristotle, Descartes and Kant), three major philosophical categories; 'ideas, experience and development' could be distinguished (Jordan et al, 2008, p 7-8).

As far as ideas are concerned, Plato advocated the principles of idealism that prioritized ideas over experience. This philosophical trend came about as a reaction to the sophists who maintained that truth is relative and that all that is needed is a good argument to win over the adversaries. Plato on his part believed that senses are misleading and that the mental is therefore superior to the physical, given that only the mind can get in touch with the 'ultimate reality'. Descartes also embraced the same principle and argued that the physical world is

misleading. This conviction led him to adopt an approach of systematic doubt and to stress logical deductions as an alternative to reaching knowledge. He illustrated this trough his well-known principle, 'cogito ergo sum' (I think, therefore I am). This position which has been adopted by idealists brought to the fore the issue of knowledge and education in the form of the question: 'How do we know what we know? Through our senses or through our minds?' (ibid).

According to Jordan et al (2008), the implications of idealism on education can be summarized in three main points:

- The priority of theory over practice which is a principle that highlights the role of the teacher as a central figure in the educational operation
- The significance of logical thinking the influence of which is evident through the encouragement of critical thinking and through the encouragement to students to ask questions
- The Importance of liberal education which is demonstrated by the fact that some people seek knowledge for its own sake, as is the case with artists or freelance researchers, as opposed to knowledge that would get them material benefits.

The second notion in educational philosophy, as delineated by Jordan et al is experience. This approach was also known as the empiricist approach that valued experience and testing as the only reliable evidence on which knowledge should be based. In fact, the English philosopher John Lock maintained that 'there is nothing in the mind which was not first in the senses' (Smith et al, 2004) cited in (Jordan et al, 2008, p 12). David Hume followed Lock's footpath and 'attempted to rely heavily on the evidence of the senses and experience' (ibid). This philosophy was against the process of induction and argued that statements must either be 'valid' by their own meaning or they must be verified through 'experience' (ibid). This trend in philosophy left its impact on the works of behaviourists.

Development is the last category in this classification by Jordan et al (2008). In a nutshell, this theory revolved around the Aristotelian principle of teleology, 'the study of purposes' (ibid). In order for learning to take place, it is crucial for learners to understand its usefulness and relevance. This approach to knowledge is particularly relevant to this research as it considers that human activity is geared towards acquiring knowledge. This is in line with Activity Theory that underpins the present study. In fact, Aristotle argued that 'all human beings by nature desire to know' (ibid), which means that the ultimate goal or purpose for this activity is knowledge, the exact goal of the EFL classroom that is the focus of this research. Equally, both contexts involve activities that make use of relevant tools that are controlled by rules of the

context in which they take place. This fact highlights the relevance of the socio-cultural context in the learning process.

3.2 Learning Theories and Foreign Language Education

Before the 20th century, language teaching was not considered a profession (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p 1). However, according to Holmes and Gardner (2006, p 78), 'in the last 100 years or so, learning theories have progressively taken centre stage, beginning with Behaviourism, developing through Cognitivism and through to today's widely-held Socio-constructivism'. In addition, the development of psychology and of linguistics as a field of study inspired applied linguists to draw on various disciplines to develop methods and materials required by language teaching. Thus, the past century was characterized by various innovations in language teaching methodologies. These methodologies kept changing and developing either informed or inspired by both research findings and the development of various psychological and philosophical theories. The following section discusses Cognitivism and Social Constructivism as two learning theories relevant to the understanding of AT, the theoretical framework adopted by this research.

3.2.1 Cognitivism as a Learning Theory

According to Holmes and Gardner (2006), scholars realised early in the 20th century that not all learning activities could be explained through principles drawn from behaviourism. In actual fact, even behaviourists who believe that learning results from repeated actions came to the conclusion that some learning activities took place in the brain and were therefore cognitive, as was proposed by Köhler (1925) in 'insightful behaviourism' and by (Tolman, 1948) in 'purposive behaviour', both cited in (Holmes and Gardner, 2006. The opposing trend in the learning theory was labelled cognitivism. This learning theory has been associated with psychologists such as (Piaget, 1983), (Bruner, 1982) and (Vygotsky, 1978). This theory was described as 'an antithesis to behaviourism, in as much as it focuses squarely on the mind and the learning processes of the brain' (Holmes and Gardner, 2006, p 81).

According to Piaget (1967), development takes precedence over learning. In order for children to learn, develop and progress in their learning, they don't need too much interference and intrusion from adults. The role of adults should be restricted to providing support as excessive mentoring could backfire by hindering the child's learning development. However, interaction with equal peers is very much welcome as it is in fact, these interactions that constitute great opportunities for learning development. Unlike during their interactions with adults, children feel very little power difference when interacting with equal peers and therefore are more disposed to learning and developing intellectually.

Another very crucial intellectual function that is essential to learning in Piaget's view is 'operational thinking'. Operational thinking is the ability to consider various points of view as well as multiple actors in a given situation, also called 'decentration' (getting away from oneself). Once again, the notion of power is crucial in this regard. For instance, views by adults will generate a totally different reaction to what views from peers might generate as 'criticism is born of discussion and discussion is only possible among equals" (Piaget, 1932, p 409(cited in (Mercer and Littleton, 2007). Children therefore learn and develop through interactions with their peers more than they would do through instruction received from adults. These socio-cognitive conflicts proved to play a great role in child learning and development (e.g. Doise and Muygay, 1984 and Dervet-Clerment, 1980). Although heavily criticized for this classification, Piaget's thesis that focused on learning developmental stages; namely, the "sensory-motor stage", the "pre-operational stage", the "concrete operations stage" and the "formal operations' stage", still continues to influence education in many parts of the world.

An equally prominent figure in the cognitivist movement was Bruner, who coined the term 'scaffolding' to refer to providing and gradually removing support when a learner is given a task. Bruner also considered that learning takes place through progressive steps (1990). Accordingly, tutors are expected to provide learners with tasks that match their level and learning capabilities. In general, 'Cognitivism can be seen as a progressive step towards an approach that combines cognitive processes with the element of individual and shared meaning-making that is constructivism' (Jordan et al 2008, p 53).

3.2.2 Social Constructivism and the Socio-Cultural Theory

Constructivism as a learning theory maintains that learners learn better from their own experiences and in a social environment through tool mediations and social interactions. This learning model 'requires that learners construct their own knowledge. Therefore, it is important to assess the kinds and extent of knowledge construction by learners not the regurgitation of ideas previously delivered to them.' (Jonassen, 2005, p 29).

This theoretical paradigm is derived from social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1981), which embodies sub-theories such as the socio-cultural theory, the cultural historical theory and the socio-cognitive theory (Lantolf, 2006). The terms Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT) and Socio-Cognitive theory will be used in this research in the sense that they complement each other, given that Vygotsky sought to develop a learning theory that would bring together the cognitive as well as the social aspects of learning. Actually, 'SCT is grounded in a perspective that does not separate the individual from the social....This includes not only obvious relationships but

also the qualities that comprise higher-order mental activity that is rooted in semiotically mediated social interaction' (Lantolf, 2006, p 213).

One of the principle tenets of SCT is mediation or the use of artefacts and tools to facilitate an activity. For instance, Vygotsky (1997) considered language a key mediating tool in social interaction and learning. Although humans use other cultural and social tools to learn, language remains the most important of these tools (Lantolf, 2006). In fact, language is used in social interactions as well as in cognitive activities (Vygotsky, 1997, p 171), 'We always think in some language, that is, we speak to ourselves and organize our behavior within ourselves just as we organize our behavior as a function of the behavior of other people'. In addition, 'language is social—a social practice, a social accomplishment, a social tool' (Atkinson, 2002, p 529).

The importance of the social aspect of language until recently does not seem to be focussed enough by second language education research. In fact, 'most research on second language learning, until recently, has focused primarily on the processes by which learners internalize, process, and use language, independently of the social milieu in which language learning and use takes place' (Preto-Bay, 2008, p 38). The use of AT as a theoretical framework that derives from SCT will help this research to highlight the fact that EFL learners may need an appropriate pedagogy that suits their socio-cultural and learning environment.

In order to master a language according to SCT proponents, it is important to combine both scientific concepts (top-down) and spontaneous concepts (bottom-up) processes (Robbins, 2003). This way, learners internalize and externalize knowledge alternatively as knowledge exists first in the social arena before it is transferred to the cognitive pane. The implication of this in a classroom is that learning adopts an approach whereby teachers are facilitators and guides to learning while learners are encouraged to be actively involved in learning in order to construct the version of reality and knowledge that they will process and internalize.

SCT quintessentially believes that learners search for meaning through understanding what is around them, building on their previous learning and using the help of others. SCT proposes that learners construct their own learning within their environment and with the use of mediating artefacts or tools. This construction of knowledge includes understanding wholes as well as parts that are considered in relation to their environment. Equally, teachers need to understand what students learn and what they perceive the world to be. In other words, they need to be aware of their student's learning styles and strategies.

The role of the teacher is therefore not to teach intensively but rather to continuously coach and facilitate learning. In class, learners are not told everything but they are encouraged through questions to formulate their own understanding and develop their perception of the truth and

knowledge. In fact, task instructions from teachers to their students should not only aim to elicit learning, but the teachers need to facilitate learning progress by assisting learners to learn new and relatively advanced features and thus help them progress through their zones of proximal development (ZPD).

The notion of ZPD is one of the essential tenets of social constructivism. It stands for the difference between what a learner knows on his own and what he/she would be able to learn with the help of a teacher, a parent or a peer (Vygotsky, 1978). In other words, ZPD is the difference between acquired knowledge and the knowledge to be acquired through scaffolding or the use of temporary learning aids used to help the students become independent learners. In fact, scaffolding in this paper means not only 'providing contextual supports for meaning through the use of simplified language, teacher modelling, visuals and graphics, cooperative learning and hands on learning' (Ovando et al, 2003, p 243), but it implies the use of students L1 as well. The use of L1 however should be restricted and temporary; as 'students become more proficient, the scaffold is gradually removed' (Diaz-Rico and Weed, 2002, p 85).

The question investigating the correlation between learning and development is also relevant for establishing the connection between mediation and development. Development is an accumulation of learning, which implies that learning culminates in development (Baltese et al, 1977). Just as learning is conducive to development, the mediation of learning is a means that leads to learning expansion. Humans develop by constructing meaning of what surrounds them; whether that is linked to their societal context or historical events (Vygotsky, 1978). Both learning and development occur as a result of the individual interaction with the environment. This interaction is usually mediated by tools; and when learning progresses, it results in the development and expansion of knowledge.

In the EFL classroom which is the focus of this research, interaction occurs between students and their teacher and between students and their classmates sometimes through L2 but on some other times through L1 in classes where all students share the same L1. This interaction in the Saudi EFL classes is usually mediated by the use of Arabic, the students' L1, in the case of beginner students. Arabic is used by these students until such time that they have learned enough English to manage a short interaction with their teacher. Sometimes, they get stuck and make use of Arabic to seek the help of their classmates. The use of L1 in this scenario helps in expanding students' knowledge, and it is also an example of using what is known to progress and acquire that which is challenging and new.

For instance, in an EFL classroom teachers and students make use of pedagogical scaffolding techniques through the use of L1 in order to facilitate the learning of new English functions,

structures and vocabulary. This can take the form of "steps" that learners will "climb" (Holmes and Gardner, 2006). Thus, a language class provides an environment where new learning builds on previous knowledge and experience, where learning is mediated through interactions with others, where learning is a series of problem solving, and where learning is a process facilitated by teachers and other students (Reyes and Vallone, 2008). The core beliefs behind this theory according to Nolan and Francis are:

1. Knowledge is constructed by learners through social interactions.
2. Prior knowledge plays a major role in learning new items.
3. The focus of the teachers should be on how to improve students' learning and not the teachers' teaching.
4. Learning takes place in a specific socio-cultural context.
5. Learning is a social activity not just an individual one. (1992, pp. 47- 49)

To summarize, the gist of constructivism as a pedagogical approach and as a learning theory is that learners construct their own knowledge and meaning through their involvement with their learning environment to create their own experiences.

3.2.3 SCT and Foreign Language Teaching-Learning

SCT as a learning theory considers that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through building experiences and by reflecting on those experiences. This approach to learning has been considered an important innovation in L2 education and therefore used to promote learning (Feden and Vogel, 2003). In addition, SCT believes that new knowledge is matched with and builds on prior learning. In L2 classes where prior knowledge is usually present in the form of L1, the encounter with the foreign language could sometimes result in discarding the old knowledge, rejecting the new information or transferring from the old knowledge to the new one to contribute to the learners' 'inter-language' (Ellis, 1994). In addition, learners create their own learning through questions, explorations, and knowledge assessment through their L1 which constitutes an important part of their learning strategies.

This approach would be very useful in an EFL learning context given that a language is usually learned better through social activities and interactions in the form of conversations and role play. With some bias towards constructivism, teachers would encourage their students to question their learning styles and strategies, and ideally turn into expert learners gradually. This approach seeks to endow the students with evolving and expanding tools to become independent life-long learners. Consequently, the instruction should focus on making connections between what the learners already know and the new knowledge introduced. Thus,

teachers who use L1 to tailor their teaching approach to the students' learning needs to help them to analyse, interpret and predict information through open-ended questions, can easily provoke interactions with and amongst their students.

Although constructivism has been criticised for down-playing the role of the teacher, the fact of the matter is that constructivism emphasises the active role of the teacher as well as the value of expert knowledge. Constructivism is also often misconstrued as a learning theory that compels students to reinvent the wheel. Quite the contrary, constructivism encourages learners to take advantage of their prior learning and use it as a learning scaffold to gain current and future knowledge (Nolan and Francis, 1992).

It has been argued that the influence of constructivism could be traced in Krashen's second language acquisition model (Lantolf et al, 2006). While it is true that Vygotsky and Krashen come from two entirely different backgrounds, similarities between the two theories have been drawn. For instance, it has been proposed that Krashen's input hypothesis may arguably be compared to Vygotsky's ZPD as both notions stress the importance of social interactions as being essential to foreign language 'internalization' (Vygotsky, 1962) or 'acquisition' (Krahsen, 1982). Also, the process of learning takes place more effectively when a learner is helped based on what she/he already knows, to learn new and more advanced language functions. For Vygotsky, this is progressing through his/her ZPD; whereas for Krashen learning progress can be facilitated through 'i+1' (learning advanced or challenging input). Apparently, what seems to be dissimilar concepts in their models could be complementary in informing foreign language teaching methodology, as no theory could claim to be perfect by itself.

In fact, following the dialectic nature of thought, socio-cultural constructivism has developed into other sub-theories. One of these sub theories is Activity Theory (AT), which has been adopted by the present research as a theoretical framework to explain the role of Arabic in EFL classes. So what is AT?

3.3 Activity Theory

According to Kuutti (1996), the origin of AT could be traced back to 1920s with Vygotsky's work that was grounded in socio-cultural constructivism, which was further developed by Luria and Leont'ev. While Luria contributed the notion of 'artefacts' or tools that could be either psychological or social to the theory, Leont'ev elaborated on AT by suggesting that activities are driven by needs or motives constructed either biologically or culturally. AT was further developed to include a defined unit of analysis by Zinchenko (1985) labelled 'activity system'. Engeström (1987), who also extended Zinchenko's notion of mediated action, considered the activity system to be the unit of analysis (Lantolf, 2000, 2004 and 2006). In fact according to

Roth (2004), the main credit for AT is attributed to Engeström who 'through his publications and presentations in a variety of disciplines spread the word' (p. 1).

Leont'ev's version of AT is in fact an advanced version of Vygotsky's 'cultural-historical tradition' (Kaptelinin and Nardi, 2006). In addition, Leont'ev's theory influenced other versions of AT (e.g. Engeström 1987; Greif 1991; Rabardel and Bourmaud, 2003). From an epistemological point of view, AT was used as 'a means of overcoming the Cartesian opposition between the subject and the object, between the "inner" world of consciousness and the "outer" world' (Lektorsky, 2009, p 75). This dichotomy of cognitive activity versus social behaviour has already been addressed in this chapter.

3.3.1 Defining Activity Theory

AT answers the question 'what is the individual or group doing in a particular setting?' (Wertsch, 1985, p 211), cited in (Oxford, 2006, p 4). In other words, 'Activity Theory provides an account of the why, where, when, and how of people's social and mental behavior' (De Guerrero, 2005, p 13). Based on this definition, an activity could easily be confused with a task. However as far as EFL education is concerned, there is a difference between task and activity. For Coughlin and Duff, a task is defined as the 'behavioral blueprint provided to students in order to elicit data' for research (1994, p175). A task has also been defined as 'an outcome-oriented instructional or as a behavioural framework for research or classroom learning' (Oxford, 2006, p 4). Activity on the other hand has been defined as 'the behavior that is actually produced when an individual (or group) performs a task' (ibid). In other words, a task may include one or many activities among individuals as well as within one single individual.

Based on my readings and reflections, I have come to understand AT to be an open-source theory which welcomes additions and modifications, depending on the area of research it is used for and also based on the experience of the researcher. In fact, this description reinforces the interaction and exchange of knowledge typical of an activity system. While interpretations of AT may differ from one individual to the other, (Kaptelinin and Nardi, 2006) referred to works that contained introductions to AT (e.g., Wertsch 1981; Davydov 1990a; Bødker 1991; Kuutti 1992; Nardi 1992, 1996a, 1998; Blackler 1995; Kaptelinin, Kuutti, and Bannon 1995; Kaptelinin 1996a; Kaptelinin and Nardi 1997; Verenikina and Gould 1998; Bertelsen and Bødker 2003) and observed that they all look similar both in length and content.

In a nutshell, AT is used as a theoretical framework or a descriptive tool to study any activity system that describes a human behaviour. This framework believes that activity participants are socio-culturally embedded actors who interact with their environment. In addition, goal-motivated and rule-governed activities combine both cognitive and social aspects into one

integrated activity; in which participants or subjects learn by doing. Learning, however, is not an internal activity; learning is 'distributed between individuals, their colleagues, their material artefacts - tools, and their semiotic resources' (Engeström et al, 2002). The fact that this definition looks similar to the one provided by (Lantolf, 2006) as a definition of SCT indicates that theories deriving from social constructivism have many aspects in common, notwithstanding their different labels.

3.3.2 The Notion of Activity

For AT, an activity is not random. Rather, it is motivated 'either by a biological need, such as hunger, or a culturally constructed need' (Lantolf, 2006, p 8) (see Figure 3.1). For instance, the present research project was instigated by many motives; to understand the attitudes of various stakeholders toward the use of Arabic in EFL classes and how they are shaped by the real classroom practice, to obtain a PhD and to contribute to my personal professional development, and hopefully secure better career options. An activity is usually instigated by motives and is usually also goal-oriented. As a case in point, learning as an activity will only take place if it the learners are motivated and their goal is clear to them. Hence, different learners will possess different learning motives and goals. In fact, 'observable activity can be linked to different goals and motives' (ibid).

Figure 3.1 Human behaviour as an activity (Caper, 2004)

Unlike Piaget's version of cognitive theory (1983) that focused mainly on the cognitive side of human behaviour, AT presents a wider perspective by establishing a connection between human thinking and activity. Behaviourist for instance spoke of a linear connection in the form of stimulus – response relationship, while AT views this relationship as interactive. Thinking and activity are constantly exchanging feedback; thus thinking affects activity and activity affects thinking. This interchange is necessary to match the goals set (Capper, 2004). A good example for this interaction is what learners do during any given task in the classroom. For instance, a student might think of a word to use; and after using it, s/he would realise its unsuitability and then think of using a dictionary or asking his/her classmates or teacher for a better word.

The socio-cultural context in which the activity takes place is of utmost importance for AT. Teachers need therefore to be aware of this fact and work on adapting their teaching styles and

techniques to the socio-cultural context hosting their practice. The more relevant and compatible their methodologies are to the socio-cultural environment, the smoother the educational activity will be; as it will make more sense to the learners (Capper, 2004). As a case in point, the use of Arabic in EFL beginner and elementary classes would prove more useful than using English when learners don't understand it. In addition, it is crucial that a teacher takes into consideration the cognitive abilities, the proficiency level and the social practices of his/her learners. Partly, these social practices are to be linked to their prior learning experiences, including their learning strategies. To achieve this, teachers and learners need to be speaking to each other. Hence, teachers need to treat their students' activities in the classroom as interactions with the world they live in, not as mere passive actions in which they receive knowledge of the world (Purcell-Gates et al, 2004). This way, learners become active agents involved in the learning activity.

3.3.3 Combining the Socio-Cultural and Cognitive Skills for Learning

Through an activity system, cognitive and socio-cultural contexts are combined as two sources of information that interact, influence and in turn get influenced by each other. In fact, they mutually 'shape each other' (Engestrom, 1987). The intersection of these two activities yields an activity system that hosts interactions, as shown by figure 3.2 below. Taught through a 'learning-by-doing' approach, learners use both cognitive skills and socio-cultural practices to construct their own meaning and knowledge as they attempt to relate their skills and strategies to the social context in which they operate (ibid). It is therefore evident that an activity system cannot exist if one of the aforementioned elements is missing.

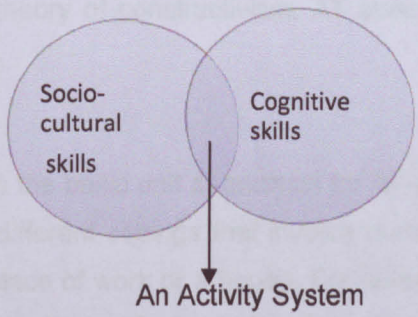

Figure 3.2 The combination of socio-cultural and cognitive skills

Given the interactive relationship that exists between cognitive tools (ideas) and physical or behavioural tools (actions), human behaviour could be controlled not only from within but also from the outside through auxiliary stimuli (Engeström, 1999) or through mediating artefacts (Vygotsky, 1978). The importance of actions as behavioural tools in human activity were also highlighted by Leont'ev (1978) who viewed that a 'human activity does not exist except in the form of action or a chain of actions…If the actions that constitute activity are mentally subtracted

from it, then absolutely nothing will be left of action', cited in (Wilson, 2006, P. 125). Engeström built on the same idea to conclude that an activity is object driven and that 'there is no activity without an object', while there could be objects without activities such as unaddressed world problems such as desertification (2009, p.306).

When applying this notion of activity system to an EFL classroom in order to improve learners proficiency in English (cognitive activity), teachers need to be cognizant of the specificity of the social context in which it is happening. Saudi learners, for instance, have been using Arabic as a medium of instruction; and they have developed very specific learning strategies as far as learning English is concerned. In addition, due to their low proficiency in English, the exclusive use of English in their classes will result in a lack of understanding and therefore a lack of interaction; since the cognitive activity will be missing from the learning process. Learners should be able to make sense of their social context to respond to it; as they also need to be afforded the opportunity to build on their prior learning in order to be socially interactive (Wetherell, 2001).

As a case in point, it has been noticed that Saudi EFL students easily lose interest if they don't understand, and if the situation is not saved through the use of Arabic to render the EFL input comprehensible, teachers run the possibility of spoiling the lesson altogether. The use of Arabic in these cases either by the teacher or by the students themselves is a form of mediation to learning. For this and many other reasons, AT constitutes a useful framework and research tool to investigate how students learn foreign languages and how classroom practices evolve overtime. As a sub-theory of constructivism, AT stresses the importance of the socio-cultural aspect to learning.

3.4 Activity System

The activity system is the basic unit of analysis for AT (Engeström et al, 1999). Activity systems could be spotted in different settings that involve human behaviour; be that in a classroom, a place of worship, a place of work or a house. For research or study purposes, the 'lens' can be focused on specific activities or its components such as students' class participation or learning strategies (Russell, 2002). When observing an EFL class for instance, it is important to focus on the common object, the motive and the mediating tools that the subjects share. AT serves as a lens allowing us to 'focus in different directions and with different levels of 'magnification' to help us answer the questions we have' (ibid, p. 70). Nevertheless, it does not come with rules or a user manual on how to apply it in any situation. It is rather up to the researcher or observer to adapt it to the situation he/she envisages to study. As I have already mentioned above, AT is a kind of a general but flexible theory that could be applied in more than one context.

3.4.1 Activity Theory as a Research Tool

According to AT, any human behaviour could be described as an activity system. Human behaviour is not therefore a simple response to a stimulus nor is it mere exteriorizations of cognitive actions. In fact, AT seeks not only to describe human behaviour but the theory goes further to explain it with reference to its socio-cultural context.

Inside each activity system, there are various nodes such as the subject, object, tools, outcome, rules, community and roles. The subject is usually a collective one, and a community acts on an object to reach a specified outcome. The subject uses tools that are appropriate to the nature of the object. These tools could be visible or hidden, behavioural or cognitive or both. They can vary from one member of the collective group that constitute the subject of the activity to another. In the case of an EFL class, both a teacher and his students in their classroom are engaged in an educational operation that constitutes an activity system in which they are the subject acting on the object of teaching-learning English. The subject therefore operates on the object using tools to mediate the activity to reach a pre-set outcome. The goal serves as the motivation that would finally facilitate the realization of the outcome to varying degrees. For instance in this research, EFL teachers and their students have set the relative mastery of the language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) as their primary outcome or goal. Most students may realize this outcome in varying degrees but some may not realize it at all. Of course some of the teaching or learning tools may be approved by the community and others may be disapproved of. The activity system takes place in a community the members of which could be set far apart from each other but still linked through the tools used and the policies that regulate the overall activity.

Such a community in the case of an EFL classroom, as in this research, is made up of the students and their teachers, the English department and the college administration. These members all interact and impact on the activity system which is EFL education. One way through which this community could get involved is through setting rules and distributing roles. With these rules comes the notion of power relation. In fact, Auerbach accorded a socio-political dimension to the use of the L1 in L2 classes and considered that 'everyday classroom practices, far from being neutral and natural, have ideological origins and consequences for relations of power both inside and outside the classroom' (1993, p. 29).

Rules could help the activity progress as in the case of rules that seek to instil discipline and order through fostering mutual respect and classroom ethics. On the other hand, there could be other rules and values, whether obvious or hidden, that might hamper the activity such as objecting to the use of Arabic in the EFL classroom. For instance, while teachers and students

may consider the use of some Arabic a useful, and therefore, justified tool to mediate learning, some policy makers might frown upon it. This attitude gets communicated to the EFL teachers who act on it to prohibit the use of Arabic in their classes. So, the community can affect the choice of tools available, as it can also afford the subject(s) the opportunity to act on the object effectively and efficiently. This is but one example of the interactive relationship that relates the various nodes of an activity system.

In addition to setting rules, communities hosting activity systems also use role distributions to determine what role or contribution members of such community should contribute to the activity. For instance, in the case of an EFL classroom, teachers teach, students learn and the management facilitates the overall educational operation. However, sometimes roles could be intertwined and teachers could learn from their students, students could teach other students, while a teacher could sometimes turn into an administrator (e.g., taking attendance or providing counselling).

As it has already been mentioned above, all these nodes communicate and interact with each other. For instance, the rules and the object of an activity could determine what tools to use. However, the subject could impact on the community to change the rules. For instance, when teachers are involved in decision making, they could have an impact on the distribution of roles. In case the outcome is not met to the satisfaction of the subject or the community, tools used might be revisited, new rules might be generated and roles might also be reassigned.

In short, AT is a framework or descriptive tool for a system which considers that people are socio-culturally embedded actors involved in an activity. The theory has gone through three different generations and this research is primarily interested in the third generation model developed by (Engeström, 1987) as shown by Figure 3.3.

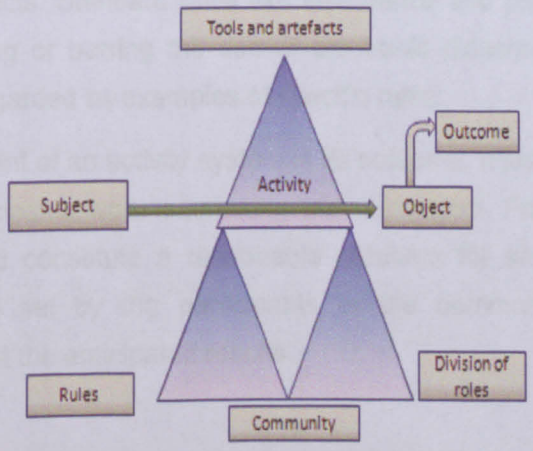

Figure 3.3 Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987)

3.4.2 The Components of Activity Theory

The essential component in an activity system is the subject which could be either an individual or a group of people. Students and their teacher in an EFL classroom are involved in the EFL teaching and learning activity. AT considers that the subject directs the activity towards the object and works on it to achieve the outcome. To put this into perspective, the object in an EFL classroom is studying and teaching English. To interact with the object, the subject (teacher and students) needs to make use of tools and artefacts to mediate the activity at hand. These tools could be physical or abstract, behavioural or cognitive. EFL students for instance use physical tools such as books and stationary, but at the same time they also use cognitive learning strategies such as translation and memorisation, or behavioural strategies such as asking questions or using their L1. Equally, their teacher makes use of tools such as hand-outs, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), or as argued here the learners' L1. The choice of these tools would depend among other factors on the community rules, the object as well as the outcome of the activity.

In the same way, an activity system takes place within a community with which it interacts; impacts on and gets impacted by too. For this research, EFL education takes place in a classroom where the subject is collective (students and their teacher). The rules in this case are both classroom-related and college-related. In fact, this activity takes place in a college that implements a policy that frowns upon the use of Arabic in EFL classes. Regarding the distribution of roles and, as it has already been mentioned, teachers teach, students learn while the managerial staff facilitates the educational process.

The relationship between these community members is established through rules. An EFL classroom for instance has its own rules that may or may not be shared by other classrooms hosting other subjects. Standard rules like attendance and punctuality are shared rules; while allowing, disallowing or barring the use of electronic dictionaries, cell phones or the mother tongue could be regarded as examples of specific rules.

Finally, the end point of an activity system is its outcome. It justifies the tools and rules used by the actors or participants while interacting with the object. For instance, the mastery of basic English skills could constitute a reasonable outcome for an EFL courses. The outcome is therefore the goal set by the participants or the community where the object (EFL) is transformed to meet the anticipated results.

3.4.2.1 Tools as Mediating Artefacts

The concepts of tools and artefacts are of paramount importance for AT. Activity systems use tools or artefacts, physical or symbolic, to shape the way things are carried out within an activity. Tools could be anything that assists in manipulating an environment to get the required information from it. Language is considered the most important of all tools. For instance, when a teacher or a student uses Arabic to explain a notion or a function that was not comprehensible in English, this constitutes a case of mediation through the use of language (L1) to learn or teach L2. Similarly, when computers are used to improve students' writings, the computer becomes a tool and so does the language as it allows the expression of ideas (Capper, 2004). It is therefore safe to say that one way of considering the use of Arabic in EFL through AT lenses could be to treat it as a mediating tool to the EFL teaching–learning activity.

Language has been recognised as a very important mediation tool in a learning activity system. In fact, language is 'the most pervasive and powerful cultural artifact that humans possess to mediate their connection to the world, to each other, and to themselves' (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006, p 201). This statement is reminiscent of Butzkamm's claim that L1 is the best asset that foreign language students bring to the foreign language classroom (2003).

Mediation tools could also come in the form of cultural components from the environment hosting the activity. These tools could be traditions, mores, norms, beliefs, customs, rules or laws. For instance, Arabic in Saudi Arabia is a language that is highly valued for being the language of the Quran, but it is also an important tool that helps learners to link L2 to L1 skills and knowledge. Still, language policies in most colleges prohibit the use of Arabic in the EFL classes. This situation suggests the existence of conflicts and contradictions. Equally, the learning habits that learners have developed in their prior education have culminated in the adoption of learning strategies reflecting their learning styles. More often than not, these learners carry these strategies with them to the EFL classes. The effectiveness of these learning strategies in an EFL classroom may depend on the relationship students have with their teachers. If a teacher allows his students to make use of Arabic, then this learning strategy will be part of the learning tools used to mediate learning, otherwise the strategy will be suppressed and this would result in a state of confusion for the students, and conflicts and contradictions between the teachers' teaching styles and the learners' learning strategies. In brief, the role of learning strategies is determined by status and power relationships in a learning community (Russell, 2002).

Mediation is also what regulates the relationship between the community and the division of labour. It is important above all to consider who uses which tools and whether the tools are

suitable for the activity as this has direct consequences on the completion of the activity. The use of Arabic as a tool may be accessible to learners and Arabic-speaking teachers, while it may not be available to non-Arabic speaking teachers. This situation that gives an edge to the Arabic-speaking teachers (bilingual teachers) over their non-Arabic speaking colleagues (especially monolingual teachers) is also a case of contradiction, which would require reconsidering the distribution of roles by allocating Arabic speaking teachers to teach the levels where the use of Arabic serves as a necessary mediating tool. In fact, there should be a sensible division of labour based on the users' ability to use the available tools (Capper, 2004).

3.4.3.2 Interactions

AT considers that a human activity takes place within a system governed by rules that control its internal actions and interactions. These rules impact on and influence the tools and the final outcome of the activity system. In turn, the community has its impact on the activity systems it hosts through the rules that it sets. Indeed, any community that hosts an activity system is made up of people either as individuals or as groups to whom activity tasks are allocated both horizontally and vertically, considering both power and status, in what is termed division of labour (Engeström, 1996). There exists a dialectical relationship between these elements and the activity in progress as they both influence and shape each other in order to allow the subject to achieve the set goal or the anticipated outcome of the activity. In other words, these relationships and interactions are forever changing since activities are always dynamic and all the elements of an activity are bound together by the motive and the objective of the activity itself (Hasu and Engeström, 2000).

The above mentioned elements and their relationships could be better put into perspective by taking an EFL classroom as an example. Figure 3.4 that follows shows how the present research has adapted Engeström's AT to explore the role of Arabic in EFL classes in a Saudi college.

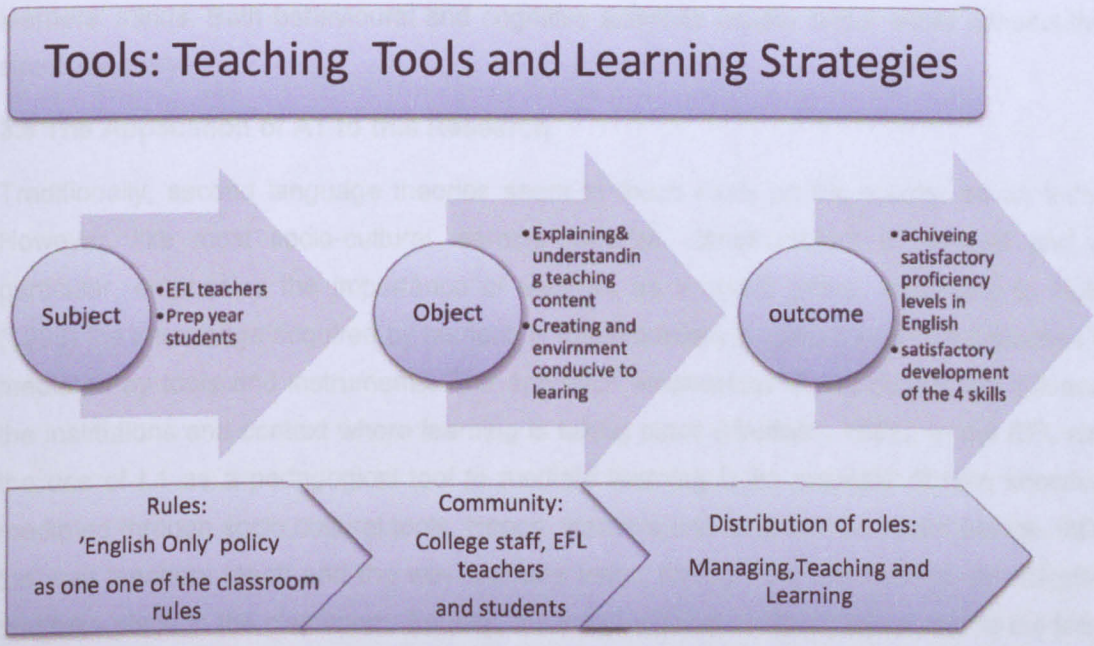

Figure 3.4 EFL educations as a human activity system in a Saudi context

3.4.2.3 Action versus Activity

It is evident that a distinction has to be drawn between action and activity in order to distinguish between the two notions. While action is perceived to be individual, activity is seen as collective. This implies that an activity may include many actions. In addition, a group activity is made of individual actions that might not be linked together or encouraged by participants around them. Leont'ev (1978) viewed that, unlike collective activity, actions have defined goals with a beginning and an end. Actions join together to constitute an activity, but they should not be confused with the difference between a task and an activity as was discussed previously in this chapter. In a classroom for instance, a teacher and his students perform different actions to mediate and contribute to the learning activity. Without these actions, learning would be meaningless.

Similarly, activity systems interact and sometimes overlap each other. For example in an EFL classroom, there are many activities taking place within the principle activity of learning English. These activities are traditionally known as language learning tasks that are activities involving learners and their teacher. Other activities, mainly cognitive ones, are carried out in individual learners' minds. A good example of these interactions could be what was observed in the EFL classes during the data collection by this research, as it has emerged that students occasionally use Arabic to seek each other's help or simply to socialise. Similarly, the use of translation as a cognitive learning strategy is another example of activities that take place within individual

learners' minds. Both behavioural and cognitive activities usually occur either consecutively or simultaneously.

3.5 The Application of AT to this Research

Traditionally, second language theories seem to focus more on the learner as an individual. However, like most socio-cultural learning theories, constructivism in general and AT in particular, emphasise the importance of learners as a social group. According to Hutchins, (1995) the knowledge acquired by humans is fundamentally a cultural and social process that is mediated by tools and instruments. The approach emphasizes the socio-cultural influences of the institutions and context where learning is taking place (Wertsch, 1991). In the EFL classes, the use of L1 as a pedagogical tool to mediate learning is an example of how knowledge is mediated through socio cultural tools. Hence, learners and teachers, as social beings, influence the way teachers teach and the way learners learn, through the interactions and negotiations that take place in the classroom. Equally, the socio-cultural context plays a role in the teaching-learning process. For instance, in order to understand Saudi students learning strategies, it is important to be aware of their past learning experiences. In other words, one needs to delineate their socio-cultural perspectives or their schemata. As on one hand, they have been used to studying English through Arabic; on the other hand they are Muslims and value Arabic as the language of Islam. To expect them to ditch Arabic at one go shouldn't be expected to happen in a short time.

AT is a useful theory that seems suitable for exploring the role of Arabic in EFL classes. The essence of this theory is activity which is understood here to mean 'doing in order to transform something' through studying 'human practices as development process' (Kuutti, 1996, p 14). AT has mostly been made use of in human-computer interaction studies (e.g. Bødker, 1991, 1997; Nardi, 1996a), in developmental workplace research (e.g. Engeström, 1987, 1997; Engeström and Middleton, 1996) and in education (e.g. Dillon, 2000; Grossman, Smagorinsky and Valencia, 1999; Kozulin, 1998; Moll, Tapia and Willmore, 1993; Newell, Gingrich and Johnson, 2001; Wells 1994; Wertsch and Toma, 1995). However, AT -like other socio-cultural approaches- has also made their entrance into L2 research (e.g., Hall, 1997; Lantolf and Pavlenko, 1995).

3.5.1 Mediation, Expansion and Contradictions

This research has found the AT principles of mediation, expansion and contradictions to be useful for the analysis and interpretation of its findings, as they represent the salient components of the EFL teaching- learning activity. These notions are defined below.

3.5.1.1 Mediation

As I have already mentioned earlier, the idea of mediation is traced back to Vygotsky's mediated learning. According to this principle, learning is not just based on repetitions and imitations, nor is it a verbalization of cognitive concepts. Learned information first exists in the social context before it is internalized and then externalized. To internalise or comprehend knowledge from its context, social and cultural tools or artefacts are used. This is called the mediation of learning that Engeström developed further in his version of AT (Engeström, 1987).

According to Engeström, mediation is assured through tools (means or artefacts) that facilitate the learning process and progress. These tools could be visible or hidden, behavioural or cognitive. In the case of this research, learning strategies stand for tools - whether cognitive or behavioural - that could be used to mediate learning. Equally teachers may use a myriad of tools to facilitate their teaching as well as their students' learning. Although members who constitute the subject of an activity system may make use of different tools, there are instances where they would make use of the same tool to mediate the activity they are involved in. For instance, data collected by this research suggest that EFL students as well as their teachers use Arabic to facilitate the teaching-learning process, albeit in varying quantities and ways.

3.5.1.2 Expansion

Mediation plays a great role in learning that which is learnable and that which is at an accessible level for the learners. However, learning that that which is above the learners' level would require external help to assist them to progress through their ZPD (see figure 3.5). This situation arises due to the dynamic nature of the activity system which presents new opportunities for learning all the time. Vygotsky's ZPD has been defined as the difference between what is already learned independently and that which can be learned with the help of others like teachers, parents or other educated peers. In fact as illustrated by Figure 3.5, ZPD has also been defined as 'the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (Vygotsky, 1978) cited in (Lantolf, 2006, p 20). On a similar note, Russell suggests that 'people change and learn as they expand their involvement with others in a community and the tools that community uses in certain ways...It is in Engeström's phrase 'learning by expanding' (1987).' (2001, p. 77).

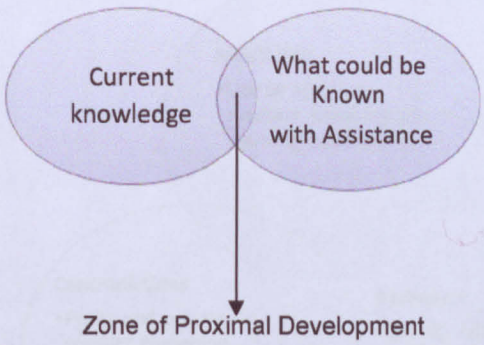

Figure 3.5 Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978)

3.5.1.3 Contradictions

More often than never, conflicts and disagreement regarding the tools to use, the outcome to reach, or the role assigned might arise (Russell, 2002). These contradictions are a source of learning development and learning expansion (Engeström, 1987). Any given activity system is home to conflicts, disagreements and contradictions. Russell considers that these contradictions arise 'when people are at cross- purposes' (2000, p. 65). Contradictions could exist between the subject and the community in which the activity system is taking place, between the tools and the rules, or between any other elements of the activity system. These contradictions could also be the impetus for an activity progress through change. In fact, an activity system is continuously working through contradictions (Engeström, 1987). In relation to the present research, the use of Arabic in EFL classes is a source of contradictions in this educational activity (see Figure, 3.6). On one hand, there are students and teachers who use Arabic either overtly or covertly to mediate the EFL teaching-learning activity; on the other hand, there are policy makers and teachers who either frown upon such use or prohibit it completely. This conflict of opinion is an example of contradictions that necessitate reflection and renegotiation of rules or even policy change in order to reflect pragmatic and appropriate EFL classroom pedagogy.

As I have already explained above, the three principles of AT mediation, expansion and contradiction) have been adopted by this research to identify the role of Arabic in EFL classes and to explain the attitudes of the EFL stakeholders in a Saudi college (see figure 3.6). Such application aims to relate this pedagogical activity to its socio-cultural context, and hence justify the suggestions and recommendations that its findings might come up with in order to inform an appropriate and pragmatic pedagogy that is appropriate to Saudi EFL classes.

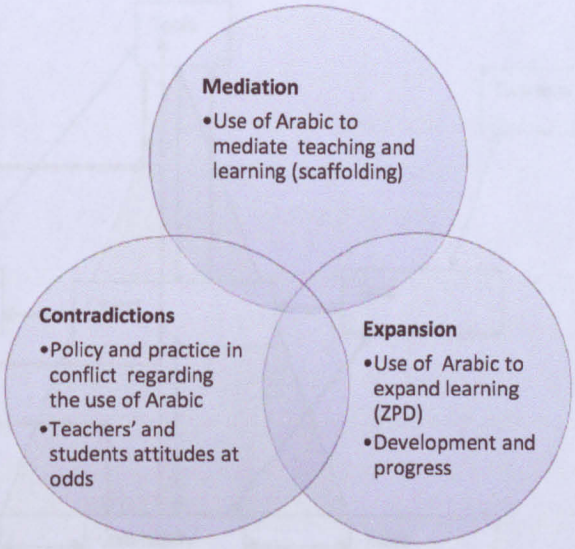

Figure 3.6 The use of Arabic in EFL college preparatory year classes from an AT perspective

Most research projects which have recently adopted AT as a theoretical framework were grounded in the legacy of the first and second generation of this theory (Sannino et al, 2009, p. xiv). These research projects have mostly focussed on issues around them that manifested contradictions to demonstrate how theoretical and methodological resources may be used for 'practical applications and empirical challenges' (ibid).The official position regarding the use of L1 in EFL classes in Saudi colleges could be a good example of a local practice that constitutes the source of many contradictions. It is anticipated that the application of AT to the present study will help to demonstrate how the use of AT principles can offer a systematic analysis and interpretation of the findings. It is also anticipated that such use also help in defining the challenges that such adaptation to EFL classroom research may evoke for future research experiences in the field.

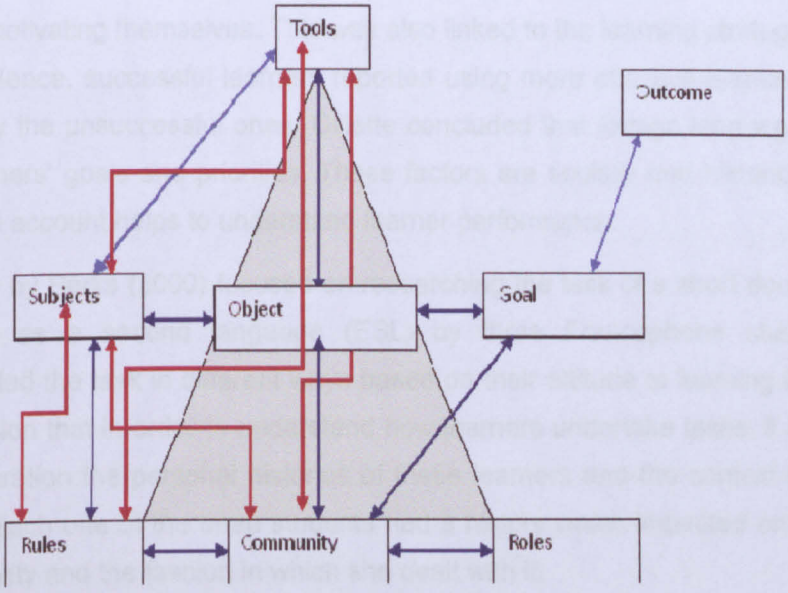

Figure: 3.7 Interactions (straight arrows) and contradictions (bent arrows) within an activity system

3.5.2 Studies that Made use of Activity Theory

AT has been used to explore its implication in second language acquisition by many research endeavours (Coughlan and Duff, 1994; Gillette, 1994; Parks, 2000 and Thorne, 1999). Such approach to research allowed researchers not only to describe the investigated phenomena but to provide an explanation for them as well.

For instance, Coughlan and Duff (1994) looked into a task-based performance from an activity perspective. The authors distinguished between a task and an activity. Unlike tasks, activities do not have set goals as students define their own goals. Accordingly, students as agents are capable of directing activities towards their own goals. Based on a task that involved describing pictures, the authors concluded that the activity is a unique exercise to each learner and that different learners react to the same task differently. This, in their view, makes learners active agents who steer activities towards their goals. They also concluded that this type of activity cannot be separated from its socio-cultural context.

Another research, Gillette (1994), was based on a series of studies relating to successful and unsuccessful experiences of adult L2 learners. Based on class observations, learning histories and diaries, the author concluded that students' motives play a great role in their learning outcomes. In fact, students' learning histories revealed that their motives to learn varied. In addition, students' attitudes and perceptions to the learning of foreign languages were influenced by their exposure to the world. The author also found out those successful L2

learners believed in the 'learning by doing' philosophy, whereas the unsuccessful ones had hard times motivating themselves. This was also linked to the learning strategies each set of learners used. Hence, successful learners reported using more effective learning strategies than those used by the unsuccessful ones. Gillette concluded that foreign language learning is influenced by learners' goals and priorities. These factors are socially and historically constructed; taking this into account helps to understand learner performance.

A study by Parks (2000) focused on researching the task of a short documentary style video in English as a second language (ESL) by three Francophone students. These students completed the task in different ways based on their attitude to learning English. Parks drew the conclusion that in order to understand how learners undertake tasks, it is important to take into consideration the personal histories of these learners and the context in which the task takes place. Each one of the three students had a history which impacted on the way she perceived the activity and the fashion in which she dealt with it.

Thorne (1999) as well investigated the impact of the internet use on foreign language learners' communicative activity. Students reported that they didn't feel much responsibility for what they said over the Internet as they were not supervised, although they were aware that their instructor was online. It became clear that the use of the internet to mediate communication gives students some freedom and some of the students used obscene language. However, when the teacher resumed his role as a face to face teacher, the communication changed. The author concluded that the use of the internet to mediate communication opened up a set of options not available in the normal classroom. Although it was viewed as an opportunity to produce negative language, it certainly offered latitude to students to use the language freely.

The last study in this survey was by Lantolf and Genung (2002) which investigated a student who failed while attempting to learn Chinese, due to the impact of power rising from the learning context that 'appeared to conspire against the best efforts to learn the language' (p. 193). This context impacted on the student's motivation to learn Chinese. The authors concluded that failure to learn is socially embedded and that motivation is not the learners property, and adds that communities and activities 'are characterized by shifting motives, goals, rule of behaviour and they normally entail struggle and conflict, including contestation of power, how it is deployed and potentially challenged' (ibid).

3.6 Conclusion

In the lines above, I have delineated AT as the theoretical framework adopted for this research. I have indicated that the study is grounded in the socio- cultural theory, and that it uses the AT to analyse the findings. The use of AT, as a theoretical lens, will allow for the systematic interpretation of the findings; while reflecting the impact of the socio-cultural context on the EFL teaching-learning activity under study. I have defined AT and how it is applied to this research. I mentioned as well that, in the institution where the research has taken place, Arabic is used in EFL classes as a mediation tool, as a learning expansion tool and as a source for contradictions. Hence, I explained that mediation involves the use of tools in the form of learning strategies and the teaching tools. Equally, expansion involves learning development by helping students to progress through their ZPDs. Finally, I have mentioned that the use of Arabic is a source of contradictions at different levels of the EFL activity; be that at the EFL classroom level or at the college level. I have also mentioned few studies that made use of AT in SLA research, bearing in mind that there is a difference between SLA and EFL as far as the context where each process takes place.

Finally, the theoretical approach of AT along with its components of analysis adapted by this research, have afforded the researcher with a useful conceptual framework within which to analyse and interpret the data in order to establish the role of Arabic in EFL classes and explain the attitudes of the EFL stakeholders. Prior to adopting activity theory, the research lacked focus. In fact, it seemed similar to all the research endeavours that researched the use of L1 use in L2 classes. It can safely be argued that AT has attributed both robustness and originality to this study.

The following chapter describes the mixed methods approach, as the research paradigm that I have used to collect data in his study. It also defines the rationale and process that led to this choice.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

Language research has been defined as 'any systematic and principled inquiry in language learning and teaching' (Brown and Rodgers, 2002, p 12). For this research to be both 'systematic and principled', it needs to follow a methodology or a set of methodologies. Thus, researchers have always accorded great importance to research methodology, due to its significant impact on both the quality and substance of research projects, their data and findings. In fact, any flaw in a research design can have far-reaching consequences on the overall running of a research project, primarily on the collection and analysis of its data (Dawson, 2002; Swetnam, 2005, Gibson and Brown, 2009). This importance becomes even more pertinent for novice researchers and research students. It is my submission that the research methodology is the backbone of research, and therefore needs to be both rigorous and adaptable.

The present chapter is divided into two separate but complementary parts. The first part is a report on the pilot study that set the ground for this research. The second part introduces the topic of the research as well as the main questions it seeks to answer. In this section, the research methodology used is explained and the participants are described. In addition, a summary of similar studies relevant to the research approach used for this research are introduced. Finally, the research ethics as they have been observed throughout the research are laid out in details.

4.1.1 Definitions

Terms like method, methodology, approach, paradigm, strategy and design are used in conjunction with research throughout this chapter and therefore need to be defined. A research method is used to mean 'a particular research technique or way to gather evidence about a phenomenon, such as questionnaires, interviews, observation, focus groups and any other research tools or instruments' (DeMarrais, 2004, p 2). On the other hand, research methodology, approach, paradigm, design or strategy is all used to mean the modus operandi of the research, and that 'involves analysis of the principles and procedures in a particular field of inquiry' (Schwandt, 1997, p 93).

4.2 The Pilot Study

> 'Questionnaires do not emerge fully-fledged they have to be created or adapted and developed to maturity after many abortive test flights. In fact, every aspect of a survey has to be tried out beforehand to make sure that it works as intended'. (Oppenheim, 1992, p 47) cited in (Dornyei, 2003, p 65)

4.2.1 Introduction

It is common practice within the research community to pilot-test research instruments, since designing and implementing a valid and reliable survey tool for English learners hold many opportunities for data collection errors, which may lead to misleading results (Reid, 1990). According to Dornyei (2003), questionnaire piloting or 'field testing' is a fundamental part of the whole research process. The rule of thumb seems to be that 'if you do not have the resources to pilot-test your questionnaire, don't do the study' (Sudman and Bradburn, 1983, p 283) quoted in (Dornyei, 2003, p 64). In reality, many research scholars stressed that piloting is an opportunity to discover the pitfalls and shortcomings of research instruments, which in turn allows for corrections and rectifications prior to the full-scale project (e.g. Dornyei, 2003; Dawson, 2002; Bryman, 2008; Gibson and Brown, 2009). The current research project was approached with these cautions in mind.

4.2.2 What is a Pilot Study?

A pilot study could be defined as a model of the full research study, but on a smaller scale that aims to identify weaknesses, inconsistencies and ambiguities the research tool might contain. It therefore affords the researcher the opportunity to correct and rectify the research instrument before embarking on the major research project. Zailinawati et al defines a pilot study as a 'small study to test research protocols, data collection instruments, sample recruitment strategies, and other research techniques in preparation for a larger study' (2006, p. 70). In fact, as Murphy's Law goes, it allows what can go wrong to go wrong during the piloting phase, so that it can be addressed prior to starting the full study.

On the other hand, it can also serve as a feasibility study which is a 'small scale version, or trial run, done in preparation for the major study' (Polit et al, 2001, p 467). In general, it could be said that a pilot study gives advanced warning about the potential failures of the research instrument. It is precisely for this reason that De Vaus (1993, p 54) cautioned researchers not to take the risk and to pilot test the research instrument first.

On the same note and according to Lancaster et al, 'a well-conducted pilot study, giving a clear list of aims and objectives within a formal framework will encourage methodological rigour,

ensure that the work is scientifically valid and publishable' (2004, p. 307). In my view, any researcher using a research tool whose validity and reliability have not been proven will need to pilot test it. This seems to be truer for PhD students. However, it has been reported that pilot-testing research tools to ensure both their rigour and integrity is no guarantee that the main research will be a successful one (Teijlingen, et al, 2001).

Given that publishers insist on validated research projects and do not accept pilot studies, these latter are seldom published or reported except when used as feasibility studies carried out to apply for funding. In fact, journals have a tendency to accept only research projects that carry important results and refuse the ones that report 'non-significant effects' (Teijlingen, et al, 2001, p 3). In spite of this, and although reporting a pilot project has been likened to revealing one's 'dirty laundry' (Reid 1990, p 323), I am reporting this pilot study in order to inform future researchers against research pitfalls, and also to share as much details about this research project as possible.

However, a piloted research instrument might well seem valid and reliable to its author only to be deemed invalid or even flawed by others. A case in point is Reid's Perceptual Learning Style References Questionnaire (PLSPQ), which was piloted and tested to the satisfaction of its author (Reid, 1990), and which has also been used by many researchers ever since. In fact, Chaffin (2009) reported that PLSPQ was used by studies such as (Wintergerst, DeCapua, and Itzen, 2001) and (Wintergerts, DeCapua, and Verna, 2003) all of which reported that PLSPQ was flawed. Dornyei (2005) too suggested alternative surveying tools that he deemed more interesting and exciting than Reid's PLSPQ.

Chaffin (2009) criticized this questionnaire as a research tool when he tried it with Arab students as an evaluation to see if it could be used to provide accurate 'cultural profiles of learning styles' in a different context to that in which it was developed. He found that it was not a valid questionnaire for Arab students. In fact, Chaffin tried PLSQ in an English mediated university in an Arabic speaking country. The participants were Arabic speaking students in their university preparatory year. One of the problems he reported was related to language problems experienced by the participants. He reported difficulties of comprehension and interpretation, as he had not translated the questionnaire into Arabic (due to a lack of time and finances). This simply means that the unreliable results that Chaffin got using the original version of Reid's questionnaire, initially meant for ESL students in the United States, could be due to the use of an inappropriate or un-adapted questionnaire for a population that would expect it to be in their mother tongue (Arabic).

Nonetheless, various researchers have criticized Reid's questionnaire for lacking validity; notwithstanding the fact that she had spent a sizeable amount of time trying it out and striving to perfect it, with the help of professionals in the fields of research and statistics. This should serve as an example that no research instrument could claim absolute validity or perfection. The piloting test questionnaires in this research were written in the language that can be easily understood by the participants to avoid both comprehension and interpretation difficulties. It was precisely for this purpose that the students' questionnaire in the present research was designed and developed in Arabic.

The current pilot study was undertaken between June and October 2009. It consisted of two phases: the design and development phase and the administration and analysis phase. Its utmost goal was to ensure that items in each questionnaire would address the essential research question properly and accurately. Thus, the pilot phase specifically sought to check the comprehensibility and consistency of the questions and also to establish the degree to which respondents would interact with the questionnaires and the research topic as a whole.

Three questionnaires were designed to probe the attitudes and opinions of three sets of respondents; one for the students, one for Arabic speaking EFL teachers and another for non-Arabic speaking EFL teachers. During the development stage, the questionnaires were piloted three times on very short scales. Following each trial, comments, changes and suggestions were taken on board. After a large-scale piloting, the questionnaires and their preliminary results supported by descriptive figures were sent to the research supervisors for their feedback. This feedback was very detailed and clear; the supervisors found that there were some inconsistencies both within and between the questionnaires. They also highlighted that the choices provided as responses for some questions were very restrictive, and suggested that open-ended questions should be added. In a nutshell, the pilot testing of the three questionnaires revealed the following:

- Some students did not fully comprehend the instructions at the beginning of the questionnaire.
- Some students did not understand certain questionnaire items
- More space was needed for voluntary comments.
- Certain questions needed to be grouped or moved to other positions within the questionnaire.
- The research needed to be grounded in a theoretical framework to allow the interpretation of its findings in a systematic and rigorous manner.

4.2.3 The Development Phase

In short, the development of these questionnaires went through the following stages:

- Surveying the literature for tested suitable instruments that could be used
- Getting acquainted with the kind of statements/items that could be useful for the research instrument
- Translating the statements and questions into Arabic (for the students) and reformulating the statements to suit the research problem
- Designing and producing the questionnaires and discussing them with colleagues
- Piloting the questionnaires on a small and then on a large scale
- Seeking feedback from the research supervisors

A survey of the relevant literature revealed only one questionnaire used by Prodromou (2002) in Greece to assess the students' use of Greek in EFL classes. Although it provided some useful insight regarding the student's questionnaire content, it was more inclined to collecting purely numerical statistical and descriptive data. It was therefore not appropriate to the purpose of this research, which needed to find explanations to the phenomenon. Similarly, I did not come across any suitable questionnaire to use for the teachers.

Faced with this situation, I started drafting the students' questionnaires informed by my readings, my conversations with colleagues and students, and by my own observations and experience as a practicing EFL teacher. Thus, the students' questionnaire was developed and written in Arabic to ensure both its clarity and lack of any misunderstanding. It was then piloted on a class of 25 students, and the feedback revealed some errors in the open-ended questions. These were corrected and piloted twice before the questionnaire was distributed to 100 preparatory year students. This questionnaire was designed to address the following areas:

- The students' attitude towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes
- The attitude toward their teacher's use of Arabic
- The different uses of Arabic in EFL classes
- The areas in which the use of Arabic could be most or least useful in EFL classes
- The reason for their support or opposition to the use of Arabic in EFL classes

As mentioned earlier, the surveyed literature did not provide any suitable questionnaires that could be used to probe teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes. Two different questionnaires were designed; one for the Arabic speaking teachers and another for the non- Arabic speaking ones. Right from the early stages of the development and piloting

of these questionnaires, it was reported that teachers needed more space to express their views about an issue they deal with every day.

The teacher's questionnaires aimed to address the following issues:

- The EFL teachers' attitudes towards the use of Arabic as the students' mother tongue in the EFL classes
- The teachers' observations of this practice in their classes

It was crucial for this questionnaire to satisfy the criteria of validity as well as reliability. As far as validity is concerned, the questionnaire should measure exactly what it claims to measure (e.g. Seliger and Shohamy, 1989; Dornyei, 2003; Brown and Rodgers, 2002; Creswell, 2007 and 2009). In short, validity simply means that the questionnaire will measure what it was meant to measure; whereas, reliability means that the research could be replicated successfully with the use of the same or an adapted version of the instrument. Hence, during the piloting phase, it was necessary to check whether similar questions would elicit the same response. It was also necessary, according to the surveyed literature, to ask the same questions in different forms to check responses consistency (Fowler, 1984).

4.2.4 The Trial Stage

Participating students were approached on the basis of their availability. Hence, EFL teachers were given a number of questionnaires that corresponded to the number of their students and were requested to distribute them to these latter. Neither the researcher nor the EFL teachers knew the number of the students who would be present. The distribution was done completely randomly by the teachers at the end of their classes. Although the students were free to leave, they all filled in the questionnaires, and the return rate was 100%. As regards the teachers' questionnaires, they were handed by the research in person to each EFL teachers', and the questionnaires were completed and returned within 24 hours.

The data were coded into numbers and a research processing log was kept showing what reply corresponded to what number (e.g., Yes =1 and No =0). Then questions addressing the same variable were grouped and processed as one variable. For instance, questions relating to the attitudes about the use of Arabic in EFL classes were grouped together and so were the observed possible uses of Arabic in the EFL classes. These groups of questions constituted the research variables. The variables and their corresponding codes were entered into the computer software for data analysis (SPSS 16). Percentages were calculated for each variable and tables and figures were then generated on the basis of these variables.

Fourteen teachers (7 Arabic speaking and 7 non-Arabic speaking teachers) participated in this pilot study. Following this questionnaire, it would seem that the positive attitude vis-à-vis the use of Arabic in EFL classes was not unanimous. 60% (8) of the teachers were for this use while 40% (6) were not. Out of those who were for the use of Arabic in EFL classes, 3 (30%) were non-Arabic speaking. These 3 teachers were the ones with the longest teaching experience in Saudi Arabia. Out of the 6 teachers who were against the use of Arabic in EFL, 2 (40%) were Arabic-speaking, and one of them had only one year teaching experience.

Table 4.1 EFL teacher's attitude towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes

EFL Teachers	For Arabic in EFL classes	Against Arabic in EFL classes
Arabic speaking	71%	29%
Non-Arabic speaking	43%	57%

It could conclude from Table 4 above that further research was needed to establish the reasons behind these choices. It would for instance be of great importance to this research to find out whether there are any correlations between teaching experience, time spent in the Saudi Arabia or Arabic proficiency and the attitudes held by these teachers. After giving it much thought, it transpired that face-to-face interviews with these teachers would contribute a lot towards clarifying these attitudes.

Table 4.2 below presents data related to the usefulness of the students' mother tongue and shows that 86% of the participants were for the use of their students' mother tongue in EFL.

Table 4.2 the usefulness of the students' mother tongue in EFL classes (Arabic speaking teachers – the pilot study)

Attitude toward the use of students' mother tongue in EFL classes	Percentage
Strongly agree	43%
Agree	43%
Disagree	14%
Strongly disagree	0%

Table 4.3 that follows, and which presents data about the possible uses of Arabic, shows the possible uses of Arabic in EFL classes as expressed by these teachers. They all agreed that Arabic is useful in explaining new or difficult words. Equally the majority agrees that Arabic is not useful neither in introducing new material nor during pair work.

Table 4.3 Possible use of Arabic in EFL classes by Arabic speaking EFL teachers (pilot study)

Possible Arabic use	Yes	No
To explain difficult words	100%	0%
To introduce new material	14%	86%
To summarize	0%	100%
To test understanding	29%	71%
To crack jokes with students	57%	43%
To help students relax	43%	57%
During pair or group work	14%	86%
To explain differences between Arabic and English	43%	57%
To give instructions	71%	29%
To give individual feedback	29%	71%

Table 4.4 below introduces the frequency of teachers' use of Arabic and shows that the EFL teachers use Arabic in their classes mostly to explain words, check understanding, and give instructions.

Table 4.4 Frequency of teachers' use of Arabic in EFL classes by Arabic speaking teachers (the pilot study)

Uses	yes	No
to ask for word meaning	71%	29%
For conversation	71%	29%
To seek peer help	100%	0%
For group work	86%	14%
For reading	71%	29%

Table 4.5 below shows that non-Arabic speaking teachers did not all agree on the view that EFL teachers should know their students' mother tongue. The majority of them seemed to be against the use of Arabic in EFL classes.

Table 4.5 Non-Arabic speaking teachers' attitudes about the use of the mother tongue in EFL

(The pilot study)

Non-Arabic speaking teachers' attitudes	Yes	No
Some Arabic may be used in EFL	43%	57%
EFL teachers should know their students' mother tongue	86%	14%
Teacher should use their students' mother tongue	14%	86%
EFL students should use their mother tongue	71%	29%

Table 4.6 below shows the teachers' attitude towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes. They seem to agree that teachers should stop students from using Arabic in the classroom. Curiously enough, 5 out of these 7 teachers thought that some Arabic may be used by teachers. This seems to contradict the findings in Table 4.5. Hopefully, class observations and face-to-face interviews will clarify this apparent discrepancy.

Table 4.6 Non-Arabic speaking teachers' attitude towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes

(The pilot study)

Statements	Completely agree	Agree	Disagree	Completely Disagree
'English only' use	29%	42%	29%	0%
Some Arabic may be used by teachers	14%	72%	0%	14%
Students may use some Arabic	14%	29%	43%	14%
Teachers should stop students' use of Arabic	0%	86%	14%	0%
If I knew Arabic I would use it	13%	29%	29%	29%
Students learn English without the use of Arabic	29%	42%	29%	0%
The use of Arabic in EFL Classes is a hindrance	58%	28%	0%	14%

Figure 4.1 that follows shows that most of these teachers think that Arabic would be useful to explain new words. This correlates with the findings related to Arabic-speaking teachers.

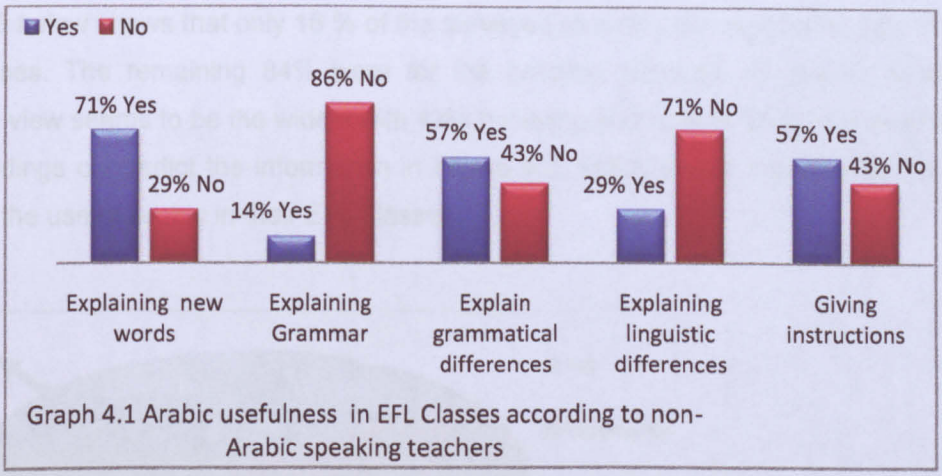

Figure 4.1 Arabic usefulness in EFL Classes: Non-Arabic speaking teachers (The pilot study)

The students' questionnaire aimed to establish the attitudes of the students towards the use of Arabic in the classroom. It was made mainly of closed–ended questions, but also included two open-ended questions to afford the students the opportunity to explain their beliefs regarding the use of Arabic in EFL classes. This particular type of questions was recommended by various scholars in second language education research (e.g. Dornyei, 2002; Brown and Rodgers, 2004). In addition, the inclusion of open-ended questions was deemed necessary as it was anticipated that the students who filled in the questionnaire may not be around for interviews, since interview questions would usually be based on issues arising from the questionnaires.

Figure 4.2 below shows that while most students (51%) were in favour of the use of Arabic in EFL classes, there was not much difference to 49% who opposed it. However, when asked whether their own teacher may use it, most of them seemed to be in favour of such use. Once again, it was anticipated that class observations and teachers' interviews might help to explain this discrepancy.

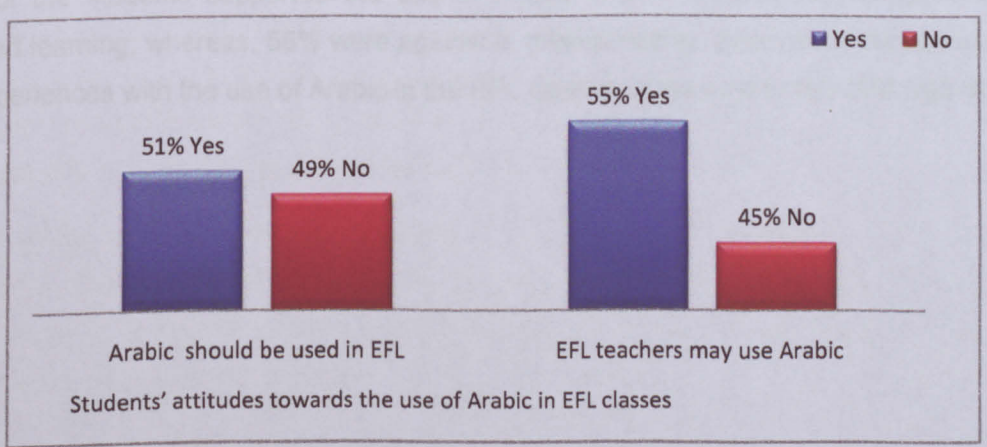

Figure 4.2 Students' attitudes towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes (the pilot study)

Figure 4.3 below shows that only 16 % of the surveyed students are against the use of Arabic in EFL classes. The remaining 84% were for the practice, although in varying degrees. The moderate view seems to be the widest with 43% believing such use to be only somewhat useful. These findings contradict the information in Figure 4.2, which shows that 51% of the students opted for the use of Arabic in their EFL classes.

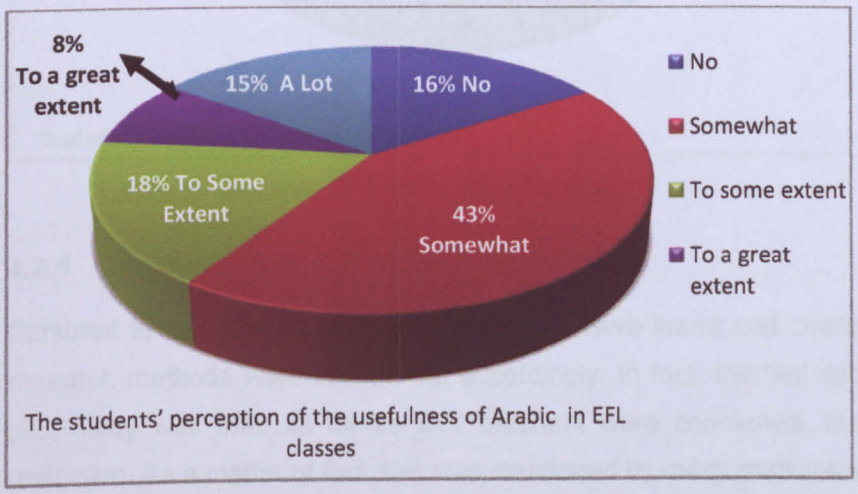

Figure 4.3 The students' perception of the usefulness of Arabic in EFL classes (the pilot study)

Some students explained their responses through the comments they wrote on the questionnaire as answers to the open-ended questions. These comments were translated and divided into two categories; comments in support of the use of Arabic in EFL classes and comments opposing it.

Overall, only 43% of the students gave reasons for their choices, and the remaining 57% did not explain their choices. Based on the attitudes expressed in these comments, less than half (45%) of the students supported the use of Arabic in EFL classes, apparently because it facilitated learning; whereas, 55% were against it, most probably because of their unsuccessful past experiences with the use of Arabic in the EFL classes at the elementary and high-school.

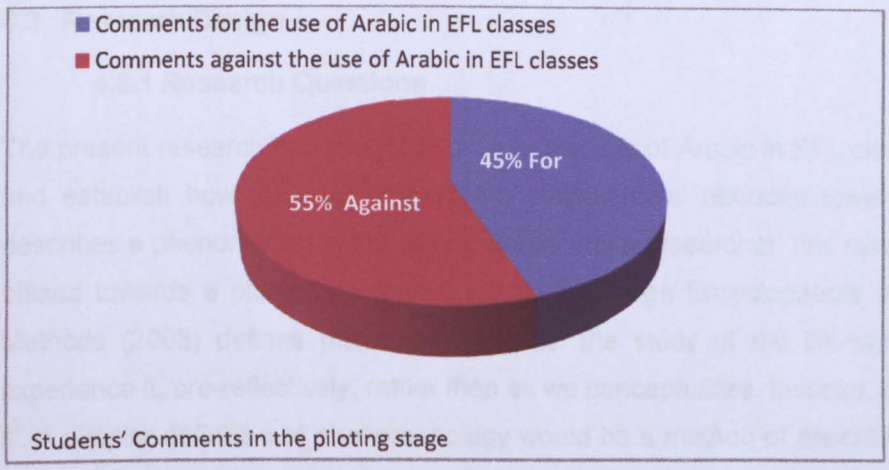

Figure 4.4 Students' Comments (the pilot study)

4.2.5 Conclusions

Pursuant to the present study, many lessons were learnt and changes and corrections to the research methods were carried out accordingly. In fact, the first decision emanating from this pilot study was that, as far as EFL teachers were concerned, the questionnaires were too restrictive. As a matter of fact, this was mentioned by many participants in the first phases of the pilot study, and this was also reinforced later on by the research supervisors' feedback. They suggested that the questionnaires should offer teachers opportunities to mention any other opinions, attitudes or views. Based on this fact, I realized that class observations, followed by semi-structured interviews, would be more suitable to collect in-depth and detailed data.

As far as the students were concerned, the pilot study revealed that, given the number of participants, it would not have been practical to carry one-to-one interviews, nor would it have been possible to hold focus groups. In fact, students are usually absent during scheduled classes, and it didn't not look like they would attend focus groups. A questionnaire distributed in class would therefore be the only possible option. Accordingly, the questionnaire was modified to have more focus and to include more open-ended questions in order to ensure that maximum relevant information is generated. In addition, the search for a useful conceptual framework was completed with the adoption of AT and its principles of mediation, expansion and contradictions.

In view of the experience described above, it has transpired that using a purely quantitative research paradigm would not be productive. Equally, a qualitative methodology by itself wouldn't include students. It became evident then that a combination of both approaches would be best suited to the purpose of this research.

4.3 Research Design

4.3.1 Research Questions

The present research has sought to explore the role of Arabic in EFL classes in a Saudi college and establish how this role shapes the stakeholders' attitudes towards this practice. As it describes a phenomenon in the daily practice of the researcher, this research could be seen as biased towards a phenomenological study. The Sage Encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research Methods (2008) defines phenomenology as 'the study of the life-world as we immediately experience it, pre-reflectively, rather than as we conceptualize, theorize, categorize, or reflect on it'. A simpler definition of phenomenology would be a method of describing a phenomenon that exists within the world in which the researcher lives. To achieve this goal, the research has ambitiously sought to set the ground for future studies. Initially, the research was motivated by what could be termed either a misconception or a lack of understanding of the role of Arabic in EFL classes, and this constitutes a phenomenon within the world of the researcher.

Although phenomenology is considered one form of the qualitative approach (Bryman, 2008), this study adopted a pragmatic stance and used a combination of methods and methodologies that are both quantitative and qualitative. The research has aimed to answer one core question:

- What role does Arabic play in EFL classes?

Other questions have also been derived from the question above:

- What are the attitudes of the students, the teachers and the policy makers toward the use of Arabic in EFL classes?
- What are the reasons for these attitudes?
- How do these attitudes relate to one another?
- To what extent do the uses of Arabic in EFL classes shape these attitudes?

4.3.2 Research Traditions

According to Creswell (2009), there are three types of research designs; quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research. This distinction, however, is not to be seen as a list of "polar opposites or dichotomies", given that both qualitative and quantitative approaches are two ends of a continuum (ibid, p.14). What this implies is that there is room for these approaches to be used in combination, based on the nature of the research topic, the experience of the researcher and the audience to whom the findings will be presented. This research model is termed 'the mixed methods approach'. Before defining this approach, it is felt that it would be

useful at this juncture to discuss the quantitative and the qualitative research methodologies first.

Proponents of the quantitative research methodology hold assumptions that are consistent with the views of the positivist philosophy (Maxwell and Delaney, 2004). These so-called quantitative purists maintain that social science inquiry should be objective. Accordingly, educational researchers should eliminate their biases, remain emotionally detached and uninvolved with the objects of their study, and test or empirically justify their postulated hypotheses. This scientific view, however, was found to be unrealistic as no method can claim total objectivity. The truth is that quantitative research method itself involves many human decisions and preferences, and this opens the door to a sizeable amount of subjectivity as it entails choosing what to study and how to study it (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Qualitative research methodology purists (also called constructivists and interpretivists) reject the ideology of positivism and post-positivism. They argue for the superiority of constructivism, idealism, relativism, humanism and postmodernism (Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln and Guba, 2000; Schwandt, 2000). In addition, these scholars contend that there could be multiple-constructed realities, that generalizations that are time and context-free are neither sought after nor possible, that research is hardly value-free, that it is impossible to clearly distinguish causes and effects, and that researchers can be separated from their findings as subjective researchers do exist (Guba, 1990). Qualitative purists have also been known for their objection to an indifferent and uninvolved style of reporting research findings, favouring detailed written descriptions that answer questions like 'how' and 'why'.

Each side of this ideological debate view their paradigm to be the ideal one for research, and advocate the incompatibility thesis (Howe, 1988). Such thesis postulates that qualitative and quantitative research paradigms could not and should not be mixed. This position was exemplified by Guab's assertion that the 'accommodation between paradigms is impossible' as they have nothing in common (Guba, 1990, p 81). However, research as a field seems to have now moved beyond the quantitative versus qualitative research arguments, since both quantitative and qualitative methodologies could be used in a single research. In fact, Patton, (2002) believes that the qualitative/quantitative war was over as qualitative research has ultimately been accepted as a reliable research method, and the challenge has now become adapting the most suitable research methodology to the research purpose and issue. This adaptation may sometimes mean combining the two paradigms in the form of mixed methods.

Prior to Campbell and Fisk's use of multiple approaches in their 1959 study, the mixed methods approach was less popular than were the qualitative and the quantitative approaches. However,

by the 1990s this approach developed to combine the use of the two approaches (Creswell, 2009, p 14). The argument for its use was that these approaches can not only complement each other and make up for their weaknesses, but one approach may also help set the research ground for the other. For instance, new questions could emerge, or further criteria for choosing participants may surface (Tashakkori and Teddie, 1989).

Mixed methods research, as a relatively new research paradigm, is suitable filler for the gap existing between quantitative and qualitative research (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2004a). Recently, mixed methods research has been used by many researchers (e.g. Creswell, 2009; Johnson and Christensen, 2004; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003), and this could be seen as evidence that the research community has embraced this research strategy.

The purpose behind classifying research paradigms is to allow researchers to be well informed when designing their research. Some researchers might find that mixing methods or paradigms is more useful (Rocco, 2003, p 23). In my view, this is crucial mainly for beginner researchers such as PhD students. My experience as a researcher, as described in the pilot study section, is testimony to this effect. As a matter of fact, the use of the mixed methods research by this study was primarily motivated by the fact that it would be very useful to draw from the strengths as well as reduce the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research approaches.

4.4 Research Paradigm

To generate answers for the research questions mentioned above, it was necessary to choose the most suitable approach, informed by the nature of these questions, the research context and the related literature (e.g. Bryman, 2008, Creswell, 2009; Gibson and Brown, 2009; Dawson, 2002, Patton, 2002). A research design, which constitutes the corner stone of any research project, refers to the strategy to integrate the different components of the research project in a cohesive and coherent way. It is a way of planning a research project with a view to tackle the research questions. Creswell suggested that three factors should be taken into account when settling for a research design; the research problem, the personal experience of the researcher and the audience to whom the results will be presented (2009, p. 18). In my view, the research context and the participants are equally just as important in shaping the research approach.

Thus, the choice of either a quantitative, a quantitative or a mixed methods approach is primarily determined by the nature of the research question or problem posed; whether it seeks to describe an issue and/or test a hypothesis (quantitative), or explore a phenomena that is under-researched to come up with a theory (qualitative). In other cases, a combination of the two approaches may be used in the form of triangulation (e.g. Denzin, 1989; Patton, 2002; Dawson 2002, Bryman, 2008; Gibson and Brown, 2009), or mixed methods research (e.g, Creswell,

2009; Brannen, 2004; Rocco, 2003; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003).

In the case of the present research, the choice of the mixed methods strategy was not made based on allegiance to a specific research culture or in response to socio-political tendencies or agendas of a particular stakeholder, as is usually the case with funded research projects (Brannen, 2005, pp 6-11). In reality, the fact that I was self-funded allowed me some latitude when opting for a pragmatic approach, or a 'workable solution' (Maxcy, 2003), by choosing the research methodology that I believed would be both practical and useful.

The decision was mostly informed by the pilot study, the advice of the supervisors as well as by similar studies carried out in various parts of the world. To illustrate this influence, I first tried the quantitative approach as a stand-alone method but it soon transpired that teachers needed more space to elaborate on their views. In fact, they considered that closed-ended questions did not afford them enough space, and also reported that the questionnaire did not allow them to use their own words to describe what they felt was important to them. They felt their responses were restricted by the predefined categories suggested by the questionnaire. Equally, when I tried a purely qualitative approach, I noticed that most students did not say much to justify their attitudes towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes. When asked, the students replied that they preferred guided answers and multiple choices. The decision was then taken to combine both quantitative and qualitative methods in a 'concurrent mixed methods' approach to collect data (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998; Creswell, 2009), and then triangulate the results at the analysis stage.

It is also worth mentioning that this choice only became evident as the research was progressing; knowing that the current project went through various test and error stages that were fully explained in the pilot study report. In a nutshell, the position adopted was to make use of 'whatever philosophical and/or methodological approach works for the particular research problem under study' (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1989, p 5).

As I have already mentioned earlier, it was primarily the nature of the current study that influenced the adoption of the mixed methods approach for it. Questionnaires, interviews, and class observations were used essentially to address the research questions in a proper fashion. Mixed methods research was defined as 'the class of research where the research mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study' (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p 17). On the same note, Creswell explained that mixed methods research comes in different formats, among which is the 'concurrent mixed methods', a procedure that is of particular interest to this study. Following

this procedure, researchers 'converge or merge' both methods to collect data and analyse them (2009, p. 14).

This concurrent strategy has therefore been adopted for the present research. Hence, the questionnaire used with the students contained both quantitative and qualitative questions. Equally, class observations used both check-lists, note-taking and video recordings; in order to get a clearer picture of the issue under investigation. However, the interviews were all semi-structured and only permitted qualitative questions.

4.4.1 Mixed Methods Research Design and Research Methods

The research design in this study adopted a mixed methods approach based on an "equal-status concurrent triangulation" strategy which uses both quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell, 2009; Johnson and Christensen, 2004). This use has helped the researcher to make up for the time spent on the unexpectedly long pilot study, which confirms that 'the concurrent data collection results in a shorter data collection time period' (Creswell, 2003, p. 217). Taking into account the theoretical and practical concerns of the study, equal priority was given to each method during data collection and also during data analysis. In fact, when the data has been interpreted the findings from both methods have been triangulated to note the convergence of the findings to strengthen the knowledge claims of the study and explain any lack of convergence that may result (Creswell, 2009, p 14). It is believed that using various data collection methods for this research would help to validate and substantiate the findings. Both research process and design, as explained above, are illustrated by Figures 4.5 and 4.6.

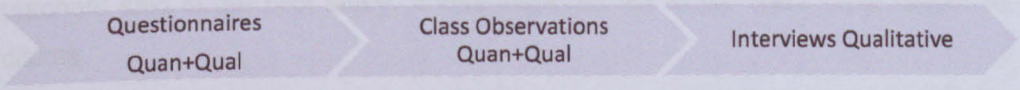

Figure 4.5 The research process for the study

Figure 4.6 that follows shows how the mixed methods approach has been applied to this research in both data collections and data analysis stages.

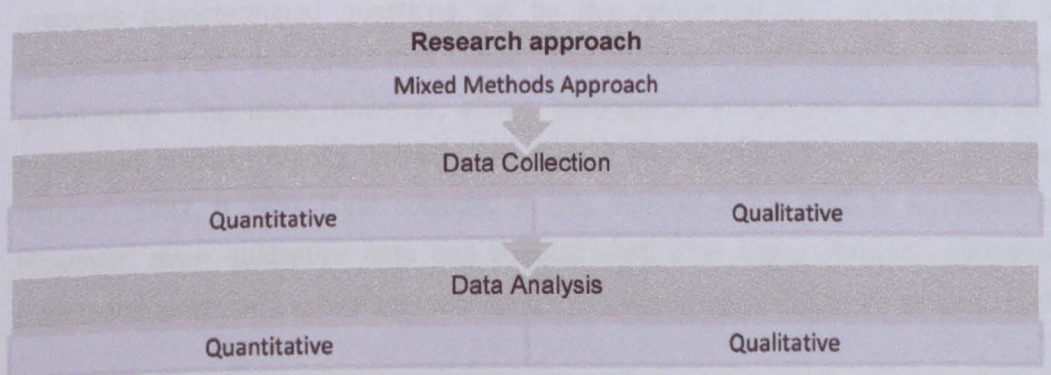

Figure 4.6 Concurrent mixed methods strategy as used in this research

4.4.2 Research Tools

For reasons already mentioned, and in view of the scarcity of research initiatives on the use of Arabic in EFL classes in Saudi Arabia, and the need to both describe and gain a deep comprehension of the phenomenon, I combined qualitative and quantitative methods in this research project. Hence, I made use of questionnaires, class observations and semi-structured interviews. The rationale for choosing each of these instruments is discussed below.

4.5.2.1 The Questionnaire

Questionnaires have been widely accepted as preferred data collection tools for researchers. In fact , 'the main attraction of questionnaires is their unprecedented efficiency in terms of (a) researcher time, (b) researcher effort, and (c) financial resources' (Dornyei, 2003, p 9). However, in the present research, the decision to use a questionnaire as a research tool was made essentially for its suitability to a particular set of participants (the students), as they were not available for any other research method. The questionnaire was also used first to allow the conclusions emanating from its results to inform the next step of the research. It was estimated that such information would direct the research to investigate relevant and specific issues. As a matter of fact and based on the results of the questionnaires, some questions that emerged warranted further investigation using other research tools such as class observations and interviews. For instance, the students who filled this questionnaire mentioned the instances where they used Arabic the most. However, that did not appear to correlate with what the teachers said in the pilot study. It was therefore left to the class observation, to verify these claims.

According to Nunan (1992), questionnaires are one of the research instruments that fall under the elicitation umbrella. They are mostly used in surveys and are quite popular among graduate students. A questionnaire can be either open-ended or closed-ended. The former type presents predetermined questions set by the researcher for participants to choose the suggestions that most reflect their views. The analysis of data collected in this way is usually quantitative. The latter, however, allows participants to express their views on the issue presented in more details. In fact, 'the subject can decide what to say and how to say it' (Nunan, 1992, p 145). Data collected in this manner yields itself to a qualitative analysis. However, even qualitative data can be quantified after being analyzed qualitatively, which fosters the view that the two approaches are two ends of a continuum (Creswell, 2009, p 15).

Developing a reliable and valid questionnaire is both challenging and time consuming (Nunan, 1992). For this reason, piloting has been stressed as a crucial phase of questionnaire development. Equally, Dornyei warned in no uncertain terms that

> questionnaires do not emerge fully-fledged they have to be created or adapted and developed to maturity after many abortive test flights. In fact, every aspect of a survey has to be tried out beforehand to make sure that it works as intended. (2003, p. 65)

The piloting stage of this research as I explained earlier is an example of these 'abortive flights' that culminated in functional instruments.

Questionnaires are also piloted to test their validity and reliability. Brown (2004) defines instrument reliability as being concerned with the degree to which the results obtained utilising such instrument would be consistent if repeated in a similar context or environment. He added that that no research instrument would ever achieve 100% reliability. For Dornyei, reliability describes the 'extent to which scores on the instrument are free from errors of measurement' (2003, p. 110). However, it is possible for a tailored questionnaire, such as the one used by this research, to be described as meeting the reliability criteria if the internal consistency is shown. Dornyei explains that internal consistency 'refers to the homogeneity of the items making up the various multi-item scales within the questionnaire'(2003, p 111).

This vision guided the design of the questionnaire used with the students. In this research, the questionnaire contained open-ended as well as closed- ended questions. Because it was anticipated that some students might have replies and responses other than those listed; each question was followed by an option labelled 'other'. The questionnaire was designed in Arabic and both its language and questions were simplified to avoid confusing the students. Informed by the pilot study, the questionnaire focused specifically on establishing the students' attitudes towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes, the reasons for these attitudes, and the instances of these uses.

The questionnaire served to collect a good amount of information that needed to be verified through class observations and interviews. The fact that the questionnaire was used first gave both direction and insight to the research regarding what to look for during the class observations and interviews that followed.

4.4.2.2 Class Observations

So much has been written about class observation and classroom ethnography to show its strengths and weaknesses, as well as the necessary guidelines to observe before and during

this experience (e.g. Seliger and Shohamy, 1989; Dawson, 2002; Patton, 2002: Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2009). In fact, there are various types of class observations ranging from the use of note-taking, to recorded observations, to the use of sophisticated digital recording devices. Whichever method is used, it is of crucial importance to follow clear and strict ethical guidelines. In this section, I will discuss class observation as a research tool in addition to the ethical issues related to it.

Class observations are one of the methods used to collect data in educational research. The advantages of using observations for collecting data are that they allow the study of a phenomenon at close range with many of the contextual variables present, a feature which is very important in studying language behaviours. However, this advantage may become a drawback when the closeness introduces biases that may affect the researcher's objectivity. In addition, the presence of the observer in the research situation may influence or alter the behaviour of the subjects observed. This has been experienced first-hand during this research. Although this was anticipated, based on the results of the piloting trial, students seemed very quiet and the class looked unnatural as if staged. The presence of the camera caused some students to sit out of the camera scope. However, both students and teachers behaved in more relatively a natural behaved in a more natural fashion after the first 15 minutes, and way.

According to Seliger and Shohamy 'observations have always been considered a major data collection tool in qualitative research' (1989, p 162). There are many types of class observations ranging from covert where the researcher does not make his intentions explicit, to a highly explicit one where the observer overtly states that he is observing the class to collect data for a specific research. Observations in general have usually been linked to qualitative research and phenomenology studies. Recently however, structured observations have been used by quantitative research as well. This comes in the form of classroom observation check-lists or observation schedules (ibid).

In the case of this research, a combination of methods has been used; note-taking, video-recording and checklists. It can therefore be stated that the class observations in the present research used both quantitative and qualitative methods. While note-taking and video recording can be described as aspects of qualitative research, the check-list, which contained closed–ended statement with 'Yes' and 'No' boxes to be ticked accordingly, is seen as a quantitative research tool. In total, I observed 8 preparatory year EFL classes lasting 50 minutes each. Two of the teachers observed are Arabic speaking while six were not. All the

students however are Arabic speaking, and both teachers and students gave their verbal consent for the class observation to be video-recorded.

Whether structured or not, an observation needs to make use of checklists, notes, and audio or video recording tools. Notes allow the observer to record what is observed. Nevertheless, the presence of the observer may have some influence on the participant's behaviour, and so would audio and video recording devices as they may be seen as intrusive. Although video cameras provide more elaborate data, their good use depends on the angle of the camera and what it focuses on. For instance, in few classes I had to move the camera to cover the other groups of students who sat out of the camera scope. The content of these recordings needed to be rendered into words through the process of transcription, which proved to be a time-consuming activity.

Class observation in the present research has been carefully thought out. The checklist used emanates from the preliminary results of the diagnostic questionnaires and interviews held with the teachers. The major trends revealed by the EFL teachers in their interviews and the students through the questionnaires have been checked against their actual behaviours during the observed classes. It has already been mentioned that this practice is recommended in mixed methods research, in what Creswell (2009) labels 'concurrent mixed methods'. This form of member checking process is also necessary to observe research validity (Brown, 2004).

4.4.2.3 Semi-structured Interviews

Interviewing is an effective tool to secure information directly from participants. An interview can be carried either face-to-face, over the phone or via email. It is a personalized tool that allows for in-depth questions and detailed answers which couldn't otherwise be collected using a different tool. Although there are many types of interviews, only the unstructured, semi-structured and structured interviews are popular with researchers. In this research I have made use of semi-structured interviews as they have been identified as the most suitable interview type for educational research (Dawson, 2002; Patton, 2002). The flexibility of this type of interviews has allowed me to get specific and detailed information from each participant

Literature abounds with guidelines on how to design and carry out robust and effective interviews (e.g. Bryman, 2008; Gibson and Brown; 2009, Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). For instance, Gibson and Brown (2009) stipulate that a well-designed interview should observe the following features:

- Questions should be clear and unambiguous.

- Questions should cover all relevant matters to the research issue.
- Questions need to be focused and pertinent to the research question.
- Questions have to follow a logical order.
- Questions must be consistent to ensure that participant's replies are analysable.

As already mentioned, I elected to use semi-structured interviews to allow participants the opportunity to elaborate on their replies while I could still focus on the questions relevant to the topic. The participants involved in these interviews were EFL teachers and college policy makers. The interviews attempted to cover three areas; the attitudes or policies regarding the use of Arabic in EFL classes, the rationale behind these attitudes and policies and the impact of the practice on EFL education. The interview with the EFL teachers contained the following questions:

- What is your attitude toward the use of the mother tongue in foreign language teaching?
- What is your attitude toward the use of Arabic in EFL classes?
- What impact does using Arabic have on English learning?
- What factors affect your language choice in class?
- How often should Arabic be used in EFL classes?
- For what purposes should Arabic be used in EFL classes?
- How would the students' learning be affected by the use of Arabic in EFL class?
- How does the use of the English-only policy affect EFL teachers and their practices?
- What guidelines should be observed by the user(s) of Arabic in EFL classes?
- Based on your observation, what do your students use Arabic for in EFL classes?

The interview with policy makers contained the following questions:

- What is the official policy of the college regarding the use of Arabic in EFL classes?
- Does the English Department have a policy regarding the use of Arabic in EFL classes?
- If there is no such policy, what would a policy related to this issue look like?
- If there are policies in this regard, what is their aim? What are they based on?
- Are such policies informed by research in this area? Are the EFL teachers who are insider professionals consulted?
- What is the rationale behind this policy if any?
- In case there is no policy, what would a departmental policy look like? What would be its broad lines?
- On what grounds will this policy be based?

- What will be its impact on the EFL teaching-learning process in general?
- What would its purpose be?

Few other questions were asked as the occasion presented itself.

Conducting interviews has always been known to be both time consuming and patience testing. For these reasons, I ran mock interviews to try schedules out, and I took the preparations and arrangements for the interviews very seriously. As a matter of fact, a great deal of communication with the participants in relation to, the purposes of the interviews, the information about the research topic and the agreements on suitable times and places preceded these interviews. The questions listed above were based on information garnered from students' questionnaires, discussions with the teachers and from the aforementioned mock interviews. The interviews did not only seek to provoke new information but served to check the information obtained from the students' questionnaire and the class observations.

The questions about the attitudes and policy questions sought to get a deeper understanding of the participant's beliefs as well as gaining insight into who makes EFL policies and on what grounds. In other words, was it a personal process or an institutional one? The goal of the second set of interview questions aimed at reaching a deeper understanding of policy making. However, the main goal of these interviews was to find out the actual role of Arabic in EFL classes.

In order to keep an accurate record of the data collected via these interviews, a digital recorder along with a spare recording device were used to avoid any potential loss of data. Immediately after each interview, I recoded my impressions while still fresh and transcribed the recordings myself, as this would have brought me closer to the data and facilitated their subsequent analysis.

The interviews were successful in the sense that they produced a sizeable amount of data, and gave me a broad and deep comprehension of the issues involved in the shaping of the stakeholders' attitudes and policy making regarding the use of Arabic in EFL classes. Not only did the interviewees provide valuable and detailed information for this issue, but the data I collected from them helped me in creating a strong and relevant framework for the analysis of other portions of data. The analysis of data collected from these interviews is primarily a qualitative one. This allows for a detailed analysis that takes into consideration the relativity of the truth to be drawn from the information gathered. The analysis also took into account the

degree of involvement of the interviewer and his identities as a researcher, a colleague and a staff member (e.g. Cassell, 2005; Denzin, 2001).

4.5 Research Participants

Given that this research sought to explore the role of Arabic in EFL classes at a college preparatory year programme, it was necessary to seek out the views and attitudes of the students, the EFL teachers and the policy makers. Due to religious and cultural considerations that prevent males from accessing female campuses, the participants in this research were all males; as the educational system in Saudi Arabia is based on the separation of boys and girls throughout its various levels. The primary stakeholders in this study are the EFL learners, the EFL teachers and the college policymakers. More specifically, the participants are preparatory year students, preparatory year EFL teachers, the head of the English department, and two of the college senior policy makers. Although this may seem to be a convenient sampling, all participants that could have been included were invited for participation. This type of sampling could also be described as 'purposive' sampling (Dawson, 2002).

4.5.1 Preparatory Program Students

A total of 197 preparatory year students, from a Saudi College took part in this research between January 2009 and February 2010. The students were all males, aged between 19-21 years. Nearly all preparatory year students in Saudi Universities study English for six years before they graduate from high school. Like all English mediated higher education institutions, the college where this research took place operates a compulsory preparatory year program that includes English as a key and very important component. These students study a false beginner to elementary course (English 001) and an upper elementary to pre-intermediate course (English 002) for a whole academic year. In order to find out these students' attitudes towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes, a mixed method questionnaire was used and all the preparatory students who were available during the 2008-2010 academic years participated in it.

4.5.2 EFL Teachers

Regarding the EFL teachers, initially all the available 14 preparatory EFL teachers were invited for participation. However, that was not possible and the decision was made to interview as many teachers as possible and equally observe as many classes as possible. To get balanced data, it was necessary to interview Arabic speaking as well as non-Arabic speaking teachers. I interviewed six Arabic speaking teachers and six non-Arabic speaking teachers. In addition,

eight classes were observed and videotaped in order to find out what actually goes on in the EFL classes in relation to the use of Arabic. Two of the observed teachers were Arabic speaking and six were not. The teaching experiences of these teachers ranged between 2 and 23 years. These participants were chosen based on their availability and convenience. Some teachers agreed to be interviewed but others declined. One teacher for instance did not want to be interviewed but allowed his class to be observed. All in all, 13 EFL teachers were involved in this research. The following table shows the teaching experience of these teachers and their proficiency level in Arabic.

Table 4.7 Bio data of the participating Teachers

Teacher	Arabic Native Speaker	Teaching Experience	Interviewed	observed
Teacher 1	Yes	6	yes	No
Teacher 2	Yes	15	yes	No
Teacher 3	No	10	yes	Yes
Teacher 4	No	18	yes	Yes
Teacher 5	No	28	yes	Yes
Teacher 6	No	12	yes	Yes
Teacher 7	No	8	yes	yes
Teacher 8	Yes	25	yes	No
Teacher 9	Yes	4	yes	No
Teacher 10	No	9	yes	yes
Teacher 11	Yes	7	yes	No
Teacher 12	Yes	2	yes	yes
Teacher 13	Yes	27	yes	yes
Teacher 14	Yes	5	No	Yes

4.5.3 Policy Makers

The policy makers were only three participants; the head of the English department and two senior policy makers in the college, as the institution was still in the process of building itself. These participants have been interviewed using the information emanating from the students questionnaires, class observations, and the interviews. This method is known as a 'sequential mixed methods' whereby the findings of one method are expanded on using another method (Creswell, 2009). In this case, semi-structured interviews were used in order to get to the bottom of the 'common sense' policy upon which the 'English only' practise in EFL classes is based. The purpose was also to find out the rationale for these beliefs.

4.6 Research Ethics

Although this research project involved the collection and use of data involving human participants, the nature of such data was not a sensitive one. Indeed, the participants ran no potential harm or risk during the collection or use of this data. As a matter of fact, participants merely needed to express their views regarding the use of Arabic in EFL classrooms. The nature of the collected information is not sensitive or incriminating and has therefore been deemed harmless. Consequently, it has been estimated that the project would pose no risks to its participants. In fact, the researcher was fully conscious of the research ethics of London Metropolitan University and observed them throughout the different stages of the project. Had there been any divergence from the research methods stated in the project proposal, the approval of the research committee would have been sought first. Finally, the research has been carried out with the utmost integrity and professionalism and in full compliance with the UK Data Protection Act of 1998, as well as the research ethics of the institution where the research took place.

4.6.1 Research Ethics Compliance

This research made use of questionnaires, interviews and class observations where participants were

- kept anonymous
- not asked to reveal sensitive information of personal or potentially damaging nature
- free to refuse participation in the research
- kept informed about all details regarding the research
- not at risk
- not to benefit for participating
- not to be punished for not participating
- observed overtly and during normal classes

Equally, the researcher

- guaranteed that he will not use any names and/or addresses in the final report, nor store or sort information using names and/or addresses (Anonymity)
- guaranteed that he will not disclose directly any information provided by participants group to a third party, unless permission has been granted to do so (Confidentiality)
- agreed to keep the participants informed about the progress of the research, and if at any stage a participant wished to comment on the emerging results or the final report

they were in a position to do so by approaching the researcher, or by contacting the supervisors or writing the ethics committee chairman (see appendix 2)

- agreed to listen to participants' comments and make relevant alterations, if and as appropriate
- complied with the UK Data Protection Act 1998
- complied with the local research ethics at the college where the research was conducted

4.6.2 Research Ethics Summary

All the participants were informed of the purpose of the research in a clear, simple and explicit language (appendix 2). For instance, students' questionnaires were prepared in Arabic appendix 4) to allow for complete clarity and comprehension, and an English version of the questionnaire was prepared (appendix 5). In addition, questionnaires and interviews were completely anonymous. For instance, students will only need to provide their course level.

Furthermore, during the interviews, participants were free to opt out of the research at any time, and all collected data has-been coded using numbers. The participants were informed in advance that data will only be used for the purposes of this research. They were asked to sign a consent form to this effect (see appendices 3 and 4). Regarding the digitally recorded data (audio and video-recordings), the consent of the participants as well as the university in which the research took place (see appendix 1) were secured before starting the research. Thus, teachers and students were informed of their rights to object to the use of any audio or video files in which they appear. Subsequently, generated data were stored by the researcher and will be kept safe for as long as it is required by the research ethics policy and procedures of London Metropolitan University, before being disposed of in the most appropriate way.

4.7 Research Limitations

Like most research project, the present study was not without limitations. There were limitations related to the participants and others related to the research tools used. As I have already mentioned, I could only collect data from male participants due to the existing religious restrictions that prevent males from accessing the female campus. This socio-cultural reality limited the pool of participants both in terms of gender and size. If I could collect data from the of female teachers and students in the preparatory year program whose number is double that of their male counterparts, that would have widened the scope of the research and it would also have presented new perspectives and evidence.

Another limitation was due to the fact that some participants were not fully cooperative. In fact, some EFL teachers refused to have their classes observed. Hence, although I interviewed 14 teachers I only managed to observe 8. I could have been able to depict a more comprehensive picture if I were able to observe more classes. On the contrary there was one particular teacher who allowed me to observe his class, but did not want to be interviewed. His excuse was that the last time he was interviewed by a researcher he lost his job. I assured him that whatever he would tell me would be kept under strict confidentiality, that no one but me would have access to it, that his statements would only be used for the purposes of this research, and that he would be kept anonymous as a nickname would be used instead of his real name. However, all these guarantees did not seem to reassure him. This particular teacher has an extensive teaching experience in Saudi Arabia and he is also an Arabic speaking teacher. He cited an incident in the past that cost him his job. He said he was asked to leave a job he loved because he gave an interview and expressed his views regarding an issue. He added that his views were made public, misinterpreted and he was asked to leave, stating that my request brought back bad memories and asked to be excused from the interview.

There were other limitations related to the interviews. As I used semi-structured interviews, some teachers did not directly answer the questions and most of the time I had to interrupt them and remind them of my question. If I felt that questions were not clearly understood by the teacher I would rephrase or reword the questions. Sometimes I even had to give examples of what I was expecting them to focus on. This meant that more time than planned was wasted on worthless verbiage. In addition, some teachers felt very intimidated by the questions related to the use of Arabic in EFL classes and abided by the policy perhaps to sound politically correct. Others sounded apologetic kept stressing that they were talking about very limited justifiable use of Arabic as if they felt guilty of recognizing that Arabic plays a role in their EFL classes.

During the ethnographic part of this research, both note taking and videotaping were used to observe the EFL classes. These techniques carry inherent limitations, and some of these obstacles were encountered during this phase of data collection. The note taking technique had limitations as it was not possible for me, the observer, to write down all data as it occurred. I was able to write only the interactions that I noticed in relation to the use of Arabic in these classes. In addition, my attention could only be focused on one single event or action at a time. For instance, my concentration would be on some students and not on the others, on the students and not on the teacher or vice-versa.

Equally, the use of a video camera which aimed at documenting the class activities and interactions to inform the analysis and preserve this category of data for future reference also ran into few limitations. One of these limitations was due to the fact that the video camera was fixed in one spot to avoid affecting the natural behaviour of the participants. This consideration meant that only the activities and interactions within the scope of the camera were recorded, and clearly this limited the range of potential observations. The recording could not be representative of what was taking place in the classroom. This is why the note-taking technique and a check–list were necessary to overcome some of these shortcomings.

The other limitation of this technique is the camera effect that the presence of the camera in the classroom had on the students and their teachers. The participants in the observed classes behaved in an unusual manner. They would tailor their actions and utterances and displayed what they believed to be a politically correct behaviour. The students for instance either kept quiet or spoke at a very low voice, thus they were not heard by the researcher or recorded by the camera. Some teachers too altered their behaviour to suit the occasion and thus seemed uncomfortable. There was also evidence to suggest that some of these teachers either pre-taught the same lesson or used the lesson as a revision class. Notwithstanding, the data collected was significant enough both in size and in depth.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter comprises two distinct but complementary parts. In the first part, I have introduced the pilot study that laid the ground for this research. In the second part, I discussed the methodology used by this research project. Thus in my quest for a deep comprehension and understanding of the role of Arabic in EFL classes and the attitudes towards it, I have adopted a mixed methods approach in the form of questionnaires, class observations and semi-structured interviews. In this chapter, I have also described in details the research process, design, participants and the research methods used the research ethics as well as the methodological limitations of the research. The following chapter is the first of three chapters that introduce the data analysis and discussion as seen from AT lens. Hence, Chapter Five presents the data that supports the use of Arabic as a pedagogical tool that mediates the EFL teaching-learning activity.

Chapter Five

Arabic as a Pedagogical Artefact to Mediate the EFL Teaching–Learning Activity

5.1 Introduction

This research adopted the activity theory as a conceptual framework to establish the role that Arabic plays in EFL classes. Finding an answer to this question would contribute to gaining some insight into this controversial practice. It would also reveal the underlying reasons behind the attitudes that the stakeholders maintain towards the use of Arabic as a pedagogical tool. The data analysed in this chapter have been collected through class observations, students' questionnaires, interviews with EFL teachers and interviews with the college policy makers. Through the AT lens, data analysis revealed three major themes associated with the use of Arabic in EFL classes and in line with the principles of mediation, expansion and contradictions. The current chapter deals with the evidence related to the use of Arabic as a pedagogical tool that mediates the EFL teaching-learning activity.

Indeed, the analysis reveals that the bulk of data collected by this research supports the usefulness of Arabic as a mediating tool used to facilitate input comprehension and enhance the grasp of EFL teaching content. As explained in Chapter Three, mediation is an AT principle that bears on the use of Arabic as an artefact to facilitate teaching and learning in EFL classes. This categorization is in line with one of the AT's fundamental tenets which stipulates that any human activity needs to be mediated by tools or artefacts. The use of Arabic as a pedagogical tool in the EFL teaching-learning activity is defined by the goal, the outcome, and the rules that govern the community hosting the activity; but above all by the different 'voices' of the participants or 'subjects' involved in it (Engeström, 1996a).

The analysis also suggests that Arabic use mediates classroom interactions, a factor that creates a conducive environment to language learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf, 2006). In fact, the socio-cultural theory from which AT has evolved emphasises the importance of mediation in a language learning activity and '*holds that specifically human forms of mental activity arise in the interactions we enter into with other members of our culture and with the specific experiences we have with the artifacts produced by our ancestors and by our contemporaries*' (Lantolf, 2000a, p. 79).

The following lines introduce the analysis of data in relation to the role of Arabic as a pedagogical mediating tool. This analysis is based on the positive attitudes expressed by the majority of the stakeholders in favour of the use of Arabic in EFL classes. Considering the quantitative analysis illustrated by figure 5.1 below, it would seem that the majority of the participants advocate some use of Arabic in EFL classes especially with low-level students. On the whole, more than 2/3 (69%) of the participants support the use of Arabic in EFL classes and do so mostly for its mediating role.

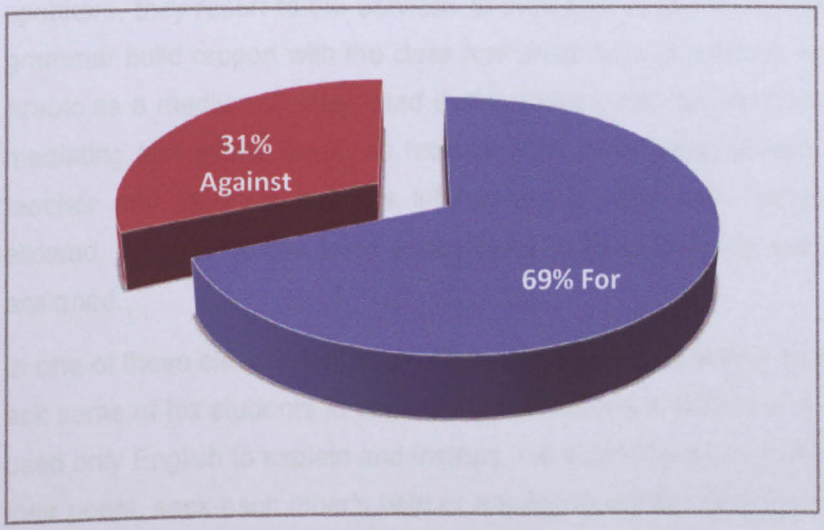

Figure 5.1 EFL stakeholders' attitudes towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes (N=213)

While figure 5.1 above illustrates the attitudes of all participants, Table 5.1 below shows the distribution of these attitudes as expressed by each set of participants and based on the responses to the question: 'Should Arabic be used in EFL classes?'

Table 5.1 Breakdown of the stakeholders' attitudes

Attitudes	Students	Teachers	Policy makers
For	63%	77%	67%
Against	37%	23%	33%

In order to uncover the reasons underlying these attitudes, the collected data has also been analysed in a qualitative manner, and the attitudes mentioned above are explained in light of the role that Arabic plays in the EFL classes. Most of these roles point to the use of Arabic as a pedagogical tool that mediates the EFL teaching-learning activity. Hence, this chapter presents

the analysis of the evidence that answer the research question 'What role does Arabic play in EFL classes?'. In addition, it presents the analysis of the quantitative data to establish the attitudes of the stakeholders by answering the question: 'Should Arabic be used in EFL classes?'.

5.2 Class Observations

It was noted during the class observations undertaken for this research that the EFL teachers use Arabic mostly to mediate their teaching. As the majority of these teachers are non-Arabic speakers, they resort to the services of their best students in order to explain vocabulary and grammar build rapport with the class and encourage classroom interactions through the use of Arabic as a medium. It was noted during these class observations that the use of Arabic as a mediating tool aimed chiefly to facilitate EFL input comprehension and encourage students-teacher and students-students interactions. It was also observed that the EFL teachers allowed, and sometimes even encouraged, their students to use Arabic to discuss the tasks assigned.

In one of these classes taught by T3, the non-Arabic speaking teacher would from time to time ask some of his students to explain the instructions in Arabic to the rest of the class. While T3 used only English to explain and instruct, his students used mostly Arabic to communicate with their peers, seek each other's help or engage in collaborative learning. T3 started his grammar class by introducing the use of the past tense to describe past events. The class started with an ice-breaking activity that went as follows:

T3: What do you call the past tense in Arabic?

Ss: Almaadi (The past)

T3: Say in Arabic: " I played football yesterday"!

Ss: La'aebt al Korah ams

T3: What is the difference?

Sx: Ams howa almaadi. (Yesterday is past) (CO, T3)

The above teacher-students interaction is an example of how T3 makes use of the students' previous knowledge through the use of Arabic to introduce new knowledge in English. In this activity, the use of Arabic as a pedagogical tool to mediate the comprehension of English grammar facilitates its learning; which concurs with the view expressed by Turnbull (2001) that

'it is efficient to make a quick switch to L1 to ensure that students understand a difficult grammar concept or an unknown word' (p. 535).

After the introduction and presentation of the lesson, the teacher gave the class a task to allow them to practice the use of the regular verbs in the past tense. The students were directed to describe activities illustrated by the pictures that the teacher distributed. T3 first explained his instruction in English, and then asked a bright student to repeat the same instruction in Arabic to ensure that the rest of the class understood the task.

> *T3: Regular verbs take 'ed' in the past form. Add 'ed 'to the verb and use it to describe a picture. Sx, can you repeat in Arabic what we are supposed to do?*
>
> *S x: Shabbab! hatta tkhalli alfi'al almodare'a maadi, tdif 'aalih 'ed' (to turn the verb into the past form, add 'ed'). (ibid)*

This is an example of how T3 made use of one of his bright students (Sx) to explain activity instructions to the rest of the class. This corroborates what T3 and many other teachers indicated in their interviews. During the task, T3 also invited his students to collaborate with each other.

> *T3: You can work together; you can help each other. (ibid)*

At this point, T3 turned to the researcher and pointed out that some students were using English-Arabic dictionaries. He added that they use them when they feel the need to do so, and that he also creates the need for such use by asking them to translate words and instructions into Arabic.

When T3 noticed that a student was not engaged in the task, he asked one of his bright students to explain the instructions in Arabic once more to that student:

> *T3: Student x, explain to Sa what he is supposed to do!*
>
> *Sx: bitdeef 'aaleeh 'ed' (you add to the end of the verb) .*
>
> *T3: you can get help from someone if you don't understand.*
>
> *Sx: Zeed 'ed' khaleeha maadi. (Add 'ed' to turn it to the past form) (ibid)*

Other students heeded their teachers' advice and used Arabic to help each other:

> *Sb: Llee gablah? (The one before it?)*
>
> *Sc: Listen? Plus 'ed'*
>
> *Sb : O Llee ba'adu ? (And the one after it?)*

Sc: kullaaha plus 'ed' (all plus ed) (ibid)

T3 noticed that a student got all the answers wrong and delegated the teacher's role to Sx.

T3: Sx! There is also another student, explain to him in Arabic. (ibid)

Sx took over this role and got closer to the student in question to help him correct his mistakes. In the meantime, other students were also seizing the opportunity to seek help from each other through whispers and gestures as they were not seated close to each other. Although it was not possible to hear what the interaction was about, the fact that they wrote 'ed' with their fingers in the air suggested they were exchanging answers. This classroom interaction is an example of how teachers facilitate learning by allowing their students to use Arabic to interact and learn.

The lesson progressed to another task as T3 asked the students to turn their sentences into questions using the auxiliary verb 'did'.

T3: Now turn these sentences into questions. Sx, explain to the others what to do!

Sx: Tghayer ljumlah li-ssuaal (turn the sentence into question)

Sc: Fahem (I understand)

Sx: Bass Thatt 'did' gabl she o tsheel ed min-alfi'al. (Just insert did before she and remove 'ed' from the verb.)

Sx seemed to be enjoying his role as an assistant teacher as he received many requests for help. This underscores the importance of using Arabic with students at this level and highlights the resourcefulness of the teachers who cannot themselves use Arabic. They conveniently make use of the bright students to convey their explanations or instructions to the rest of the class. In this class, this seems to work well as the whole class was engaged, and the students showed great interest in the lesson as they understood its content. This liveliness is to be contrasted with the silence that was observed in the classes where no Arabic was used and where teachers followed the 'English only' approach as we shall see in Chapter Seven.

The use of Arabic to explain and teach grammar was also observed in T6's class. The class was about revising and practicing the use of conditional type-two sentences and started as follows:

T6: If I found a wallet with 15 000 riyals in it, I would buy a new car. I told you this type of sentences is made of two clauses. The first one, the if-clause expresses condition or as you say 'shart'

Sx: Shart?(condition?)

T6: 'Shart' yes. The second clause "I would buy a new car' is the result clause or?

Sx: Annateejah (result)

Then, the class moved to a practice activity, and the students were divided into groups as the teacher explained the instructions;

T6: Write the sentences in suitable columns. Help each other, consult each other, and ask each other.

The students started interacting in Arabic but I couldn't hear what they were saying. They were speaking too low. Then a student said something to the teacher and the teacher didn't seem to have heard it.

T6: What?

Sa: Same

T6: Same?

Sa: Kullu zay ba'ad (they are all the same)

A student pointed to a word in the handout and T6 seized the opportunity to involve the other students.

T6: Gained, received, took, who knows the meaning of gained?

Sb: Ya'ani Iktisaab, madbout? (It means earn, right?)

T6: Grades?

Sx: Marks, darajaat

T6: Darajaat, marks

T6 noticed that his class was relatively silent and kept asking them to interact with each other and work as groups. Then turned to the researcher and commented;

T6: Normally they discuss more freely when nobody is around.

Students kept talking to each other in Arabic, but I couldn't hear what they were saying. They were probably discussing the task and comparing their answers as I could hear only one word; '**ṣ**a**ḥḥ**' (correct?) and then '**ṣ**a**ḥḥ**' (correct).

At the end of the class a student produced a statement that most students say at the end of their lessons to indicate that the class time is over.

Sd: Finish time teacher! (CO, T6)

This sentence imitates the structure and the word order of the verb fronted Arabic sentence 'intaha al waqt', which indicates that Arabic is present in the students' minds and plays a role in their interlanguage.

In another class taught by T4, Arabic was used mainly to explain vocabulary. T4 asked his students to provide Arabic translations for some words. The words were initially explained in English by the teacher who also used examples to illustrate his explanation, but the majority of the students did not fully understand their meanings. The teacher realised this and frequently asked few students to provide the Arabic translations of these words to the rest of the class. It was also observed that the students used electronic bilingual dictionaries installed on their mobile phones. This practice was in line with what T4 mentioned during his interview. He indicated that when the need arises he would ask his students to consult bilingual dictionaries (electronic or hard copy) to facilitate comprehension. The following interactions illustrate how Arabic was used in T4's class to negotiate meaning.

Sa: Teacher what laundry?

T4: What is laundry everybody?

Sb: Amalaabis (clothes), wash clothes

T4: 'Laundry' are the clothes to be washed or that you have washed

Sc: maghsalat malabis (Laundromat)

T4: The place where you get your clothes cleaned is called....? .....Silence

T4: It derives from laundry. Laundromat or launderette....What's post office?

Sd: Bareed (post)

The class then moved to a grammar task as the class was actually a preparation for the quiz to be taken later that day.

T4: What is 'across from'? Opposite?

Sa: Mogaabil (opposite)

T4: Mogaabil?

Sb: On the other side, across

T4: Between?

Sc: Between this and this (using his hands to show the limits) fil-montasaf (in the middle)

Ss: Is there any writing in the quiz?

T4: There is no writing in the quiz

Ss: Alhamdulillah! (Thank God)

Sa: What mean public transportation?

T4: What does public transportation mean?

Sb: Alkhadamat al- 'aammah (public services)

Sc: Annagl Al 'aamm(public transport)

T4: There are buses for two Riyals, they stop in many places and take you from one place to another....

Sb: Annagl al- jamaai (mass transport)

Sc: Pollution?

T4: Pollution?

Sd: Athalawuth (pollution)

T4 : Study becomes studies. Why did we change y to i

Sc: Fih harf 'aillah (because of the vowel) (CO. T4)

The interaction above reveals how students make use of their prior knowledge available to them in Arabic; it also indicates that these students are cognitively active (remember and think) in Arabic. This fact is capitalized upon and used by most teachers in order to mediate their teaching as the examples above show. This was also observed in T10's class.

T10's class was about teaching vocabulary items related to describing people's moods and temperaments, and the teacher made use of Arabic to explain the meaning of adjectives related to the theme of the lesson. As he does not speak Arabic, the teacher called upon his bright students to translate his explanation into Arabic and provide Arabic equivalents for English words.

T10 started by explaining what 'frowning' means in English then asked his class about their definition of the word, using his facial expression to help them.

T10: What's frowning? (The teacher frowned to give the students a hint.)

Sa: Malaameh (facial expressions). (CO, T10)

This is an example of how the meaning cannot always be conveyed properly through acting or through the use of body language. If the teacher knew the word in Arabic, there would be no

confusion or misinterpretation on the part of the students; comprehension would have been instant and fast. T10 points to another picture of a stressed person and asked about the meaning of 'stress'.

T10: What does stress mean?

Sx: In Arabic it's mean tawatter

T10: Tawatter. (ibid)

The meaning is being negotiated here with the help of pictures, body language and Arabic. But the use of Arabic seems to be the most efficient in conveying the exact meaning. The teacher continued acting and performing different types of body language. In order to explain wrinkles. He used the Arabic word 'shaybah' to refer to 'elderly' in an attempt to create a background context and explain the word 'wrinkles'. A student proposed 'shayeb' and 'Aajouz', which are more accurate translations.

T10: Wrinkles. Look at me I am wrinkling my skin. What is it? Shayba? Shayeb? When you grow old your skin wrinkles.

Sb: Shayeb, *'aajouz (ibid)*

T10 moved on to another picture and started explaining the word 'exhausted'. The word 'tired' was translated as 'ta'abaan',

T10: Exhausted, tired, fatigued, worn out

Sx: Ta'aban (ibid)

The teacher then moved to another picture which depicted a bored person.

T10: Bored. Which picture depicts this feeling? Bored?

Sb: Tafshan

T10: Tafshaan! Bored is when you have nothing interesting to do. (ibid)

The adjective '*embarrassed*' was explained using the English word 'shy' but a student who did not understand what 'shy' meant used the famous Arabic question '*wash e-gul?*' (What is he saying?) to ask one of his peers for the Arabic equivalent.

T10: And embarrassed? What's embarrassed?

Sc: In Arabic?

T10: No (perhaps a sense of guilt kicked in on the part of the teacher). *No try to explain in English.*

Sx: Shy?

T10: You feel shy, embarrassed when you do something you don't want others to know about,... and frustrated?

Sb: Wash e-gul? (What is he saying?)

*Sc: **Kh**ajoul (Shy) (ibid)*

A student came across the word frustrated and asked the teacher what it meant.

Sd: What does frustrated mean?

T10: When something goes against your hopes

*Sx: Mohat**t**am (devastated) (ibid)*

This is not the accurate translation but it goes to show that finding the corresponding word in Arabic is something students always feel they have to do to be convinced that they have understood. Translation into Arabic is a key learning strategy that these students have grown used to. The use of Arabic as an artefact that mediates the learning activity is pervasive and has been recorded in most of the classes observed. In this class, the students often used Arabic to provide Arabic equivalents of new English vocabulary items and also offered Arabic equivalents for simple English words when they cannot explain them properly to each other in English. For instance, 'smile' was translated as 'ibtissam', 'feeling' was translated as 'ihssass' to correct the teacher's suggestion of 'hiss' which means 'sense'.

T10: Look at this picture. It shows a smile. A smile?

Ss: Ibtissaam (smiling)

T10: Feeling is what you feel. Feeling is what? Hiss?

Sx: Ihsaas

T10: Alright. (ibid)

The above excerpts show how EFL teachers make use of Arabic through the help of their bright students to explain vocabulary. This practice seems to be common for most non-Arabic speaking teachers who have realised the important mediating role of Arabic as a pedagogical tool in their EFL classes. The instances described here are examples of real-life practices as observed in EFL classes where Arabic is used as a tool to facilitate input comprehension and to mediate classroom interaction as well. These practices corroborate the students' comments and confirm what the teachers stated in their interviews.

Against the background of this research where the use of Arabic as a mediating tool in EFL teaching-learning activity is almost considered taboo, the role of Arabic could be likened to the often-cited example of the hunting activity (Lenoti'ev, 1987) that is used to illustrate the relevance of artefacts in mediating an activity.

In a hunting activity, the tribal community members are all participants motivated by the need to catch the animal that is hunted. This goal determines and justifies the actions taken by various community members, based on the roles and tasks assigned to them by the community. Some actions like, frightening the animals away, might seem to go against the motive of the activity as a whole. However, although the beaters do not attempt to catch and kill the games, their actions become useful and reasonable when they are connected to the purpose of the hunting activity as a whole. In fact, scaring the animals away is a tool used to facilitate their visibility and ultimately their hunt. It is indeed an artefact used by the participants to achieve the ultimate goal of the hunting activity which is to kill the animal.

Quite similarly, the usage of Arabic in EFL classes might seem to be defeating the purpose of the EFL teaching-learning activity if considered in isolation. However, the practice becomes useful and meaningful when considered alongside the socio-cultural and educational realities of the context in which the activity is taking place. To illustrate, the students in the EFL classes studied by this research are either beginners or false beginners and come from an educational background where Arabic is used as a key learning strategy, including EFL classes. In fact, all their prior knowledge was acquired in Arabic. It shouldn't therefore be unnatural to them to use it to learn English too.

5.3 Students' Use of Arabic

5.3.1 Students' Attitudes

In order to establish the students' attitudes towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes, 197 questionnaires were distributed at the end of the scheduled classes, completed by the students and collected by their teachers. Then all questions and responses were coded and categorised and a log was kept for future reference and verification. Raw data emanating from these questionnaires were then entered into the SPSS version 17 to calculate percentages and to generate representative figures and tables for visual illustrations. The first question in the questionnaire was a Likert scale-type question, and was made up of four tiers of attitudes towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes: strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree. As Table 5.2 below shows, the results suggest that 16% of the students strongly agree,

48% agree, 21% disagree and 15% strongly disagree with such use.

Table 5.2 Students' detailed attitudes towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes (N=197)

Students' attitudes towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes	Percentage
Strongly agree	16%
Agree	48%
Disagree	21%
Strongly Disagree	15%

Overall, and as figure 5.2 below illustrates, the majority of the students participating in this research expressed their support for the use of Arabic in EFL classes with 63% of them stating that they either agree or strongly agree with the practice, while only 37% are opposed to it.

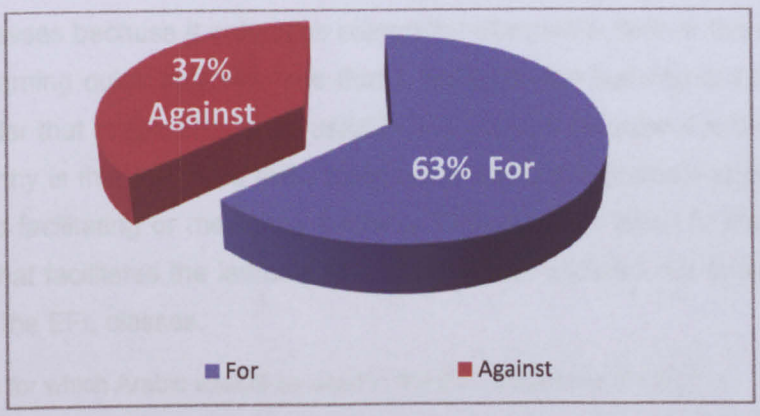

Figure 5.2 Students' attitudes towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes (197 participants)

The results suggested by the responses to question 1 in the questionnaire are also corroborated by the findings resulting from the quantitative analysis of the students' comments. Figure 5.3 below shows that 68% of these comments are in favour of the use of Arabic in EFL classes, whereas 32% are opposed to the practice. The students' comments have been elicited through four follow-up questions in the form of '*any other?*'. These open-ended questions offered the students the opportunity to explain their responses to the questions in the questionnaire. The quantitative nature of the information provided by this category of data, which contributes mainly to determine further the students' attitudes towards the use of Arabic

in EFL classes, seems less important than its qualitative significance.

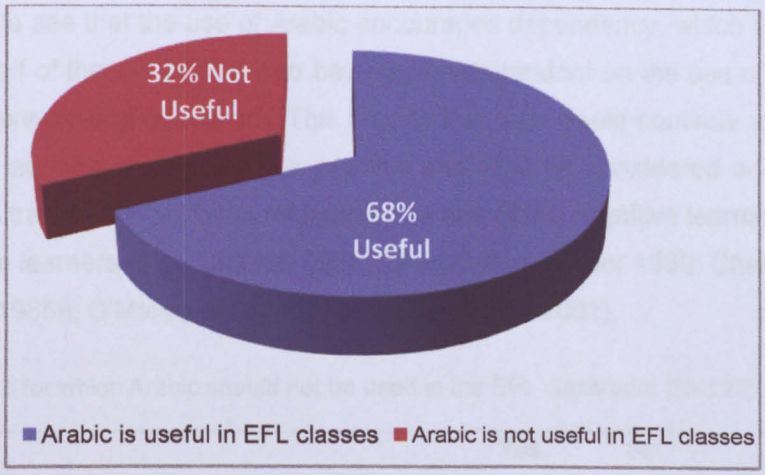

Figure 5.3 Students' Comments (N=197)

Question 2 in the questionnaire sought to establish the students' justifications for using Arabic in EFL classes. As Table 5.3 below shows, 71% of the students think that Arabic could be useful in EFL classes because it enhances comprehension; while 58% of them are of the view that it makes learning quick and 54% see that it facilitates the learning of English. However, only 47% consider that Arabic should be used in EFL classes because it relaxes the students. What is noteworthy is that the three main reasons for which the students support this practice are all related to facilitating or mediating learning. This could be taken to imply that Arabic is seen as a tool that facilitates the learning of English, which underscores further the mediating role of Arabic in the EFL classes.

Table 5.3 Reasons for which Arabic should be used in the EFL classroom (N=197)

Reason	Yes	No
It facilitates learning	54%	46%
It makes learning quicker	58%	42%
It relaxes	47%	53%
It enhances comprehension	71%	29%

Question 3 in the questionnaire required the students to choose from a suggested list the reasons for which Arabic should not be used in EFL classes. The results as shown by Table 5.4 ahead suggest that 78% of the students don't think that the use of Arabic would become a

bad learning habit, 59% don't think that the use of Arabic contributes to cognitive laziness, and 55% don't think that the practice diminishes students' exposure to English. However, 52% of these participants see that the use of Arabic encourages dependency, which seems to be the only worry for half of these students who have grown dependent on the use of Arabic to learn English in their pre-college education. This implies that they would continue using translation as one of their learning strategies. This practice shouldn't be considered an impediment to their learning as translation has been recognized as one of the cognitive learning strategies for foreign language learners (e.g., Chamot 1987; Chamot and Kupper 1989; Chamot et al. 1987; O'Malley et al., 1985a; O'Malley et al., 1985b; Oxford, 1990, 2001).

Table 5.4 Reasons for which Arabic should not be used in the EFL classroom (N=197)

Reason	Yes	No
It encourages dependency	52%	48%
It diminishes exposure to English	45%	55%
It becomes a bad learning habit	22%	78%
It contributes to cognitive laziness	41%	59%

Question 4 in the students' questionnaires aimed at pinpointing the possible uses of Arabic in EFL classes as the students view them. As Table 5.5 ahead illustrates, 86% of the students view that Arabic could be useful in explaining words and 78% of them think that Arabic could be used to explain the linguistic differences between Arabic and English. These results tend to corroborate the findings emanating from question 2 where it has already been suggested that the emphasis is on the role of Arabic in facilitating or mediating the learning of English. These results are indicative of the awareness of the participating students regarding the usefulness of Arabic as an important learning tool in EFL classes. They found it useful in explaining words, in helping students to feel comfortable and relaxed, in explaining the linguistic differences between Arabic and English and in seeking help from their classmates.

Table 5.5 Possible uses of Arabic in EFL classes (N=197)

Uses	Yes	No
To explain difficult words	86%	14%
To check understanding	50%	50%
To crack jokes with students	45%	55%
To make students feel relaxed and confident	64%	36%
To explain exam instructions	69%	31%
To help progress pair and group work	35%	65%
To explain Arabic/English linguistic differences	78%	22%
To seek help from fellow students	67%	33%

Based on the figures and tables above, it could be concluded that the majority of the students find the use of Arabic to be practical in their EFL classes. The varying opinions about its possible uses could be attributed to the learners' differences and learning strategies discussed in Chapter Two. In fact, a very small number of the students who took part in this research stood by their positions and maintained that Arabic has no role in the EFL classes. Further analysis of the 37% of the questionnaires filled by the students opposing the use of Arabic in EFL classes revealed that only 3% of these participants did not find any use for the practice. In the final analysis shown by figure 5.4, 99% of the students indicated that Arabic may have one use or another in their EFL classes. The attitude of 'disagree' expressed as a response to question 1 did not mean absolute disagreement as some of the students still identified few uses for Arabic, as suggested by questions 2 and 4 discussed above. Instances of similar discrepancies are pervasive throughout this research and are symptomatic of the attitudes of the participants who are not properly informed about the possible role of Arabic in EFL classes. These contradictions are discussed in Chapter Seven.

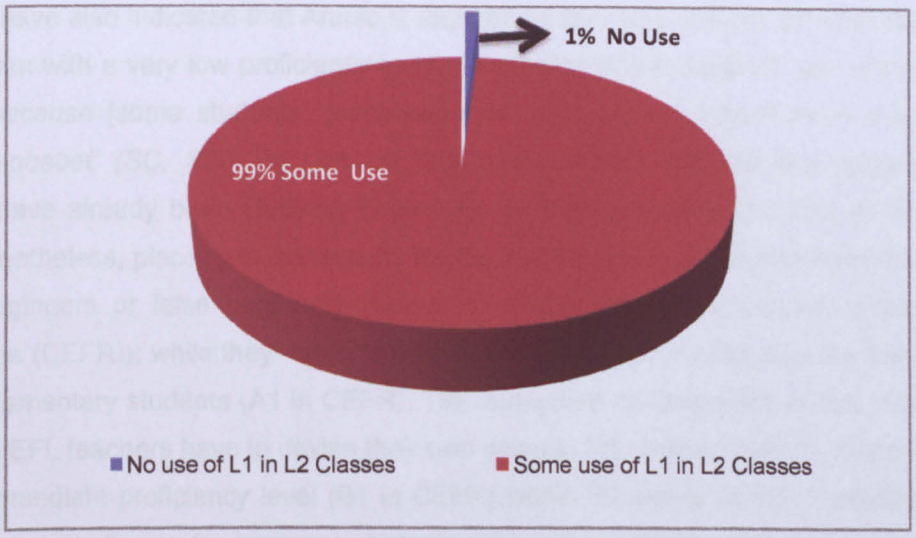

Figure 5.4 Students' Attitudes (the final analysis) (N=197)

In order to gain a better understanding of the attitudes of the students, the data emanating from the comments written by these participants on their questionnaires has been treated as qualitative evidence and analysed accordingly.

5.3.2 Students Use Arabic to Mediate their EFL Learning

It has been established above that nearly all of the students who participated in this research support the use of Arabic in EFL classes for one reason or another. Based on the comments written on the questionnaires, the majority of the students believe that Arabic is necessary to explain the meaning of words because, as a student put it, '*some words are not clear in English and need to be translated into Arabic' (SC, S4)*; and also because 'the *use of Arabic is sometimes necessary to explain some words that require translation as the teacher explains these words but students get lost or confused*' (SC, S59).

The key word here is 'necessary' which could imply that the pedagogical reality in the EFL classroom requires the use of Arabic to render explanations and instructions comprehensible. Banning this pedagogical tool from their EFL classes would result in a lack of comprehension as was in fact observed in some classes (CO, T5 and CO, and T12) to be discussed in Chapter Seven. The use of Arabic in EFL classes as described by the students' comments above is to some extent similar to the chasing of the animal in the hunting activity mentioned earlier. Batters chase the animal to make it visible for the hunters to kill. Likewise, the students in this research make use of Arabic to facilitate the comprehension of the EFL input, and therefore learn the English language.

Students have also indicated that Arabic is required in their EFL classes as most students join the program with a very low proficiency level. According to one student, *'the use of Arabic is needed because* [some students] *graduated from high school without even mastering the English alphabet' (SC, S60).* In point of fact, the students who join the preparatory year program have already been studying English for at least six years at a rate of four hours a week. Nonetheless, placement test results for the last five years show that these students are mostly beginners or false beginners (below A1 in the Common European Framework for References (CEFR)); while they were admitted to the program on the premise that they were at least elementary students (A1 in CEFR). The immediate consequence of this misplacement is that the EFL teachers have to devise their own ways to help these students attain a minimum of an intermediate proficiency level (B1 in CEFR) within 30 weeks or 600 instruction periods. This poses a challenge for beginner students who would usually require a longer period to improve their proficiency in English. The use of Arabic in this case could be both useful and recommended as it shortens the teaching time. This very idea could well be what pushed a student to urge EFL teachers to use '*Arabic to make understanding quick'* (SC, S73).

Actually, the students at the preparatory year English program consider the use of Arabic to be crucial in the beginning as it helps them to build the foundation of the English language. According to one of these students, '*Arabic will eventually be left out once the student's English has improved' (SC, S87).* The stress therefore seems to be on the use of Arabic as a stepping stone in order to build the fundamentals of English. For this reason, a student cautioned that *'Arabic should be used in English classes to enable students to understand parts of the lesson that they cannot otherwise understand by themselves at home, even if they use bilingual dictionaries' (SC, S72).* This statement highlights the importance of classroom interaction through the use of Arabic as a mediating pedagogical artefact. This seems to fall in line with the proposition that stresses the need for social interactions to facilitate language learning (Vygotsky, 1978), and brings to the fore the importance of Arabic as a mediating tool in the EFL teaching-learning activity.

The mediating role of Arabic as a pedagogical artefact was echoed by another student who indicated that '*Arabic could be used to explain any difficult words/terms that cannot otherwise be explained in English' (SC, S12).* It is important to reiterate that Arabic is the medium through which these students have received their pre-college education, the language they use to interact with each other and with the rest of their community, and above all the language that embodies their culture and identity. This is reminiscent of the argument for the use of the

mother tongue advanced by Butzkamm (2003) who proposed that through our mother tongue we have learned everything we know, and that this should hold true for foreign language learning as well (see the original citation in Chapter 2).

Some students have also reported that Arabic could be useful in preventing a lack of comprehension or confusion. A student commented that *'when Arabic is used* [students] *learn and remember fast'* (SC, S104), which supports the view that Arabic should be used to explain vocabulary and instructions that cannot be explained through other pedagogical tools. A student argued *that 'the use of Arabic is necessary as you can't explain a difficult word using another difficult word' (SC, S97).* Equally, the use of Arabic is required when *'the teacher finds it difficult to convey the information to the students' (SC,* S43), as some students *'only understand when the teacher explains in Arabic' (SC, S55).*

The use of Arabic in EFL classes entails the use of translation. In reality, translating difficult English words into Arabic can sometimes prove unavoidable with beginner and elementary students. Due to their previous learning experience, the students in the preparatory year program expect their *'teachers to explain some English words in Arabic' (SC, S36), and 'it is mostly vocabulary explanation that would make use of this technique* [translation]*' (SC, S3)* due to the fact that 'the *English foundation of the students is very poor'* (SC, S56). Therefore, translating English content into Arabic would be useful to avoid confusion as students have reported that when *'the teacher explains ... words in English ... students get lost or confused'* (SC, S1).

In addition to the use of Arabic to mediate EFL learning by facilitating overall input comprehension, some of the students' comments suggested that Arabic could also mediate learning through fulfilling specific functions in the EFL classroom. For instance, *'Arabic may be used to explain grammar and pronunciation' (SC, S41)* or to *'explain vocabulary and grammar'* (SC, S53). Another student commented that 'Arabic *is useful in understanding difficult words and some grammar rules'* (SC, S17). Equally, another student suggested that the use of Arabic *'helps in understanding and connecting meaning in Arabic to English'* (SC, S65), which again highlights the significance of prior knowledge that the student had acquired through Arabic.

Students have also reported that they make use of Arabic to explain instructions. One way of mediating teaching and learning could be achieved through making class instructions comprehensible. Various students' commented that Arabic is not only useful in understanding difficult words and grammar rules, but it is also helpful in *'informing students about exams and quizzes' (*SC, S18). Understanding instructions is essential for EFL learning, especially for

students at the beginner level who need to understand the instructions for the practice tasks and activities; but most of all, they need to understand test questions and instructions. Failing this, students could feel confused, and they may probably not learn much due to their inability to understand the instructions. This was pointed out by a student who commented that *'Arabic is good for informing students about exams and quizzes. It also helps in a good understanding of the confusing rules' (SC, S87).*

5.3.3 Students Use Arabic to Facilitate Collaborative Learning

The students' use of Arabic to mediate collaborative learning was experienced in the classes observed for this research. Although it was not always possible for the researcher to hear exactly what the students were saying to each other as they whispered most of the time, their body language and the isolated words of Arabic overheard suggested that most interactions in the classes observed were related to the lessons. In fact, class observations uncovered that students make use of Arabic primarily to seek each other's help, and it has been observed in all classes that students only use Arabic to communicate to each other, unless directed to only use English by their teachers. Some students used Arabic to check their answers during their practice tasks and activities. These interactions usually benefit the weak students as they receive help from their more able classmates; which would be a form of helping them progress through their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) or expanding their learning as I will discuss in Chapter Six.

In T4's class for instance, it was observed that a student used Arabic to explain a grammatical component to one of his classmates, i.e. how '*y*' changes to *'i'* in verbs like '*try*' and not in verbs like *'play'* (CO, T4):

Sa: *Why did we change y to i*

Sb: Li Annah Fih harf aaillah (because of the vowel) (ibid)

In the same class, it was also observed that two students used Arabic to discuss tense use and argued whether to use '*took*' or '*take*' in '*I took a shower*' or *'I take a shower*':

Sa: Ish saheeh? Took aw take? (Which is correct? Took or take?)

Sb: Took, li-annu maadi (Took because it is in the past form)

The fact that these students make use of Arabic to discuss these language components suggests that Arabic is used to mediate collaborative learning. In fact, during pair work which centred on grammar practice, the students in this particular class used only Arabic to interact with each other.

In the class taught by T7, students made use of Arabic to explain instructions and suggested answers to each other. For instance one particular student was recorded explaining the word '*cook*' in Arabic (CO, T7):

Sa: Wash maana cook? (What does cook mean?)

Sb: Tabbakh (a cook)

Other students used both English and Arabic to correct each other's spelling of certain words, or to help form sentences that one of their classmates was writing on the board. In one case, an Arabic word was even used to complete one of the produced sentences; '*I was playing ballot*' (cards) (Ibid). While it was observed that the students in this class only used English to communicate with their teacher, it was also observed that they used mainly Arabic to seek help from each other regarding the spelling of some words and as a medium to interact and collaborate during the class tasks and activities.

Peer assistance helped in creating students-students interactions and contributed in making the learning activity move forward. It was observed that the students used Arabic to participate, ask questions and seek clarifications about the language items and instructions they did not understand. During T3 class observation for instance, it was noted that two students used Arabic to discuss the use and pronunciation of the verb 'wash' in the past form. They were whispering and covering their mouths with their hands but I managed to overhear *'washt?'*, then *'washed'* (CO, T3). This conversation is an example of how students use their mother tongue to seek each other's help. Instances of collaborative learning like these have been reported by both teachers and students.

Many EFL teachers reported that their students use Arabic to seek each other's help and to engage in interactions and collaborative learning. T3 explains in the statement below how this takes place:

> *For example if they are given a task not all students understand, a student will still need some instructions and English is not going to help him, then I hand him over to a student who can help in L1 to understand what the lesson is about, what the grammatical points are. For most of the time in my class they are using it for the lesson.* (Interviews, T3)

In addition, data analysis also suggests that the students in this research make use of Arabic as a learning strategy which they have developed over their past years in education.

5.3.4 Students Use Arabic as a Learning Strategy

Scholars have suggested that the students' previous learning experiences have an impact on how they perceive and approach learning. Thus their past learning experiences affect their future learning strategies, and their learning behaviours will reflect this impact (e.g. Dart, 1998; Prosser and Trigwell, 1999).

The role of Arabic in EFL classes as a learning strategy is determined by the historically embedded socio-cultural role it enjoys in the students socio-cultural context. In some other Arab countries (e.g. Morocco), Arabic does not seem to play this role in the EFL classes as I have learned from first-hand experience. Perhaps this is so because English is the third and not the second language in Morocco. However, the attitudes of the students in this research are informed by their own learning experiences as the following comment shows: *'I was poor in English and used to score low in the exams. This year the teacher is using Arabic and I scored 92% because the use of Arabic helped me understand'* (SC, S3). Another comment suggested that the use of Arabic maximizes EFL learning and therefore could explain why students *'prefer the use of Arabic for prep year students. Only 40% of the students understand English as they had successful experiences with the learning of English. The remaining 60%, for various reasons, just don't understand English.* (SC, S83). Another student suggested a different figure: *'I think 70% of the students can understand English. While 30% are below average and need the use of Arabic'* (SC, S15). However, this research has established through the quantitative analysis cited earlier that 63% believe that the use of Arabic as a mediating tool in their EFL classes is indispensable.

The students' familiarity with the pedagogical realities in the EFL classrooms brings to the fore the importance of their past learning experiences. A student summed up this experience stating that *'the English syllabus at the high school did not benefit us much. I wish they could implement the use of Arabic and do it quickly'* (SC, S21). Another student argued that EFL learners should be allowed to use Arabic because they *'grew up using it'* (SC, S25). The fact is that these students joined the preparatory English program with Arabic as one of the learning strategies that they have inherited from their previous education.

Students also confessed that they were shocked to find out how different high school and college educational systems are. For instance, the policy in the college is to use 'English only' for class instructions. This feeling of shock was described through a comment by a student that *'there is a great difference between the high school period and the college level. Students are shocked by the use of 'English only''* (SC, S31). A smooth transition that makes use of Arabic

is therefore required for some students *'more than others, due to their poor performance in English'* (SC, S32), given that these students *'graduated from high school without even mastering the English alphabet' (SC, S61).* The use of Arabic at this level plays primarily a mediating role as it facilitates not only learning but teaching as well.

5.4 EFL Teachers Use Arabic to Mediate the Teaching-Learning Activity

Before delving into the analysis of the qualitative data to find out how EFL teachers use Arabic to mediate the teaching-learning activity, it is important to establish the attitudes of these participants first.

5.4.1 Teachers' Attitudes

Based on their answers to the question 'what is your attitude towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes?', the majority of the participating EFL teachers expressed their support for the practice as is illustrated by Figure 5.5.

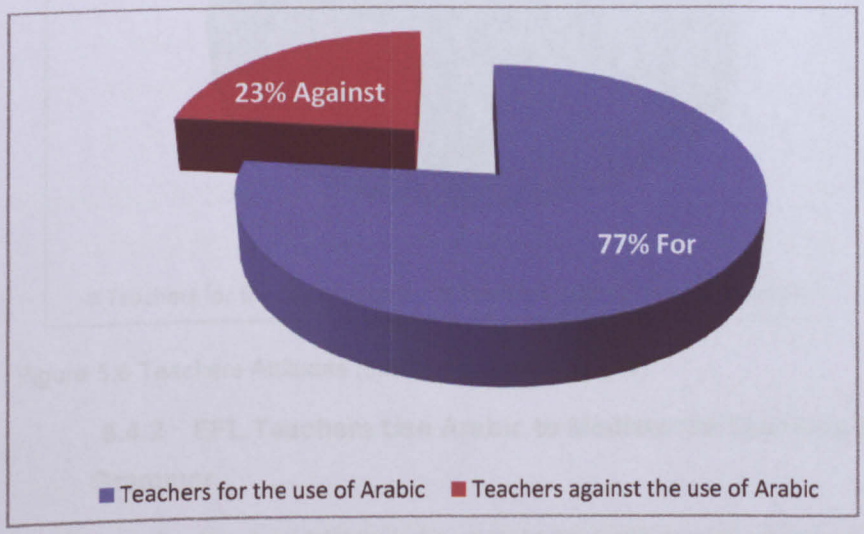

Figure 5.5 Teachers' Attitudes towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes (participants 14)

However, only one of the three teachers who expressed their opposition to the use of Arabic in EFL classes remained faithful to the monolingual approach in his class. The other two teachers ended up admitting that Arabic could be used in the classroom to explain difficult vocabulary for instance. In light of these findings, Figure 5.5 above becomes Figure 5.6 below. This case of apparent contradiction, reminiscent of the discrepancies encountered in the analysis of the students' attitudes, further highlights the number of contradictions that characterise the use of Arabic in EFL classes. These contradictions will be discussed in Chapter Seven. In fact, the EFL teachers who seem to be trapped between a rock and a hard

place, cannot avoid acting in contradiction to either their students' needs or to the policy of the college.

However, the majority of the teachers openly expressed their support for the inclusion of Arabic in their EFL classes. In fact, they facilitated that use in their observed classes. This could be an indication that local critical pedagogies, such as the ones observed in these classes where Arabic is made use of against all odds, emerge based on and informed by the practice in the classroom. Due to their dissatisfaction with the status quo, the participant EFL teachers have displayed attitudes that are in line with their conviction of the practicality of the use of Arabic in their EFL classes.

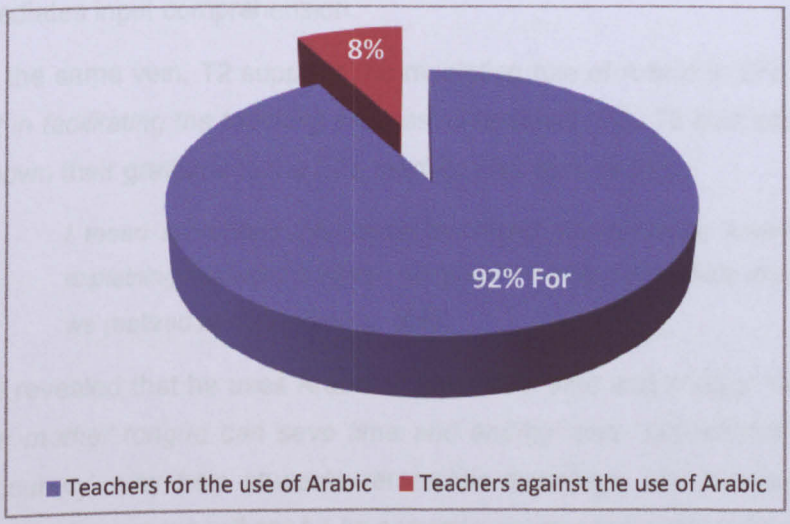

Figure 5.6 Teachers Attitudes (the final analysis) (N= 13)

5.4.2 EFL Teachers Use Arabic to Mediate the Teaching of Vocabulary and Grammar

Data from the teachers' interviews corroborate what was observed in their classes, and the majority of these teachers highlighted the important role that Arabic plays in explaining abstract vocabulary and concepts. This use of Arabic as a mediating pedagogical tool is essentially guided by the classroom reality that requires it. According to T1, 80% of the beginner students would require the use of Arabic to explain difficult vocabulary or abstract notions. He suggests that these '*students would prefer the use of 80% of the Arabic words for the difficult vocabulary and the difficult notions*' (Interviews, T1). This statement implies that beginners require help in order to gradually build up their inter-language and learner language (Ellis and Barkhuizen, 2005), which would eventually develop to shape their own versions of English. This could be achieved through the gradual increase of the amount of English vocabulary and structures in

addition to the decrease of the Arabic language components. This educational process is known as scaffolding that has already been explained in Chapter Two.

T3 reported that he uses Arabic in his EFL class primarily to ensure the *'comprehensibility'* of the EFL content he presents. His use of Arabic is determined by whether the input presented to the students *'is comprehensible or not, if it is not comprehensible and nothing helps, then* [he] *resort*[s] *to L1'* (Interviews, T3). He aims to make his instructions *'more comprehensible, more efficient and more effective', and* uses Arabic *'as a device or as a confirmatory device to check that the students have understood vocabulary and abstract concept'* (ibid). Arabic for this teacher facilitates EFL teaching and learning as it functions mainly as a pedagogical tool that mediates input comprehension.

In the same vein, T2 supports the mediating role of Arabic in EFL classes because it *'helps a lot in facilitating the teaching process'* (interviews, T2). T2 also added that students have often shown their gratitude to the EFL teacher who uses Arabic

> *I mean sometimes they come and thank you for using Arabic. They tell you thank you for explaining this word in Arabic we thought it meant something else but when you said it in Arabic, we realized its true meaning. (*ibid)

T6 revealed that he uses Arabic to save both time and energy. He suggested that *'the use of the mother tongue can save time and energy'* and argued that the use of Arabic to teach 'accuracy' may help students remember meanings, and warned that *'if we don't use the mother tongue we will not be as accurate as we want to be'* (Interviews, T6). He shared one of the instances where he struggled to explain a simple expression such as *'Who on earth are you?' 'I don't know Arabic very well so I took a long time to explain the expression. If I had known the relevant Arabic expression, that could have saved me time and energy'* (ibid). T10 corroborated this view stating that *'when explaining maxims, idioms or abstract terms, the mother language should be used'* (Interviews, T10). Equally, T2 suggested that Arabic may be used to explain the cultural differences between Arabic and English: *'with beginners, you can explain something if it is difficult. This may be cultural differences or something they don't understand' (Interviews, T2).*

Overall, the usefulness of Arabic as a mediating tool in EFL classes can't be stressed enough given that, as T9 put it, *'many students have got a problem understanding English because their level of proficiency is not that good. So they need the use of Arabic because it helps a lot'* (Interviews, T9). T10 believes that Arabic could be used mostly for *'vocabulary, abstract terms and maxims or idioms sometimes' (interviews, T10).* He also reported that Arabic facilitates the

interaction among students and added that such interaction is part of the set-up he devises in order to get the smarter students to assist the weak ones:

> *I get the 'smarter students to help the weaker ones, then of course there is Arabic exchange. When I go for mixing the students for any pair work assignments, I observe some exchange of Arabic; the smarter one trying to lead his classmates. (Interviews, T10)*

Data from the teachers' interviews also suggest that one of the reasons behind the students use of Arabic is to seek help from each other, which could be attributed to the fact that Arabic is one of these students' learning strategies and a conduit through which they seem to prefer to learn:

> *These students tend to communicate everything in Arabic, whether it's in class asking for details from friends etc. Sometimes one word in Arabic goes a long way in kind of explaining the whole matter. So it's really worthwhile using Arabic now and then, of course within limitations.* (Interviews, T11)

In the following statement, T6 describes how his students make use of Arabic as a learning strategy and how efficient he thinks that strategy is:

> *The students make use of their mother tongue. I noticed that when students ask for meanings of English words, they do it in Arabic. When they come across a structure, they ask their friends to explain that structure in Arabic. And I have realized that when they get the explanation through their friends, they understand. (Interviews, T6)*

Teachers have as well reported that they realised the efficiency of the students' use of Arabic in promoting collaborative learning and have therefore encouraged the top achievers in their classes to assist the weak ones. As a case in point, T7 acknowledged that he gets *'the strong students to translate to the poor ones'* (Interviews, T7). This teacher also stated that he turns this translation exercise into a productive learning activity: *'I would have the good students translate to the weaker ones, and then I would have the weaker ones translate it for me'* (Ibid). Sometimes, the initiative to make use of Arabic for collaborative learning comes from the students themselves: '*Yes they need vocabulary so the weak ones ask the good ones, and they sometimes ask questions' (ibid).*

Participant EFL teachers similarly reported that the use of Arabic is useful in explaining instructions in the class and during classroom-based tasks, quizzes and examinations. T2 explained that the use of Arabic serves to explain instructions especially with beginners where teachers need to make sure that their explanations and instructions are understood:

Sometimes I need to make sure that the instructions I gave the students are clear, and it happened to me many times. I instructed students to do one type of tasks or activity and many students didn't understand these instructions. This is why it's very important when giving instructions to be very clear, and sometimes I have to use Arabic. (Interview, T2)

T3 concurred with this view and indicated that he usually makes use of Arabic to explain instructions and vocabulary:

I use Arabic for two things, to make instructions clear when the students don't understand my instructions. I ask a student to translate them or I use some vocabulary from Arabic to make it comprehensible. I also use it for vocabulary, abstract vocabulary, if they do not understand it. At times, some vocabulary come up for which I do not have any visual thing to show, then I just use the word in Arabic. (Interviews, T3)

T4 as well stressed the importance of making the instructions clear, and shared an experience to illustrate how a lack of comprehension would result in the students' confusion regarding the teacher's instructions:

There was an activity in the book and I told them this is a class assignment and I am going to mark it now, and there was no reaction no response at all because they did not know the word assignment. They did not know the word mark and they did not know that I was going to record those marks for their assessment. So I had to explain this. The use of Arabic is unavoidable in that case. (Interviews, T4)

In the same vein, T11 suggests that the instructions for quizzes and examinations need to be translated into Arabic:

Sometimes even to explain the questions, when it comes to concept checking for example you ask a question and you find them all looking at you with kind of blank faces. So you explain it in Arabic to see if they really understood the question. I noticed this even during the exam, other students 'the ESP students', were asking us to explain questions for Math. So, once that was explained in Arabic, they immediately opened up and they started to understand what the question was about. (Interviews, T11)

In fact, the use of 'English only' with these students can result in a total misunderstanding, and in one student's case this policy resulted in him missing his exam:

I honestly wish that those who teach English 001 and English 002 could speak Arabic and use it when the need arises. I came for an exam and the teacher started talking to me but I didn't understand what he was saying. I learned later that I had missed the date of the exam and I had to re-sit it unprepared. We suffer a lot because of teachers who do not understand or speak

Arabic, needless to say that I failed that exam because the teacher did not convey his message in a language I could understand. (SC, S70)

The statement above summarizes the attitudes of the participants who promote the usefulness of Arabic in facilitating comprehension. Students need not only understand the meaning of a word or a notion, but they also need to understand instructions and any other information relevant to their studies. They need to use Arabic to understand not only the word but the world as well (Freire, 1970).

5.4.3 Teachers Use Arabic to Mediate their Students' Psychological Well-being

The importance of attending to the learner's psychological well-being through the use of Arabic has also emerged as one of the significant roles this language plays in mediating the EFL teaching-learning activity. Participants have reported that the use of Arabic plays a role in making students feel welcome, helps them relax, increases their motivation and makes them feel part of the EFL class community. The body of evidence collected by this research indicates that Arabic mediates EFL learning, through the creation of an environment that is conducive to learning and through ensuring students' psychological well-being.

For instance, a student commented that the use of Arabic helps learners relax as *'it alleviates the stress under which the student finds himself in especially at the beginning of the program, as he finds himself in a new world' (SC, S66).* The use of Arabic in this context makes students feel welcome and contributes to building a degree of trust between the students and their teachers. Some students may feel that *'there is a lack of trust. The use of Arabic helps us communicate with the teachers and avoid mistakes we made in the past' (SC, S115).* Equally, the use of Arabic makes the students aware of what is happening around them in the classroom, they feel involved and included. Besides, the use of Arabic allows the student to *'get the right picture about what is happening in the classroom in relation to his classmates and in relation to his teacher' (SC, S49).*

This understanding of what goes on in the classroom can also be mediated through the students/teacher interactions, and the use of Arabic *'is useful for interaction' (SC, S54).* As a matter of fact, *'Arabic could be used to talk to the teacher about problems that the students cannot explain in English'* (SC, S58). Inter-students' interactions as well can be facilitated through the use of Arabic seeing that students use it to help each other. A student commented that 'Arabic *could be useful for students to help each other and explain instructions' (SC, S51).* Class interactions, which could mostly be mediated only through the use of Arabic, are significant and necessary educational and socio-cultural activities that enhance EFL learning.

Data gathered from class observations indicate that Arabic is sometimes used by teachers to build rapport with their students. For instance, T10 repeatedly used the Arabic word *'ya'ni'*, which means *'meaning'* or *'that is to say'*, as his way of building rapport with the students (CO, T10). In the same manner, T4 used the Arabic phrase *'yashabaab'* to mean *'come on boys'* (CO, T4) in order to motivate his students and build rapport with them. This teacher also used the word *'shabbab'* or *'boys'* to call on the attention of his students and make them feel that he is one of them. T6 too used Arabic to establish rapport with one of his students as the following exchange shows.

Sc: Finish
T6: Finished?
Sc: Finish
T6: Masha Allah! Mabrouk! (This is the will of Allah. Congratulations!)
Sc: Baraka Allahu feek. (May Allah bless you!)

In addition, it was observed that the use of Arabic created a positive ambiance and facilitated interactions between EFL teachers and their students. This observation is consistent with what the EFL teachers reported in their interviews; that Arabic plays an important role in attending to the psychological aspects of their EFL learners. Arabic in T1's opinion is a must for beginners as it motivates them and facilitates their inclusion and involvement in the class.

> *If you are teaching low level students in a low maximizing level of English environment in an Arab country or in an Arabic context, if you are teaching the primary level of students, you need to adhere their audience or motivation by using Arabic at the beginning as a way to motivate them to understand what you are saying.* (Interviews, T1)

The majority of the teachers support the use of Arabic in their classes because they believe that this practice can motivate the students. Other teachers like T1 do so because they are aware of the students' hostility towards the teachers who use 'English only':

> *There is a tendency of hostility towards the teachers who use 'English only'. Students see it as a statement of authority from teachers who use pompous words and within five or ten minutes in the class, they will lose the whole attention to the teacher. So the way to hold the students attention and get them to learn the language and even to give them a nice feeling towards English I would say, the use of Arabic is essential in our context and I stress in our context.* (ibid)

Along the same lines, T3 pointed out that the use of Arabic makes his students feel comfortable mainly because it improves their comprehension. At the same time the practice

reassures the teacher who uses it as a feedback devise:

> *It makes them comfortable right? It makes their comprehension better. They don't have to always beat around the bush for not understanding the target language. It makes it easy for them to swallow. At the same time for me it's a feedback device. I say something; I am not sure if they understood it or not as I ask them if they understood it in Arabic. And as I said, I have little knowledge of Arabic, so it gives me a sort of feedback whether they understood it or not.* (Interviews, T3)

Based on the statement above, comprehension seems to contribute to the students' good feelings and focus. T8 reported that when Arabic is used, his students understand and appear to have found their learning track:

> *It helps them to understand the English meanings, the meanings of English words. When you don't use Arabic, it's a kind of a mess to them. They feel like they are lost. But when you use Arabic, it helps them to understand the main idea of the class.* (Interviews, T8)

In addition, students' relaxation and their sense of belonging may contribute to increasing the level of students' motivation. T7 reported that when his students understand, their body language changes to reflect relief. He commented that *'somehow it's a motivational thing for them. You can see on the faces of the poor ones, ah! That's it! I got it'.* (Interviews, T7).

IT was also reported that the use of Arabic helps in breaking the monotony of the class by creating a relaxed learning atmosphere. T4 for instance reported that he uses Arabic purposefully to change the class atmosphere, especially when he feels that the students are lost:

> *Sometimes I feel that the students are lost; they cannot understand, and they are not with me anymore. In that case I keep this bilingual dictionary with me all the time and directly look for the translation of the word, write it on the board or tell them and they get it and I can see on their faces that they are relieved because they understand. (Interviews, T4)*

T4 provided examples of words and expressions he often uses to build rapport with his students, when the class atmosphere gets tense or just to change the mood. He usually resorts to the student's code and the use varying tones of voice to show them that he is one of them, and that he understands their world view:

> *Sometimes, I use Arabic just for a change, just to break the monotony, just to have fun you know. So when I am going to finish my class I would say: 'Shanaghna ya shabaab?'* (Shall we go boys?), *and they would laugh. Shagahna means let's go. Sometimes during the class I feel that things are getting a bit boring and monotonous; I would say 'Agool Lakom Ya Shabaab'* [I

tell you boys (in a tone of voice that is full of suspense)] *and everybody will have a smile on their face, and you know it facilitates learning and that is the basic purpose and that's the main idea.* (ibid)

EFL teachers have also stressed that the lack of motivation in their classes is a hurdle they have to deal with on a daily basis. Similar to what the statement above illustrates, most of them have realised that the use of Arabic facilitates comprehension and therefore motivates students. T10 summarised the reasons behind the use of Arabic in his EFL class in one word: '*Motivation. That is my ultimate end towards this issue. It helps them become more vibrant you know? More responsive I guess, they come up with something, you know?' (Interviews, T10).* This teacher elaborated on his statement using an example of one of his students and how he improved with the help of a few words of Arabic:

> *Well, usually I have seen... and I am very confident that it results in much greater motivation on the part of the students. And I have a very good example I have observed one of my students, believe me, sometimes frankly speaking I shouted my head off you know, just to make him speak a single word. Then ... I started using a limited amounts of Arabic, believe me today he came up with two answers... He volunteered, and his performance in the quiz was much better I just encouraged him with one or two words in Arabic. (ibid)*

On the other hand, T6 who argued as well that the use of Arabic serves as a motivational tool in his class warned that the lack of comprehension can lead to students' de-motivation in the same way that comprehension helps enhance their motivation:

> *I think that it motivates them; it brings them back. When you are teaching a group of students who don't understand you, this leads to de-motivation. When they feel that they have not understood what the teacher is saying, they get distracted. But again if you give them the tread of what you are teaching, they get back on track. They get motivated again.* (Interviews, T6)

T4 considers that the use of Arabic does not only enhance the students' performance and motivation, but it could also serve as a source of job satisfaction for some teachers. He stated that he feels satisfied when his students understand, suggesting that such feeling is reciprocal:

> *When I look at their faces, I feel they understand. And later activities consolidate and reinforce that they really understand when I translate it or when I ask one of the bright boys to explain it in Arabic. That gives me satisfaction and I feel this worked, it really worked, and sometimes as I told you some of these terminologies, just for fun, some expressions here and there it realty work.* (Interviews, T4)

5.5 Policy Makers Endorse the Use of Arabic to Mediate the EFL Teaching-Learning Activity

As far as the policy makers are concerned, the results obtained seem to contradict the widespread belief that management in the college strictly advocates the 'English only' policy. In response to the question 'what is your attitude towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes?', it transpired as Table 5.6 below shows that two out of the three policy makers interviewed support the use of Arabic to maximise the students' EFL learning. These positive attitudes towards the practice emerged repeatedly during the interviews with two of the policy makers. However, the third maintained his opposition to the use of Arabic in any class, and above all in EFL classes.

Table 5.6 Policy Makers' Attitudes toward the Use of Arabic in EFL Classes

Attitude	Number of Policy Makers
Policy makers for the use of Arabic in EFL classes	2
Policy makers against the use of Arabic in EFL classes	1

It seems that the majority of the policy makers share the students' and teachers views and acknowledge the important role of Arabic as a useful mediating artefact to the EFL teaching-learning activity. They accept that Arabic usage is necessary to explain difficult vocabulary and/or words that can't otherwise be explained in English. PM3 explains that '*there are some areas like vocabulary where the mother tongue might actually be quite useful and efficient in explaining words which cannot be acted, for example some abstract words*' (Interviews, PM3). Embracing the same attitude, PM2 suggests that Arabic could be used to explain difficult concepts and terminology in content subjects as well. Although the example he provided does not relate directly to EFL classes, the suggestion that Arabic plays a role in mediating the comprehension of English terms remains valid:

> *In physics for example, it would be useful to use it* [Arabic] *to teach about the concept, ok? If you think that the students are no more with you, following you, I think you can help them by providing the translation of some of the terms...may be the student may get confused if the word is not translated into Arabic.* (Interviews, PM2)

Uncovering that the policy makers acknowledge the usefulness of Arabic as a pedagogical tool that mediates the EFL teaching-learning activity came as a surprise to the researcher, given the widespread belief among teachers that the policy makers in the college promote a stringent 'English only' policy. However, the discovered positive attitude is conditioned by a caution for a

limited use of Arabic to mediate EFL learning and only in the early stages of the English preparatory year program.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the data that was collected to define the role of Arabic in EFL classes, and thus provides an answer to the main question of this research. It has also introduced a quantitative data analysis to determine the attitudes of the participants towards this practice. In the beginning of the chapter, I started by presenting the data that show that the majority of the participants are in support of the use of Arabic in EFL classes, then the data answer the question related to the role of Arabic as a useful and necessary pedagogical tool that mediates the EFL teaching-learning activity. The relevant data suggests that Arabic is used by both teachers and students to mediate EFL learning through facilitating input comprehension, enhancing collaborative learning, explaining instructions and to create rapport and ensure the students' well-being. The findings also suggest that preparatory year students require the use of Arabic in their EFL classes because it is one of their learning strategies. Finally, the policy makers support this pedagogical practice, but restrict it to the early weeks of the preparatory English program where it should only be used in small amounts and for a very limited period of time. Table 5.7 below summarizes the mediating role of Arabic in EFL classes.

Table 5.7 The mediating role of Arabic in EFL classes

The role of Arabic in EFL teaching	The role of Arabic in EFL learning
1- Teachers use Arabic as a pedagogical tool to: • explain vocabulary, grammar and idioms • build rapport and attend to the psychological well-being of the students (motivation and relaxation) • make their teaching efficient and save time • promote collaborative learning • explain instructions • create interaction in their classes • use the students prior knowledge	2- Students use Arabic as a learning strategy to: • mediate their learning • translate difficult, abstract words and instructions into Arabic • collaborate and seek each other's' help during pair or group work • explain instructions and interact with each other 3- Policy Makers support a limited use of Arabic with beginners to: • Facilitate and maximize EFL learning

Chapter Six that follows discusses the data that suggests the role of Arabic as a learning expansion tool in EFL classes.

Chapter Six

The Use of Arabic as a Learning Expansion Artefact

6.1 Introduction

Data collected by this research does not only suggest that Arabic is a mediating tool that facilitates the teaching-learning activity in EFL classes, it also indicates that the use of Arabic plays a significant role as an expansion artefact that allows EFL learning to develop through the use of old knowledge (Arabic) that serves as a scaffold upon which new knowledge (English) is built. In addition, the findings suggest that Arabic is used not only to mediate comprehension, but to facilitate 'knowledge creation, participation and knowledge acquisition' as well (e.g. Hakkarainen, Palonen and Paavola, 2002; Paavola, Lipponen, and Hakkarainen, 2004; Hakkarainen, Palonen, Paavola, and Lehtinen, 2004). In a language class, these three learning principles are in themselves activities that presuppose socio-cultural interactions between teachers and students, and students and their peers in order to mediate and expand learning. As a matter of fact, the findings of the present research suggest that Arabic is used in the EFL teaching-learning activity as an artefact that facilitates the expansion of EFL learning. This seems to fall in line with Vygotsky's view that tools grounded in a specific social and cultural settings mediate the human activities taking place in that same context (Ashton, 1996).

The notion of expansive learning was introduced by Engeström (1987) to describe the process through which learners acquire something that does not exist yet. This constitutes the starting point of true learning. For Engeström, expansive learning involves expanding the goal and the scope of the learning activity itself (ibid). Expansion of learning involves learning development and knowledge creation, which requires the use of some sort of outside help by learners to progress from what is known to what is unknown. Vygotsky referred to this process of helping learners to progress through their development as ZPD; which he defined as 'the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (1978, p.86). The external help in the case of this research is provided by teachers and other students through the use of Arabic as a medium. In addition, the principle of learning expansion cannot easily be disentangled from mediation of learning. This would explain why the data used for learning mediation also seems to be valid evidence that supports the use of Arabic as a learning expansion tool in EFL classes.

To illustrate the notion of learning expansion, the observed instances cited in Chapter Five

where weak students received assistance from their more proficient peers who explained tasks instructions, their teacher's explanations or word meanings in Arabic for them are examples of both learning mediation and learning expansion. Learning mediation would be the immediate result of the explanation received; whereas learning expansion occurs when the weak students use this learning to execute the task which they would not be able to perform without their peers' help. This scenario seems to be in line with Vygotsky's definition of ZPD cited earlier in this chapter. At the same time, Knowledge is also created during the learning process described here by both classes of students. On one hand, the more proficient students are learning a new skill of teaching others; and on the other hand, the weak ones are gaining knew knowledge and are learning new learning strategies as well. In fact, when students' prior knowledge that exists mostly in Arabic (for the participants of this research) is capitalised on and used to solve a writing task or perform a speaking assignment, this results in learning expansion through progressing from a basic knowledge level to a higher order one. EFL teachers often reported in their interviews the instances where students sought each other's help through Arabic and how that helped them to solve the assigned task. Had there been no external support, the students' learning may not have progressed and developed. These instances reported by teacher participants are cited below as illustrations of learning expansion.

6.2 The Use of Arabic as a Scaffolding Tool to Expand EFL Learning

Class observations have revealed that Arabic is used by teachers as well as students to facilitate learning progress and development in their EFL classes. Arabic is therefore used as a learning expansion tool. Seen through the AT lens, EFL classroom interactions between teachers and students and students and students result in the transformation of the EFL learning activity through the expansion of learning beyond basic comprehension, through progressing to higher-order learning. While learning expansion presupposes the use of the students' prior learning to acquire new and sometimes advanced knowledge, learning and learning expansion are two inseparable processes of the same continuum. For instance, the translation of key words can open the door for learning to take place, as it can also cause learning progress at the same time. For instance, students may these words to understand more challenging sentences.

A student attributed this to the fact that 'some *words are not clear in English and require to be translated into Arabic' (SC, S4),* and also because '*the use of Arabic helps in remembering English vocabulary' (SC, S6).* Vocabulary is a key language component required for students'

interaction and communication, and conducive to language learning expansion. Through its facilitation of the comprehension of vocabulary, Arabic plays a scaffolding role in EFL classes as *'most students are weak in English' (SC, S8)* and therefore require the use of their prior learning to help their learning of English. For this reason, it was proposed that foreign language teachers are required to pay attention not only to the L2 input but also to the students' prior knowledge (Lantolf, 2000a, p. 80).

As well, it has been observed in the visited classrooms that a close relationship exists between the mediation of learning and its expansion. This fine line that seems to separate the two distinct yet complementary stages of learning makes it at times hard to define where learning mediation stops and where learning expansion starts. This is so because both processes may take place interchangeably or simultaneously. A student commented in this regard that '*the use of Arabic makes students love the subject and understand their teacher. They understand the rules and know-how to use them'* (SC, S16). While understanding rules would be perceived as a mediation of learning, knowing how to use them could be interpreted as learning expansion. As a case in point, the use of Arabic as a teaching tool during the first weeks of EFL learning could be described as a learning scaffold, which may be reduced gradually; as one student explained that '*in the first weeks, we need some Arabic for a limited period of time. After that, it won't be needed anymore' (SC, S 82).* Another student added that this assistance provided through Arabic '*may be used in varying degrees according to the learning stages and levels of the students'* (SC, S88).

It also emerged from the collected data that students have realized that Arabic can help their learning as it allows them to draw on their past learning experiences. A student commented that most of his classmates 'need *some Arabic to help* [them] *learn English'* (SC, S92) because they are aware that their foundation in English is *'very poor'* and that *'some Arabic needs to be used'* (SC, S103). In fact, most students in the preparatory year program *'are not used to the 'English only' approach. They should be weaned off Arabic gradually'* (SC, S108). This statement could be taken to imply that the use of Arabic is required in the early stages of EFL education in order to build the students' foundation in English.

This point was highlighted once more by a student who commented that some use of Arabic '*is necessary for the preparatory year students so as their teacher can understand them'*. For instance, students could use Arabic to ask questions, which constitute a necessary tool to expand their learning and to acquire further knowledge. In fact, a student indicated that '*Arabic is useful for interaction'* (SC, S54) emphasising the socio-cultural and interactional approach to

learning which maintains that language learning is facilitated and sustained through interactions within a social context (Vygotsky, 1978), which could take the form of questions and conversations. In the context of a language classroom, teachers are expected to provide appropriate support, guidance, and scaffolding to empower their students to learn the target language (ibid). In the case of this research, EFL teachers provide this support and empowerment through using or allowing the use of Arabic in their classes.

Another student commented that it is difficult for Saudi students to learn English if only English is used and suggested that Arabic should be used as a pedagogical tool to support the learning of this language. He explained that '*Saudi students have always found it difficult to learn English. If only English is used it would be even more difficult. In my opinion, only preparatory year students may use Arabic as they are still beginners*' (SC, S111). Another student commented that the use of Arabic would render the learning of English more accessible, but 'when *only English is used we don't understand much and we can't ask anything at all*' (SC, S115). Other students argued that when Arabic is used, students *'learn and remember' (SC, S35; S4; S104; S116).*

It has already been mentioned in Chapter Five that the use of Arabic helps students to relax and feel welcome. In fact students' relaxation in the EFL classes would result in development and expansion of learning, for *'Arabic is useful in facilitating the learning of English as it alleviates the stress under which the student finds himself, especially at the beginning of the academic year where he finds himself in a new world' (SC, S66).*

In their interviews, policy makers referred as well to the role of Arabic as a learning expansion tool and highlighted the role of Arabic in building students' foundation in English; suggesting that a beginners' course that makes use of Arabic as a pedagogical tool to maximise EFL learning needs to be introduced:

> *A course, an introductory course to teach the students how to communicate, how to ask a question, how to answer a question; what are the meanings of the most common communication words. That way it will be easier for them to get more learning outcomes in the future.* (Interviews, PM1)

In other words, a course that makes use of Arabic will allow students to build the foundation required for progressing along their learning route. PM1 suggested that the implementation of a policy that promotes the use of Arabic as a tool that supports learning should be substantiated by research evidence and followed by a piloting phase. He clarified that this policy has to be

developed in a scientific way and to come up with an idea, I know it will not be perfect but at least there will be less negative results from it... We have to go by scientific research and come up with an idea... then after piloting we may change, add or delete some of it but finally we will arrive to a very well established policy to be used, because the result will be positive and our students will benefit from that. (ibid)

As far as the EFL teachers are concerned, they are of the view that Arabic supports the cognitive and affective growth of their students and contributes to developing their learning. Arabic is viewed as a tool that assist students in acquiring advanced knowledge through discerning meaning, and expressing their ideas. This conviction seems to be informed by the teachers' awareness of their students' individual learning differences. It also acknowledges the importance of the students' prior knowledge that is present only through the Arabic language.

In order to help their students to progress from one learning stage to another, EFL teachers use and allow the use of Arabic when the students' comprehension is not achieved through the use of 'English only'. Arabic in these instances is used by the teachers and students alike as a scaffold to help the EFL learning progress and expansion. As a case in point, T2 acknowledged that while his students often *'use Arabic in explaining abstract lexical items' (interviews, T2).* T2 sees Arabic as the magic solution when everything else stops working: *'when I feel that the students find it hard to grasp the concept and I tried my best already, I translate or give the Arabic equivalent'* (ibid).

Other teachers reported that they use Arabic as a communication scaffold to allow the students to express themselves, especially when they run out of English words during a conversation. T2 for instance explained that students resort to Arabic to complete their utterances and push the conversation forward: '*When they can't express themselves in English, they tend to use Arabic in classes. When I ask a student to express himself on any topic, if it goes in the right direction he goes on using English; when that fails, he uses Arabic'*. In addition, when a student *'does not understand, he asks his neighbour using the Arabic language'* (ibid).

The use of Arabic in EFL classes for T9 plays an essential role in learning transformation and progress as students who feel comfortable enough to receive help form their peers can use it to ask each other for more help. This teacher reported that his students use Arabic '*amongst each other. Sometimes they are shy to ask the teacher about certain words, so they ask their peers, their friends in the class. They find it more convenient to ask a friend'* (Interviews, T9). This practice is corroborated by T3 who related that he sometimes asks the more competent students to explain or translate to the rest of the class the instructions into Arabic: *'Sometimes,*

when the students don't understand my instructions, I ask a student to translate them or I use some vocabulary from Arabic to make it comprehensible' (Interviews, T3).

Classroom practices such as the one described above could be taken as illustrative of the various instances where the use of Arabic is employed as a tool to expand learning in EFL classes. Such practice aims to allow EFL students to progress with their learning through interacting and reacting positively to the tasks and activities assigned in the class. In fact, activities and tasks could be conducive to long-lasting learning as they afford the students the opportunity to learn through doing and through putting their knowledge into practice. In order for these students to get on with the assigned activities and tasks, they first need to understand the instructions to know what is required of them. The use of Arabic fulfils this pedagogical role as the following statement by T3 explains:

> *For example when they are given a task, they talk to each other. Not all students understand; a student will still need some instructions and English is not going to help him, then I hand him over to a student who can help in L1 to understand what the lesson is about, what the grammatical points are. For most of the time in my class they are using it for the lesson.* (ibid)

A more vivid example of the role of Arabic as a tool that expands EFL learning is illustrated by the following case where a student used Arabic to explain new concepts such as democracy and elections to his classmate:

> *I was trying to explain to them the concept of voting and democracy, and initially I spent about a minute explaining and they did not understand anything. Then one student just said one word, Alintikhabaat* [elections], *and everybody understood what he meant. So I wasted one minute which I could have saved and moved on to another item.* (ibid)

The use of Arabic in EFL classes entails taking into consideration the students' past learning experiences, learning strategies, learning styles and learning habits as well. Data collected by this research suggest that Arabic does in fact play a significant role in EFL classes as it allows EFL teachers to capitalise on students' available learning experiences, styles and strategies. Most EFL teachers in this research adopted an approach that makes use of Arabic as a pedagogical tool and that deals with the students as learners with engrained learning habits, styles and strategies that need to be taken into consideration and built on to ensure a degree of learning development and expansion.

For EFL teachers who constantly experience the difficulty to teach English as a foreign language to beginners and false beginners, Arabic is more than a mere teaching tool used to explain abstract words and concepts. Arabic for these teachers also serves as a conduit for the

students' prior knowledge to mediate the EFL classes. Thus, Arabic provides a scaffold or a Language Acquisition Support System (Lass) (Bruner, 1983) that facilitates learning and helps it progress and expand. T3 sums up this point:

> [Arabic] *has an impact on learning and it's an undeniable fact that at the same time a sort of device which links the new knowledge to the previous knowledge, the knowledge that is already there in the students' minds in their first language. So you can build on the previous knowledge and create new Knowledge.* (Interviews, T3)

By the same token, T11 views that the use of Arabic in EFL classes empowers the weak students since it allows them to follow what goes on in the classroom:

> *I think it really empowers them to a certain degree because some students are more learned in a way than others. So it puts them in the picture as well so they don't feel 'oh how stupid I am! I really can't follow I don't understand a word you're saying'. So the moment you kind of nudge them a little bit with the use of an Arabic word it puts them in the picture and makes them more active and makes them feel that they are not stupid.* (Interviews, T11)

T10 as well considers that the use of Arabic in EFL classes unavoidable with the students in the preparatory year program. This is so because Arabic is engrained in the students learning styles as part of their learning strategies:

> *Sometimes weak students need help when there is a striking contrast in the levels that you are handling. I advocate zero use of L1 when there is no need. I guess it's the level of the students first, and second when the use of L1 is so engrained, it's too engrained to be overlooked.* (Interviews, T10)

To illustrate this role of Arabic, T3 related an example from his class on how the use of Arabic actually contributes not only to comprehension but to learning development as well:

> *...this morning for example, I was trying to tell them that all our actions are based on time but they were unable to understand me. Then I asked them a question and asked a student to translate it into Arabic, they answered it in Arabic then I changed the tense to show how all our actions are based in time and if we use the wrong time, the meanings are wrong or they change. So I made use of Arabic to make them understand this concept.* (Interviews, T3)

The statement above is a good example of how teachers use Arabic to relate the new knowledge to the old one. The teacher used the tense concept in Arabic to teach the relationship between tense choice and meaning in English This facilitates both teaching and learning, but most of all it serves as a scaffold that students can use to progress to the next level of learning.

6.3 Arabic as a Tool to Expand EFL Learning

Evidence in support of the role of Arabic as a pedagogical tool that helps to expand EFL learning was observed in the visited classes in a more or less the same manner described by the teachers in their interviews or by the students in their comments. It was also observed that instances of learning mediation and learning expansion were not that easily discernible as they seem to be very closely linked and run alongside each other along the learning continuum.

In most observed classes, it was noted that students used Arabic to communicate with each other, except in those instances where their teachers directed them to use English. In addition, the EFL teachers who don't speak Arabic allowed its use through their bright students; whenever they thought that such use would facilitate the EFL teaching-learning. In one observed class, the teacher drew my attention to the fact that the students were using bilingual dictionaries (CO, T3). The students felt the need to translate some words into Arabic in order to understand their meaning. This practice also allows the students to help each other as they collaborate and learn from each other in order to expand their EFL learning. This type of interaction leads to the cognitive development of individual learners. (Vygotsky, 1978) proposed that individual cognitive development is generated through social interactions and by participating in socially meaningful activities. In the case of the students in this research, Arabic is the main tool through which they socialise and interact during the EFL classes.

In various other classes, it was recorded that peer assistance was achieved only through the use of Arabic which allowed the tasks and activities to move forward. Arabic also allowed the students to participate in the lesson and ask questions. However, in the few classes where no Arabic was allowed, students' interaction and proactivity was very limited. It would be safe to claim that the students who make use of Arabic in EFL classes to interact with each other seem to have taken agency of their learning and have become involved not only in individual learning but in collaborative learning development as well.

In fact, the findings of this research indicate that Arabic facilitates interactions and allows students to ask questions. These social activities are conducive to understanding, learning and learning expansion. To illustrate, T11 stated that he often observed his students' confusion reflected through their body language when they don't understand, but when Arabic was used, the students would open up as they understood the instructions or question:

> *When it comes to concept checking for example you ask a question and you find them all looking at you with kind of blank faces. Even if you try to explain that again they really won't*

understand you. So you explain it in Arabic to see if they really understood the question. Once that is explained in Arabic, they immediately opened up and they started to understand what the question was about. (Interviews, T11)

The role of Arabic as a learning expansive tool is demonstrated by its function in facilitating collaborative learning; through the students' use of Arabic to ask questions and to seek help from their classmates as T6's statement below explains:

The students make use of their mother tongue. I noticed that students don't ask for meanings in English, they ask for meanings in Arabic. When they come across a structure, they ask their friends to explain that structure in Arabic. And I have realized that when they get the explanation by their friends, they understand. They can grasp the idea. (Interview, T6)

The statement above depicts one of the instances of students-students interactions facilitated through the use of Arabic. According to T6, these interactions are essential for EFL learning to occur, develop and expand. The teacher elaborated that he also observed that his students used their learning techniques and strategies: '*Sometimes they try to use their own techniques of learning and they try to utilize the technique through which they learned their mother tongue at schools'* (Ibid). Arabic has often been reported to be one of these learning strategies and part of the students' learning styles, which they use in the EFL classes: *'These students are experienced in learning a language when they learned their mother tongue and at times they make use of that experience to learn English'* (ibid).

Arabic is therefore used by both teachers and students to instigate interactions and bring about students' motivation. These Interactions offer the students the opportunity to express themselves and therefore play a great role in learning development and expansion:

I get the help of smarter students to explain weird terms, abstract terms and you know this helps a lot in motivating mediocre students who failed to have any exposure whatsoever in their high school. And they have a kind of fright in coming up and talking about things in English in the target language. I have observed personally that it has brought up a hell of a change. (Interviews, T 10)

T10 commented further that students' participation and interactions become noticeable only when Arabic is used to explain vocabulary; would abler students then act as assistant teachers during pair or group work where top achievers are placed alongside weaker ones to promote collaborative learning, or when a teacher encourages the use of both English and Arabic so that weaker students feel part of the class community:

I get the 'smarter' students to help the weaker ones, and then of course there is Arabic

exchange... when I go for mixing the students for any pair work assignments then I observe there is some exchange of Arabic, the smarter one trying to lead his classmate... when the teacher encourages some code switching, then supposedly the weaker students do not feel that the teacher is directing them all the time. (ibid)

6.4 Learning Expansion as Knowledge Creation

The discussion presented in this chapter suggests that knowledge is mediated through the use of Arabic; it also suggests that Arabic could help in creating knowledge in EFL classes. While mediation is linked to learning, expansion could be associated with knowledge and knowledge creation.

Learning expansion is often confused with learning itself. However, learning expansion transcends the linear basic input based learning that consists of internalising content. Learning expansion, on the other hand, consists of using the available knowledge to acquire higher order knowledge. In so doing, learning expansion also creates new knowledge in the form of experience of how to achieve this intellectual transition. Learning by expansion is defined as a '*thoughtfully mastered learning activity*' (Engeström, 1987, p 210). The definition is not that different from Vygostky's ZPD as Engeström himself admits: '*In Activity-theoretical terms, activity systems travel through zones of proximal development..., a terrain of constant ambivalence, struggle, and surprise*' (Engeström, 1999c, p 90). Through these ambivalences, struggles, and learning occurs new knowledge of how to deal with these challenges, and that process in itself is knowledge creation through learning expansion.

Learning expansion is also the transformation of the already available knowledge in order to achieve advanced learning (Engeström et al, 2003). The use of Arabic in this research as a pedagogical tool that helps in expanding EFL learning is an example of the use of available knowledge to transcend to a higher level of learning. This process takes two distinct yet complementary forms; one is social and interactional, the other is individual and autonomous.

Participant students in this research join EFL classes after having completed their high school education. They start these classes with the knowledge accrued over the twelve years they have spent studying. This prior learning is available in Arabic and by allowing them to make use of Arabic in their EFL classes; EFL teachers also allow them to use their prior learning. This opportunity opens up new horizons for the students who feel empowered and recognized. As individual learners, the students cognitively fall back and draw on their previously acquired knowledge available to them in Arabic to learn English. This illustrates how learning expansion is achieved through the transformation of the pre-acquired knowledge. In short, these students

create new knowledge by learning English with the help of Arabic. This cognitive process is not only confined to the individual learners and results in autonomous and independent learning, it also takes a social form through collaborative learning.

In the observed EFL classes, students often used Arabic to offer assistance to their peers, through explaining new words and instructions, or through helping with the assigned tasks and activities. This assistance engenders interactions usually facilitated through Arabic and aims at helping the weak students to progress from one stage of learning to another that is slightly higher. In other words students help their peers to progress through their zones of proximal development. From an AT perspective, these students assist their peers through the use of the available tools/knowledge (Arabic) to expand their EFL learning. It could safely be argues that through these processes of learning expansion facilitated by the use of Arabic new knowledge is created as result of the students-students interactions.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the evidence that suggest that Arabic plays a role in expanding learning in the EFL classes. I have indicated that learning mediation and learning expansion are two classroom based process that occur concurrently along the learning continuum. Then I introduced data that support the use of Arabic as a scaffold to EFL learning, as a tool that helps EFL students' progress through their ZPD, as an artifact that expands EFL learning, and as a medium that supports interactions in EFL classes. I have also argued that learning expansion results in knowledge creation, both at the individual and social level.

However, it is important to reiterate at this point what has already been mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that learning expansion in general and learning expansion in EFL classes in particular has not received enough attention. This could be attributed mainly to the fact that input learning often overshadows learning expansion. In fact, learning expansion would not be visible to the 'untrained eye'. This very point highlights further the usefulness of AT as a research tool to study classroom phenomena. The adoption of AT principles has allowed this research to uncover that which similar studies did not reveal.

The use of Arabic as a pedagogical tool that mediates EFL teaching-learning and also facilitates EFL learning expansion engenders a number of contradictions at various levels and stages of the EFL teaching-learning activity. The following chapter presents the section of data that supports the conclusion that the use of Arabic in EFL classes has also been found to be the source of a number of contradictions.

Chapter Seven

Arabic Use as a Source of Contradictions

7.1 Introduction

Any activity system involves the existence of contradictions (Engeström, 2001) or tensions (Nelson and Mi-kyung, 2001) within and between its main and sub-activities. Contradictions have been described as natural occurrences in learning and developmental settings that are required to instigate innovation and research endeavors (Engeström, 2001). The present study is an example of these research activities, and this chapter presents data related to the use of Arabic in EFL classes as a source of contradictions and shows that the participants displayed contradictory attitudes towards the use of Arabic as a pedagogical tool in EFL classes.

The issue of contradictions and tensions in education has not received enough attention from the research community (Murphy and Rodriguez-Manzanares, 2008; Russell and Schneiderheinze, 2005). As regards the issue of contradictions in relation to the use of Arabic in EFL teaching/learning activity, a survey of the literature did not yield any related study. However, a study that researched the use of Greek, as students' L1, to teach ESL as a source of complexities and contradictions in Cypriot schools is a study that seems relevant to the topic of the present research (Copland and Neokleous, 2010). The researchers observed four female teachers and their students in classes of one and half hours and also interviewed the teachers about their beliefs regarding the use of Greek in ESL classes. The findings suggest that the existence of complexities and contradictions in making decisions about L1 use in L2 classes as well as contradictions in the teachers beliefs. The authors propose the construct of guilt as a possible cause of these contradictions.

The current research too has uncovered that the presence of Arabic in EFL classes is a source of contradictions, that these contradictions are mostly reflected by the attitudes of the participants, by the inconsistency between policy and practice by some participants' lack of awareness. A substantial amount of evidence collected by this study suggests that contradictions exist between the college policy and the reality in the EFL classrooms, between the teachers' pedagogical approaches or instructional techniques and the students' learning styles, strategies and classroom practices, and also between the students' pedagogical, and learning needs and teachers' teaching practices. This chapter draws on the data emanating for the comments that the students wrote on their questionnaires, from the teachers and policy makers' interviews and on the notes generated through class observations and presents the

evidence that support the existence of these contradictions. Data emanating from the present study suggest that the contradictions in the participant's attitudes towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes could be attributed partly to the 'English only' policy adopted by the college, and partly to the negative attitudes developed by the stakeholders towards the practice. In fact, EFL teachers' attitudes displayed a lot of contradictions, and data related to these contradictions are explored in the following lines. This is followed by an analysis of the data relevant to the contradictions in the participants' attitudes, and finally the findings suggested by the data that support the contradictions in the attitudes of the policy makers are discussed.

A more detailed analysis of the 37% of the questionnaires by the students who expressed their opposition to the usage of Arabic in EFL classes revealed that only 3% of these participants find no use for this practice. The analysis illustrated by figure 7.1 below shows that 99% of the students have indicated that Arabic may have one use or another in the EFL classes. Their attitude of 'disagree' expressed as a response to question 1 (see appendix 5) was later mitigated as some of these students identified few uses for Arabic in their responses to questions 2 and 4.

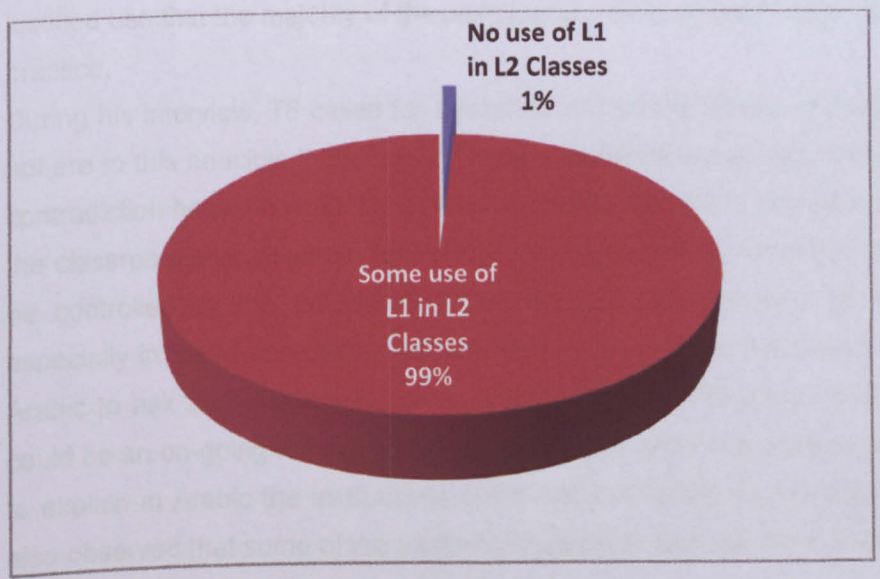

Figure 7.1 Students' Attitudes (the final analysis) (N=197)

Instances of similar discrepancies in attitudes are pervasive throughout this research and are symptomatic of the attitudes of the participants who are not properly informed about the possible role of Arabic in EFL classes. A better understanding of the declared attitudes of the students will only be achieved when the findings of the questionnaires are read in conjunction

with the other findings of this research. A portion of these findings is related to the attitudes of the 14 EFL teachers who took part in this research.

7.2 Inconsistency of attitudes and Behaviours as Sources of Contradictions

During the class observations undertaken for this research, many instances of contradictory behaviours in relation to the use of Arabic in EFL classes have been recorded. Most of these contradictions could be due to the lack of inconsistency in the participants' attitudes and behaviours. On one hand, these participants would subscribe to one position and later on express opinions in support of its opposite; on the other hand, they would state that they follow a certain practice only to contradict themselves in the classroom.

For instance, both the use and misuse of Arabic were witnessed in T6's class (CO, T6). Arabic in this class was used for learning /teaching purposes, mostly for comprehension (mediation), and also to move the task forward (expansion). However, it was also observed that Arabic was used by the students to socialise and talk about matters not related to the lesson. Arabic in T6's class was at times a source of hindrance to learning and contradicted the principled and justified use that the majority of the participants in this research have cited as a condition to the practice.

During his interview, T6 called for a justified and principled use of Arabic, however, he did not adhere to this principle in his class. There is evidence suggesting the existence of a degree of contradiction between what this particular teacher said in the interview and what he practiced in the classroom. For instance, he maintained during the interview that the use of Arabic should be controlled by the teacher and that the students shouldn't be allowed to use Arabic, especially in their interactions with the teacher. Yet, it was recorded that some students used Arabic to ask their teacher for pens, which could be understood to indicate that this request could be an on-going habit. In addition, during pair-work the teacher asked one of the students to explain in Arabic the instructions contained in the hand-out to the rest of the class. It was also observed that some of the students engaged in discussions in Arabic that were not related to the lesson.

During the interviews, the majority of the teachers participating in this research expressed their support to the use of Arabic in EFL classes. However, their attitudes were not very clear cut as they seemed contradictory. For instance, one of the teachers who initially stated that he does not think that Arabic is a 'sin' confessed later on: *'I am very strict with my students about the use of Arabic when they are expected to use English, I ask them to use 'English only"*

(Interviews, T2).

In a similar vein, Teacher 3 who stated that he would support the use of Arabic in EFL classes also admitted that, even though the students feel the need to use Arabic to seek help from their peers, he sometimes stops them:

> *I try to stop them obviously; I try to bring them back to the lesson. But as you know, classroom dynamics are there, some socializing is always going to happen. This time I have a lesser number of students so I can keep an eye on them. (Interviews, T3)*

These apparent contradictions could be explained by the fact that these teachers are keen to show that they would use or allow the use of Arabic only when it is beneficial to the students and that they would disallow it when it is not.

Few teachers were opposed to the use of Arabic in their EFL classes and implemented the exclusive use of English. Their attitudes however were ambiguous and contained contradictions. An example of these contradictory attitudes is epitomised by T7 who, at the start of his interview, stated that he was completely against the use of Arabic in EFL classes. However, he ended up admitting that some Arabic might be useful and that he sometimes makes use of some students to translate his explanations into Arabic for the rest of the class. This discrepancy between what foreign teachers say they do and what they actually do has already been reported in (Polio and Duff, 1994), where the authors reported that L2 teachers are not always aware of the extent of their use of L1 in their l2 classes. (Edstrom, 2009) also reported that *'language teachers often find that their perceptions of their classroom practice do not match up with what they usually do'* (p.9).

T7 also stated that he adopts an exclusive 'English only' approach in his classes as that was the way he had learned English himself: '*The way I learnt it and the way I am facilitating it... so, I go for English only ...English should be taught only in English.* (Interviews, T7). However, he contradicted himself later on and acknowledged that he uses few of his students to translate his explanations and instructions to their peers in Arabic:

> *I think somehow it helps that I utilize the good ones in order to translate this because I really extract the context of some of the listening material that we have in the book. Sometimes they carry on embedded humorous themes, which the beginners cannot grasp or catch. When this happens, I get the strong ones to translate to the poor ones.* (Interviews, T7)

He was asked whether that was his way of using Arabic, but he refuted the suggestion and stated: '*I am not saying it's a way for using it. Somehow it's a motivational thing for them. You*

can see on the faces of the poor ones: Ah! That's it! I got it' (Ibid).

The case of T7 is another example of contradictions that have been found between what teachers say they do and what they actually do in class (Edstrom, 2006). In fact, he stated from the start that he used 100% English in his classes; however, during the interview it transpired that he didn't actually stick to this principle. He was then asked whether in light of this contradiction he still believed that a purely 'English only' approach was practical and he replied:

> *It's not practical, it is possible but it is not realistic. Due to the level of the students, I try but still they don't understand. I feel I don't have a choice except asking the good ones to translate for the weak ones. I find the use of Arabic useful sometimes when necessary. (ibid)*

Data from the teachers' interviews also suggest that the extreme position maintained by those who oppose the use of Arabic in EFL classes was not informed by the reality in the EFL classroom. Rather it seemed to be based partly on common sense and partly on CLT's influence on ELT education and practitioners. The impact of the CLT on some teachers' attitudes could be illustrated by T5's case who reported that his students don't use Arabic because he would declare his 'English only' policy from the first day of class:

> *In fact mostly they don't, honestly speaking and from day 1 I take an oath from them. They solemnly declare that. In fact they solemnly declare that they will abide by this rule and they will speak only English as long as they are in the classroom.* (Interviews, T5)

The statement seems both unrealistic and extreme in light of what I heard from other teachers who took part in this research, and also based on what I observed in the classes I visited. Students in these classes are at the beginner and even elementary levels and require the use of Arabic mainly to render the EFL input comprehensible. Otherwise, the class will be quiet with little or no interaction. As a matter of fact, when T5 was asked questions related to what could be some of the possible uses of Arabic in EFL classes, he still acknowledged that *'if there is a stage when it's inevitable. Only then as a redressal it can be used. This is my opinion.'* (Ibid)

T6, on the other hand, suggested a mid-way solution which consists of barring only the students from using Arabic in the EFL classes while allowing the teachers to use it:

> *Well, I don't mind it until it is to a certain level, until a teacher uses it not the students. I think in a language teaching class only a teacher should be allowed to make a suitable use of the mother tongue.* (Interviews, T6)

He also stated that the use of the mother tongue to learn another language is '*not natural; it's an unnatural way of learning a language through mother tongue, through the excessive use of the mother tongue'* (Ibid). It is not clear why this teacher did not find the practice natural for the learners but deemed it permissible for the teachers. This is another case of contradiction caused by the teachers' unclear standpoint. In fact, it would not be possible to stop translation from going on in the students minds. Translation, as was seen in Chapter Five, is one of the EFL students' favourite learning strategies.

The policy makers too seem to hold contradictory attitudes towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes. The college where this research took place adopts the 'English only' policy that every staff member is expected to follow. Against this widespread belief, a policy maker denies the existence of such policy and explained that these are mere instructions to ensure that everybody uses English in their classroom and on campus:

> *There is no policy but there is a kind of instruction to motivate the teacher to speak English in the classroom because it is the medium of instruction in the college not only in the classroom but also inside the campus, to motivate all the faculty members and also the students to speak only English because it is the only environment for the students to practice their English. When they get out of college there is no such environment to practice what they have learned. It is not a policy it is a kind of instruction to motivate them to do so.* (Interviews, PM 1)

The above statement echoes the lack of exposure argument advanced by the students in support of their opposition to the use of Arabic in EFL classes. However, in what would seem contradictory to his stance mentioned above, this policy maker went on to state that Arabic may be used in EFL classes:

> *My view regarding this issue is that if we need to use Arabic, we should use it in the beginning for beginners and use it as a channel of communication with them but naturally if you don't force them to speak English they will go by default to their mother tongue because it is easier for them to understand than if you explain to them in English.* (ibid)

Another policy maker also denied the existence of a policy that forbids the use of Arabic in EFL classes. Still, he is of the opinion that Arabic shouldn't be used especially in the EFL classes:

> *Here, actually, I haven't read a policy that prevents teachers from speaking Arabic, but most probably it is not allowed. Teachers shouldn't be allowed to use Arabic, especially English teachers. Personally I am insisting on that. I am implementing this rule. I noticed that one of the teachers was using Arabic words to make it easy for the students; because these students come from high school with very poor English, so he thought that this would make life easy for them*

and therefore used some Arabic words. Sometimes, he was going beyond that, he was transferring the entire lecture into Arabic. When I noticed that actually, I talked to him very clearly. I told him 'please don't do that because this is some kind of abuse'. (Interviews, PM 2)

However, this policy maker acknowledged that he would allow some use of Arabic to explain difficult vocabulary, explaining that *'to some extent, as a teacher you need to be flexible in that regard, especially if you are teaching some course in which English is not the main objective' (Ibid).* The issue raised by this statement is that for this policy maker, it would be an acceptable practice to use Arabic to explain difficult vocabulary in content subjects but it wouldn't be acceptable to do so in EFL classes. This inconsistency is what qualifies similar attitudes as contradictions which one can possibly attribute to a lack of information in the form of research findings.

Another policy maker started the interview by saying that although he is not sure that there is a policy that prohibits the use of Arabic in EFL classes, he would still ask the teachers to refrain from using Arabic:

I will ask the teacher to refrain from using Arabic in English classes. First of all I am not sure there is a policy but most probably there is a policy that prevents teachers from using Arabic in the English classes or all the classes in the college taught in English. (Interviews, PM 3)

The issue of lack of exposure opportunities was also raised by this policy maker as one of the reasons the management relied on to promote the 'English only' policy.

I think there are two reasons. I would be able to say the first one clearly. I think it comes from the belief that if you want really to teach them English, if you want them to learn English then you have to use 'English only'. This comes from the realization that the only exposure they have to English is in the classroom. And therefore most of the time they should only use English because when they get out of the classroom there is no English. I think this is one reason. (ibid)

The contradiction here is that exposure without comprehension of the basic fundamentals of English wouldn't mean much to these students. In addition, this argument has become obsolete in this day and age where the satellite channels broadcasting in English and the Internet content that is mainly in English provide extraordinary opportunities for exposure for those who are keen on enhancing their learning of English outside the classroom.

One of the striking contradictions related to the issue at hand resulted from the discrepancies identified between policy and practice. On one hand, the college purports the 'English only' approach, and on the other hand the reality in the EFL classes requires the use of Arabic to facilitate comprehension and mediate learning development. This suggests that the policy

makers are not well positioned to take pedagogical decisions related to EFL teaching as they are not EFL practitioners themselves according to a teacher:

> *Who are these policies makers? Again are they acquainted with what is teaching? What is English language teaching? Have they ever been to the classroom? I mean they just mimic in a parrot way what somebody like Krashen who says that the use of L1 is a fatal error. They simply repeat it again to the teachers. All the policy makers must be stake holders in both ways. Administrative wise and teaching wise, so if it's a policy, I mean governments have changed theirs, how on earth can we not change this policy?* (Interviews, T 1)

Another teacher also hinted at the contradictory nature between policy and classroom practice that considers Arabic as a pedagogical tool that works well if used properly:

> *I am not afraid of using Arabic or any L1 in the class as long as it is my tool, right? It makes my teaching active and the students learning more efficient, right? As I said, all the time you cannot use L1 because where is the input, as long as you are not using L1 as an input device but rather as a tool to make your instruction more effective then it's alright.* (Interviews, T 3)

The same teacher argued that the practice is to use the students' mother tongue to facilitate the teaching of L2, and mentioned that even English native speaker teachers ask their students to procure bilingual dictionaries. He argued that *'if you have knowledge of the language use it. It is not realistic honestly speaking, even some of the native English teachers advise their students to buy bilingual dictionaries'*. To illustrate his point further, he compared avoiding the use of Arabic in EFL classes to avoiding a necessary medical operation: '*It's like a doctor trying to avoid surgery or an amputation, but when he has to do it, he will amputate the organ. That is my attitude towards the use of L1; I mean when it is unavoidable'* (Ibid). Although the analogy is somewhat extreme, it suggests that EFL teachers do not choose to use Arabic, but they feel compelled to make use of it.

Evidence for further contradictions also emerged through the argument advanced by a T8 who opposes the use of Arabic in his EFL classes to justify his position. The following excerpt from this teacher's interview illustrates the contradiction between a policy maker's instructions to teachers and what he stated during the interview:

> Question: *What do you perceive to be the policy of this college towards this issue* [the use of Arabic in EFL classes]*? What is your understanding?*
>
> Answer: *I think people who are in charge here do not allow teachers to speak Arabic in this college. Because they told us that the medium language in this college is the English language. I think this is bad.*

Question: What if I told you that this is not the position? I spoke to Policy Maker 1 earlier and he told me that this is not the position?

Answer: *But he told me that we are not allowed to use Arabic in the classrooms.* (Interviews, T 8)

7.3 Stigma and Political Correctness as a Source of Contradictions

Some EFL teachers, mostly the Arab ones, demonstrated attitudes and behaviours that contradicted the reality in their EFL classrooms. They acted against their students' needs and observed the 'English only' policy to the letter. These contradictions could be attributed to their need to portray an attitude of political correctness and avoid the stigma of laziness and incompetence that is often leveled against the Arab teachers who make use of Arabic in their EFL classes. Non-Arab EFL teachers who fall into this category simply wanted to follow the college policy and thus keep their jobs.

T13 is an Arabic speaking teacher who used no Arabic throughout his observed class. Consequently, there was hardly any interaction between this teacher and his students. T13 has just been recruited and was still under probation. As the class was teacher-centered, he was the only one talking all the time. Following the class observation, T13 declined my request for an interview stating that he lost his previous job because of something he said about the policy in the place of work as was mentioned in Chapter Four as one of the limitations of this research. This might account for the insecurity that was sensed in T13 teacher's class. He probably thought that if he used Arabic he would lose his job.

During the task assigned to the students to write a list of suggestions to improve the traffic situation in the city, the students seated at the back of the class were talking to each other and started writing. It seemed that one of the students who understood the instructions briefed them on what to do in Arabic. I could hear Arabic sounds but not complete words as their voices were low as I was sitting far from them. Judging by the movement of their lips and their body language, I could tell that they were talking about the writing task. It seemed that this teacher was forcing himself not to use Arabic. This was suggested by the fact that he asked a question in Arabic '*mish kedah?*' (Isn't that so?), as he got carried away by the explanation.

Some teachers on the other hand such as T12 explicitly expressed their opposition to the use of Arabic in EFL, citing students' dependence on code-switching as a major concern:

> *I agree that using the mother tongue is not that good because I believe that if you just give the students the chance or you just expose them to L2, the student will try to find the answers from*

the same language; but if you keep giving the Arabic equivalent they will keep code-switching every now and then. (Interviews, T12)

However, the teacher contradicted himself when faced with specific questions related to the possible uses of Arabic as a pedagogical tool that mediates EFL learning and teaching. He gave in to the required use of Arabic in cases where nothing else would work:

> *If you are in a situation and you don't know a way of explaining things, if you try to explain things and you try to use your body language and you try to draw on the board and still the students don't understand what you are talking about, or may be if there are cultural differences in some issues, then you need to be very limited in explaining the issue in Arabic.* (Ibid)

Still, he warned against the students' dependency and restated his opposition to the use of Arabic in EFL classes. When asked if he would discourage his students from using Arabic, he stated:

> As I said, you give them a chance to speak in Arabic they will get this chance to use Arabic whenever they are hesitant but if you restrict them to English, then they keep trying to find a solution or another word for it or a phrase or sentences or whatever to come up with the answer, unless you feel that the students ... but to say something as you know there are too many ways to say the same thing. Try not to accept Arabic. (Ibid)

It also transpired that T12 is fully aware of the controversial nature of the issue of L1 use in L2 classes but still chose to oppose the use of Arabic:

> *I know that there is a debate about this and that some people say that using the mother tongue helps students in explaining very difficult concepts or something difficult. But at the same time I know that others think that you should just stick to English or to the L2 to give the students more exposure to the target language.* (Ibid)

However, citing examples from his own practice, T12 explained that his students use Arabic to ask each other for help during practice or exercises, explaining that they would answer the teacher's questions in English or they will keep quite if they couldn't formulate their answers in English:

> I observed that those who are weak in English use Arabic, while those who are good in English don't use Arabic. Students only use Arabic when they have a chance to sit alone or when they practice or during an exercise; then they start talking to their colleagues to ask a question but whenever they talk to the teacher, as long as they know that this teacher's policy is not to speak Arabic, whenever they know that he does not give the chance to the students to speak in Arabic or something, then they will try to speak in English or otherwise they will not answer any of the

questions. (Ibid)

T12 acted in contradiction to the needs of his students by sticking to his 'English only' approach as is illustrated by the interaction below from the observation of his class:

T12: Here is another adjective: dreadful!

S: What's dreadful?

T12: Dreadful? Ugly ... Something you don't like

The student kept quiet, but it was not clear whether he understood or not. Later on, a student asked about the meaning of '*boring*' and received the same answer from T12 as '*something you don't like*'.

Sa: What's boring?

T12: Something that is boring is something you don't like. (CO, T12)

The use of 'English only' in this class did not seem to have properly explained the meaning of the words the students had difficulty with. On the contrary, it seemed to have blocked the students' vitality and interactions. The students did not react to this explanation; neither did they suggest answers to the question to which it pertained. Compared to another class by T10 where Arabic was used and where the meaning seemed clearer, and the student reacted by participating and providing answers. It could be argued that this class was not a successful EFL class. All in all, in the classes where Arabic was used or allowed, students-students interactions were observed; while in classes where Arabic was not permitted, students were silent. This could imply that the use of Arabic mediates interaction and learning, but the use of 'English only' inhibits interactions and blocks learning.

Other contradictions surrounding the use of Arabic in EFL classes emanate from the fact that some teachers enforce the 'English only' policy and delegate the use of Arabic to their students in order to remain politically correct. In fact, many teachers delegate the use of Arabic to some of their students in what Policy Maker 3 interpreted as an attempt *'to give the impression that they don't use Arabic'* (Interviews, PM 3). According to the same policy maker, teachers refrain from using Arabic because they believe that using Arabic is a sign of weakness,

> *...using Arabic might not be considered acceptable by the authorities here in this college both views are possible... being afraid if they are heard or if there is a complaint about them that they use Arabic. Look at the students, they need Arabic but also they complain about using it in the classroom, you know. Students do complain they say this teacher uses Arabic.* (Ibid)

Conversely, in the class taught by T12, a teacher who openly indicated during the interview that he promotes the monolingual approach, it was observed that the teacher remained faithful

to his position and did not use any Arabic throughout the class. While this showed consistency on the part of the teacher, it went against the classroom reality that required the use of Arabic. In fact, it was observed in this class that student-teacher interactions were lacking. However, students used Arabic to ask for each other's help during the practice tasks. There was a sense that the students did not understand most of the vocabulary needed for the exercises, and when students used Arabic they whispered rather than speak loudly.

T12 refrained from using Arabic but failed to give proper explanations in English when the opportunity came up. As a case in point, he explained words like '*boring*' and '*disgusting*' by replying to the students who asked for the explanation with the phrase '*you don't like it*' (CO, T12). These were teaching opportunities where the use of Arabic translations would have been more efficient than the answer provided by the teacher. There were also instances in this class where the use of Arabic could have been used to check understanding and avoid confusion. This would have been more beneficial to the students than the teacher's persistence to follow the monolingual approach for the sake of political correctness. T12 acted in contradiction to the needs and expectations of his students as he remained faithful to the 'English only' policy.

There could be many reasons why this particular teacher adopted the 'English only' approach even though it didn't seem to work. One of these reasons could be that the teacher was still under probation and was therefore careful not to go against the college policy regarding the use of Arabic in EFL classes. In addition, T12 is an Arab teacher who might be aware of the widespread stigma that Arabic speaking teachers misuse of Arabic language in their EFL classes (AL-Abdan, 1992).

Further instances of these contradictions in attitudes related to the use of Arabic in EFL classes were observed in T5's class. Of particular relevance to this chapter is the instance when a student offered to give the equivalent of the word 'predicament' in Arabic, only to be rebuked by the teacher who stated that it meant giving the research an opportunity to collect data. The interaction went as follows:

> *T5: Predicament. We used this word before; in our last class. Predicament, what does it mean?*
>
> *Sa: In Arabic?*
>
> *T5: No, I am just asking. Do you simply want to give an opportunity to him to use that? Explain it in English!*
>
> *Sa: Solution?* .... (Silence)
>
> *5T: It's a situation in which you find no way out. That is a predicament.*

Following the teacher's explanation of the word in English, a student asked in Arabic '*waash egul?*' meaning '*what is he saying?*' The question suggests that not all the students understood

what T5 was saying, and also indicates that this particular student was paying attention in order to understand but he clearly couldn't. It was noted that T5's class was very quiet and mostly teacher-centred. Perhaps the fact that the observed class took place in a lab did not allow for an environment conducive to students-students or teacher-students interactions. Still, other classes that took place in a lab contained instances of students-students and students-teacher interactions and the classes were active and dynamic.

In T5's class, the students did not seem to remember the meaning of words covered in the previous lessons as the teacher reminded them a few times that they had already come across some of the words used. It was also recorded that although most students did not understand the teacher's explanation, he never used or allowed the use of Arabic to facilitate comprehension. Meanwhile, students used Arabic in a low voice to seek each other's help. Most students couldn't find answers to the exercises in their workbook and used Arabic to solicit answers from each other. They did not seem to have understood their teacher's explanation, and yet they did not ask him as they could only do so in Arabic. The lack of students-teacher interactions could be caused by the T5's policy to use 'English only' and discourage his students from using Arabic. This policy seemed to be in contradiction with the students' needs and expectations, and the students' behaviours too were in contradiction with the teacher's rules and apparently the college policy as well. The class remained relatively quiet but when the camera was switched off, the students started talking to each other in Arabic rather loudly.

T5 who is a proponent of the monolingual approach suggested that a teacher should use all means available to him/her to help his/her students understand in English. He named some pedagogical techniques but omitted to mention the students L1, a tool that is always available to both teachers and students. He was purposely asked about how he would explain abstract words and notions to his students using the English approach and he explained that saying:

> I use some words in the beginning, it is the duty of the teacher to communicate to his students through any means possible; whether he mimes, he jumps he has to do whatever he has to do to explain to his students, and gradually -believe me- I am not trying to boast off, they start to understand all that. (ibid)

He clarified his point further adding: '*You can use your body language, your facial expressions and your language. You synchronize that, they will understand*' (Ibid). Despite all these steadfast statements, it transpired during the observation of the class taught by this teacher that the students used Arabic to get answers and explanations from each other as they

apparently did not understand the teacher's explanations (CO, T5). This is another example of the contradictions existing between teachers' beliefs and their students' needs. Not only can the opponents of L1 use in L2 classes not prevent their students from falling back on their mother tongue, but it also seems that the practice has become a fait accompli against which not much can be done.

This situation seems to be in line with what T5 revealed in his interview when he argued that it does not make sense to use Arabic in EFL classes:

> *I am of the opinion that the students shouldn't be taught to use any other language other than the target language because in this country English is the foreign language not the second language. I believe that since they have a set target before them, they should put all their effort in order to study this language. If they use Arabic or any other first language they will find so many handicaps in themselves and the habit of translating the words, and that would take time. I simply believe this, and I keep on practicing all that not only here but also back in my country. When I was teaching over there, I simply avoided using the first language although it was my own first language as well. Here I have an edge since I don't speak their language, so I avoid even using that particular dictionary in the class as well.* (Interviews, T5)

Throughout the interview and during the class observations, T5 remained faithful to his position throughout the interview and also during the observation of his class. His argument sounded purely theoretical and not very pragmatic as he believed that *'it is the duty of the teacher to communicate to the students whether he mimes, he acts, or he performs. He has to make the students understand, whatever that may take'.* Pursuant to this statement, T5 was asked where his conviction came from; whether it was based on readings or on experience, his response was:

> *This conviction comes through experience, and the second thing I believe is that when you are studying a foreign language you cannot reach north if you keep travelling south. So you can't follow the opposite direction to reach your own destination. I believe this is also true in this respect...It is common sense but it is also theory; the modern theories, linguistic theories, CLT and communicative methodology, I find it efficient.* (Ibid)

The state of affairs described above contradicts the communicative nature of EFL teaching that is supposed to encourage students to participate and interact in the classroom. In the case of T12, the teacher seemed undecided and dithered from opposing the use of Arabic in EFL classes to supporting a limited use by the teacher. As he was new to the college, it could be said that he wanted to sound politically correct or perhaps he is a victim of the stigma attached to being an Arab EFL teacher. It has been reported that Arabic-speaking EFL teachers in Saudi

schools misuse Arabic in their classes (Al-Abdan, 1992). This could account for the fact that some of the contradictions uncovered by this research are related to the past learning experiences of the students with the use of Arabic at the pre-college level.

7.4 Lack of Awareness as a Source of Contradictions

The majority of the participants who opposed the use of Arabic in EFL classes contradicted themselves when they admitted that the language could have some usefulness especially in mediating the teaching learning process. These contradictions were found to be due mainly to a lack of awareness regarding the pedagogical role that Arabic can play in their EFL classes. These instances of contradictions involved mostly students.

The few comments that the students who oppose the use of Arabic in the EFL classes made on the questionnaires were also in support of the implementation of the 'English only' policy. These comments seem to be in contradiction with the comments made by the majority of the students who supported the inclusion of Arabic in EFL instruction, as was discussed in Chapters Five and Six. For instance, a student commented that '*only the use of English helps in learning English'* (SC, S131) and another commented that 'English only' is *'the best way to learn English'* (SC, S 132). A student went further and called for the 'English only' policy to be implemented everywhere on campus commenting that *'in classes and on campus, only English should be used. There is enough Arabic spoken outside college'* (SC, S133. Echoing the same argument that is often advanced by the opponents of the use of L1 in L2 classes, a student asked '*how can you teach English using Arabic?'* (SC, S134). This is a rhetorical question that echoes the common sense–based argument and which contradicts the evidence on the ground as seen in Chapters Five and Six. In fact, L1 use is a necessary tool in the L2 teaching /learning process as foreign learners usually fall back on their mother tongues, particularly in the early stages of their L2 education.

While the majority of the students who took part in this research indicated that the use of Arabic helps students understand the meaning of words, a student who didn't share this view suggested instead that *'the use of Arabic confuses the meaning of words' (SC, S124).* Another student commented that the use of Arabic could hinder EFL learning stating: *'I learn more English when Arabic is not used' (SC, S 125).* According to another student, the use of Arabic will lead to *'memorizing just one meaning [which] will be confusing. So translation is not good. English use will cause students to become used to this language' (SC, S 157).* To suggest that translation is not a good learning strategy as it will result in memorization does not seem to be a very strong argument. Quite the opposite, memorization in my view could sometimes be a

useful learning strategy if it is used properly especially for learning vocabulary. The same idea was reiterated by another student who suggested that *'English helps in learning English better than Arabic does' (SC, S142)*; while another commented that *'using English makes learning English fast. Therefore all conversations must be in English'.* (SC, S162). This is so because, added another student, *'studies are all in English, so students need to practice English more and more'* (SC, S 165). This argument does not take into consideration the importance of comprehension in learning in general and in language learning in particular. Based on the data analysed in Chapter Five, EFL learners are keen on acquiring meaning prior to form.

It has also been mentioned in Chapter Five that the students who took part in this research appear to be aware of the various positive roles that Arabic plays in EFL classes. Likewise, they also seem to have pinpointed the various contradictions surrounding the inclusion of Arabic in their EFL classes in a college that has adopted the 'English only' policy. For instance, a student commented that there is a contradiction between how students view the role of Arabic in EFL classes and how some teachers view it. He explained that 'some *teachers look down on the students who use Arabic and consider them as weak. My message to them is that; this is wrong as nobody was born speaking a foreign language'* (SC, S120). The reference here is made to the teachers who prefer to work only with the students who possess an average or above average proficiency level in English, while ignoring the ones who are below average. This in itself is in contradiction with the principles of education that call for the inclusion of all learners and paying equal attention to them.

According to some students, EFL teachers who promote the 'English only' approach seem to act in contradiction to the needs and expectations of their students. As a matter of fact, the stance of these teachers goes against the reality in the EFL classroom where the use of Arabic is both required and sometimes even necessary for the students. For instance, a student commented that *'3/4 of the students don't understand English. They were surprised by the 'English only' approach when they joined college. Please attend to this matter for the benefit of the students' (SC, S 122).* This in fact seems to be the view of the majority of the students who participated in this research, and these comments highlight the contradictions that exist between teachers' practices and their students' needs and expectations. More examples of these contradictions were identified amongst students themselves; between those who support the use of Arabic and those who oppose it.

Some students seem to be in contradiction with the learning needs and expectations of their peers as they expressed their opposition to the use of Arabic in EFL classes. As the

quantitative analysis suggested, 37% of the students who filled in the questionnaires were against this practice. Needless to say that most of these students contradicted themselves as the final analysis of the questionnaires shows (see figure 7. 1). In fact, only 1% of all participating students found no use for Arabic in EFL classes. The remaining 99% all indicated that Arabic could be useful in the EFL classes in one way or another.

The evidence that is used to demonstrate these contradictions is drawn from the comments made on the questionnaires by the students who oppose the use of Arabic in EFL classes. One of these students believes that the use of Arabic is not as positive as it is claimed to be and that *'the students should use a bilingual dictionary as it helps learning, but the use of Arabic does not help learning' (SC, S117).* In this statement, the student seems to contradict himself as the use of a bilingual dictionary in the EFL class is a form of making use of Arabic. Attitudes like this one could be attributed to a lack of information about the pedagogical needs of the beginner students who go through a lot in order to fit within a mixed ability class.

Few other students expressed doubts about the usefulness of Arabic in the EFL classes. One of the students suggested that *'the use of Arabic wouldn't help learning if relied upon entirely' (SC, S118).* While such statement may go against the reality on the ground, the students representing this view all advanced reasons of their own. For instance, one student suggested that the use of Arabic results in students' dependency explaining that 'the *use of Arabic makes a student dependent on others'* (SC, S119). This is due to the fact that *'if a student is not allowed to use Arabic, he will be forced to learn' (SC, S120),* and also because *'only English should be used to force the student to make the effort'* (SC, S121).

Even though these students' views are only symbolic representations of the contradictions that characterise the attitudes towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes, the majority of the participants cite the reality in the classroom to support their claim of the usefulness of the practice. The opposing minority echoes the common-sense-based justifications advanced by the opponents of L1's inclusion in L2 classes, which has already been discussed in relation to the teachers. One of these comments suggested that 'the *use of Arabic is not necessary; the teacher can draw or mime to convey the meaning'* (SC, S123). Another comment advised the EFL teachers not to 'use *Arabic in order to force the students to learn in English'* (SC, S 122).

In addition to the arguments advanced above in opposition to the inclusion of Arabic in EFL classes, some students suggested that the real reason for such opposition stems from the unsuccessful experience with the use of Arabic in the pre-college level. Students warned that *'if Arabic is used the same way students used it in schools, then it won't be helpful'* (SC, S139),

given that the students *'have had a very bad experience from school days when English was taught in Arabic'* (SC, S126). In fact, a student explained that *'based on what we went through in the middle and high school, I am completely opposed to the use of Arabic in English classes'* (SC, S130).

The contradiction here stems from the fact that the students' opposition to the use of Arabic in EFL classes is due to their past experience where Arabic was over-used. This ingrained view prevented them from paying attention to the instructions provided on the first page of the questionnaire which clearly defined the meaning of the word 'use', and where the use of Arabic was defined as a principled and justified use as a pedagogical tool, which should be used only when it is deemed necessary. It seems that these students confused the justified use practiced by resourceful and confident teachers with the misuse of Arabic that they experienced in pre-college education.

The discrepancy between the calls by some students to ban Arabic from EFL classes and the reality in the classroom that requires such use has been evidenced further by the maximum exposure argument which maintains that 'English *should be used all the time because students need to hear it all the time to learn it'* (SC, S 127), and also because *'English should be used because our aim is to learn English'* (SC, S128). These arguments may be justified and reasonable but they go against the reality in the EFL classrooms and are reminiscent of the rationalizations advanced by the proponents of the 'English only' fallacy (Phillipson, 1992). The following comment by a student goes even further to add the requirement of native speaker teachers to the mix:

> *English should be taught by native speakers for the teaching to be more convincing and better in terms of pronunciation and vocabulary use. Arabic should not be used as it creates a sense of reliance on Arabic and this is why I failed before. But asking students to translate using a dictionary to learn English, will give them self-confidence and increase their vocabulary bank. I strongly advise teachers against translation and complete dependence on Arabic.* (SC, S129)

Along the same lines, a student commented that Arabic usage in EFL classes is a déjà-vu experience that would lead to failure; explaining that *'since middle school we were relying on Arabic to learn English and the result was failure. However in the first level of prep year, everybody is feeling improvement as we stopped using Arabic. I beg you not to go backwards'* (SC, S141). Other similar comments indicated that the use of 'English only' would be suitable as they have experienced the use of Arabic in EFL classes with no success: *'We did not benefit from the learning of English in the middle and high school. The use of English is better'* (SC, S

143). A rather different view by one of the 'English only' proponents suggested another reason for his opposition to the use of Arabic in EFL classes. He proposed that such use is not necessary as the students have already learned the basics in the middle school. He clarified that *'students have learnt English basics in the middle and high-school. There is no need to use Arabic'* (SC, S158).

The students who participated in this research have shown evidence of their awareness of the sociocultural dimension of the issue at hand by grounding the arguments for their attitudes in their sociocultural context. Hence, their justifications for rejecting the usefulness of Arabic in EFL classes is that their context does not offer opportunities for exposure to English outside the classroom, and therefore EFL class time should be devoted to 'English only'. For instance, one student commented that *'the social context is not conducive to learning English; we therefore need only English (SC, S 135)'.* Another elaborated that the students' fluency is at stake for *'the use of Arabic does not help students' fluency and does not break the barrier separating the students and their teacher'* (SC, S136). In addition, *'students need to speak English with their teachers and they should be forced to do so. The use of Arabic will create reliance on that language' commented another student (SC, S 137).*

The context-related argument also emphasises the lack of adequate exposure to English as another reason for the students' opposition to the use of Arabic. One comment in support of this argument maintains that *'maximum exposure to English maximizes understanding; whereas the use of Arabic erases all that has been learnt'* (SC, S 138). Few other comments stress the importance of exposure and how the use of Arabic can limit it. For instance, the statement that *'the more English we study and use, the better we become in this language'* (SC, S 166) suggests that if only English is used students' proficiency level will improve because, as another student commented, *'the use of English in class affords the students with exposure opportunities'* (SC, S 167); while *'the use of Arabic does not allow students to hear enough English' commented* another student *(SC, S 168).*

The students who called for Arabic to be banned from EFL classes argued that the social context is not conducive to practicing English outside the classroom. One student explained that 'the *social context is not conducive to learning English. Outside college not many people speak English. Even foreigners are mostly uneducated labourers who can't speak English. Therefore, we have no opportunity to practice our English'* (SC, S 150). For these students, the use of 'English only' policy would allow for more practice opportunities, knowing that *'practice makes perfect; therefore the 'English only' approach is the perfect one'* (SC, S 151). In

addition, *'the more Arabic, we use the less English we will practice; which defeats the purpose of the EFL class'*, explained another student (SC, S 159). Another advised that he *'would like everybody in the college to speak English, not just in the classrooms'* (SC, S 169) because *'students need to practice English and using Arabic does not help'* (SC, S 170).

One of the major contradictions uncovered by this research in the students' attitude is related to the stark contrast between what the students opposing the use of Arabic believe and what the reality in the EFL classroom is. As it has been mentioned above, one of the arguments advanced by these students is the dependency argument. According to one student, *'the use of Arabic is not as beneficial to the students as is the use of English and the interaction with its speakers'* (SC, S 164), and another student warned that *'the use of Arabic causes dependency on it'* (SC, S 145). Another student commented that 'students *shouldn't be spoiled through spoon-feeding. They should work hard to learn' (SC, S 144).* The conviction seems to be that *'when students are used to using Arabic, they will not use English'* as one student commented (SC, S 146), or that 'students *might feel dependent on Arabic and this might make them lazy'* (SC, S 149). As a result, *'the use of English would stop dependence and will encourage independent learning'* (SC, S 149). However, the dependency argument does not hold much strength as it is virtually impossible to stop a bilingual person from 'depending' or falling back on his/her L1.

There are few other reasons advanced by the students to justify their opposition to the use of Arabic in EFL classes. These arguments are believed to be the causes behind the contradictory nature of these students' attitudes toward the use of Arabic in EFL classes. One comment for instance suggested that this practice is a non-starter due to the linguistic differences that exist between the two languages: *'Arabic and English are two different languages. If we want to learn English, we need to live in an 'English only' speaking environment' (SC, S147).* Another student commented that the use of Arabic creates tension between the students and their teachers explaining that *'the problem is that when students speak in Arabic, teachers think that the talk is about them' (SC, S 148).* In fact, another comment reiterated the same idea stating that *'the use of Arabic may cause misunderstanding and might even cause tension between teachers who do not speak Arabic and their students' (SC, S 152).* These arguments by a small number of students are in contradiction with those advanced by the students in support of including Arabic in EFL classes. As seen in chapters Five and Six, 99% of the students who participated in this research indicated that Arabic could

be useful in the EFL classes for one reason or another. This latter category of students is also in contradiction with the college 'English only' policy.

This contradiction between students practice and college policy has apparently contributed to EFL learning as it has empowered the students and allowed them to take ownership of their learning. By choosing to adopt Arabic as one of their learning strategies and as a mediating tool that facilitates their learning, these learners have shown students agency in shaping their learning styles, which could also be seen as an instance of change initiated by passive participants who would usually receive information and not produce it.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the data that support the suggestion that Arabic use in EFL classes is a source of contradictions. It presented evidence showing that participants' attitudes are shrouded in contradictions, that there are contradictions between policy and classroom reality, between the teachers' approaches and students' needs, and between students' practices and teachers' policies. There emerged various reasons for these contradictions but they have been grouped under three categories. One of the underpinnings of these conflicts was found to be the inconsistency in the attitudes and behaviours of some participants. Such inconsistency could be accounted for by the sense of guilt the EFL teachers may harbour, the uncertainty and a lack confidence displayed by some teachers and policy makers and the lack of awareness demonstrated mainly by the students. Another reason for these contradictions was the pursuit of political correctness, especially by Arab EFL teachers who could be aware of the stigma that Arab EFL teachers misuse Arabic out of laziness and incompetence. Finally, the contradictions identified in the attitudes and behaviours of the students could be attributed to a lack of awareness and to the subscription to the popular, yet unsubstantiated, belief that English could only be taught and learned through English. Figure 7.2 on the next page shows these contradictions illustrated in broken arrows.

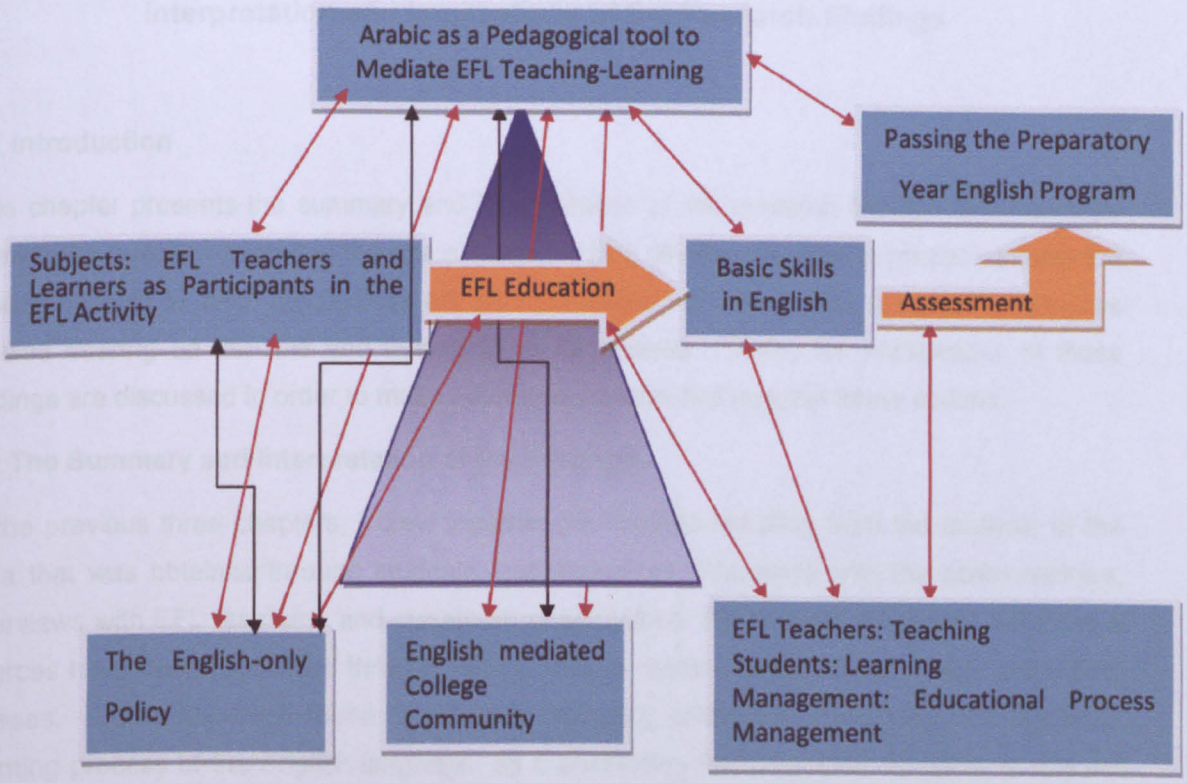

Figure7.2 Contradictions within and around the EFL teaching-learning activity system (inspired by (Engeström, 2001))

The following chapter, which is also the last chapter of the thesis, triangulates all the findings and presents the implication and recommendations that have been drawn from them. It also serves as a concluding chapter to the whole thesis, especially the conclusion parts. This latter provides an opportunity to introduce anecdotal evidence that either accompanied the research or resulted from the sharing of its results.

Chapter Eight

Interpretation and Implications of the Research Findings

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary and interpretation of the research findings and how they answer the question related to the role of Arabic in EFL classes. In order to properly situate the research within its field, the findings are also compared with the results reported by previous studies bearing on the role and use of L1 in L2 classes. Finally, the implications of these findings are discussed in order to make recommendations and suggest future actions.

8.2 The Summary and Interpretation of the Findings

In the previous three chapters, I drew together the findings resulting from the analysis of the data that was obtained through students' questionnaires, interviews with the policy makers, interviews with EFL teachers, and classroom observations. All the data emanating from these sources have been processed through the AT lens to determine the role of Arabic in the EFL classes. Arabic has been found to act as a mediating artefact that facilitates the teaching-learning process of the English language, as a scaffolding tool that helps students to expand their EFL learning, and as a source of contradictions at different levels of the EFL teaching-learning activity. The findings equally suggest that the participants are mostly in favour of the use of Arabic in EFL classes, and that they think that Arabic plays various pedagogical roles throughout the different stages of the EFL teaching-learning activity. A summary of the findings of this research is presented in Table 8.1 that follows.

Table 8.1 A summary of research findings as seen through the AT lens

Roles of Arabic EFL Classes	Manifestations of these roles		
Mediation	**Some teachers** use Arabic as a pedagogical tool to: • explain vocabulary, grammar and idioms • build rapport and attend to the psychological well-being of the students (motivation and relaxation) • make their teaching efficient and save time • promote collaborative learning • explain instructions • create interaction in their classes • use students' prior knowledge	**Students** use Arabic as a learning strategy to: • mediate their learning • translate difficult/abstract words and instructions into Arabic • collaborate and seek each other's help during pair or group work • explain instructions and interact with each other	
Expansion	**Teachers** use Arabic to help students progress through their ZPD by providing support and scaffolding through Arabic.	**Students** use Arabic to expand their EFL learning through the use of their prior knowledge and by seeking help from their classmates.	
Contradictions	**Teachers** are in contradiction with the college policy as they support the use of Arabic in EFL classes. • Some teachers are in contradiction with the reality in the EFL classes, by prohibiting the use of Arabic for fear of stigma and in pursuit of political correctness.	**Students** contradict the college policy through using and requesting the use of Arabic by their EFL teachers. • Some students say one thing and do another and seem undecided. On one hand, they oppose the use of Arabic and on the other hand they support its use in some occasions. This was mostly due to their lack of awareness.	**Policy Makers** are in contradiction with the reality in the EFL classroom through their push for the 'English only' policy in the college. • There are contradictions between the college policy and the classroom practices, due to the stark inconsistency between the participants' attitudes and behaviours.

8.2.1 Arabic as a Mediating tool in EFL Classes

Mediation has been found by this research to be one of the most important roles that Arabic plays in the EFL teaching-learning activity in the EFL classes. In fact, the research found that Arabic is used by both students and teachers for this purpose. This portion of the findings seems to be consistent with the results reported by various similar research studies, some of which are listed in Table 8.2 that follows. In fact, many other research studies have reported findings that suggest that L1 facilities the teaching-learning of L2. A more comprehensive list of these studies is provided by Table 2.1 in Chapter Two.

The common denominator of the studies mentioned in Table 8.2 is that they all highlight the mediating role of L1 in the teaching-learning process in L2 classes. In the same way, the present study found that Arabic is used as a mediating tool that mediates the teaching-learning activity in the EFL classes. Evidence that emerged suggests that Arabic plays this mediating role through its use to render the EFL input comprehensible, to explain instructions for tasks and quizzes, to promote collaborative learning, to build rapport with the students and to attend to the psychological well-being of the students. A summary of these findings is listed below:

- Teachers use Arabic to render EFL input comprehensible.
- Teachers use Arabic to mediate the teaching of grammar and vocabulary.
- Teachers use Arabic to explain instructions for tasks and quizzes.
- Teachers use Arabic as a psychological tool to motivate their students.
- Teachers use Arabic to draw on the students' prior knowledge.
- Students use Arabic as a learning strategy.
- Students use Arabic as a mediating tool for collaborative learning.
- Students use Arabic to seek help from their peers during classroom interactions.

In fact, research findings in the last three decades have indicated that foreign language teachers and students use L1 in L2 classes mainly to mediate the L2 teaching-learning process (e.g., Atkinson, 1987; Auerbach, 1993; Burden, 2001; Tang, 200; Wells, 1999). Table 8.2 summarises some of these findings.

Table 8.2 Research findings from related studies

Research study	Findings regarding the use of L1 in L2 classes
Atkinson (1987, p. 241)	• Eliciting Language • Checking comprehension • Giving complex instructions to basic levels • Co-operating in groups • Explaining classroom methodology at basic levels • Using translation to highlight a recently taught language item • Checking for sense • Testing mastery of forms and meanings • Developing circumlocution strategies
Auerbach (1993, p.19).	• Providing a sense of security and validating the learners' lived experiences • Negotiating the syllabus and the lesson • Keeping records • Managing the classroom • Setting the scene • Analysing language • Presenting language rules (grammar, phonology, morphology, and spelling), • Discussing cross-cultural issues, • Providing instructions or prompts, explanation of errors, and assessment of comprehension

Wells (1999)	• Seeking help from fellow students during speaking activities • Clarifying questions • Expressing frustrations concerning their lack of understanding • Clarifying meaning of words in L2 • Finding new words in L2 which correspond to already known words in L1 • Using language to process complex concepts • Sharing learning
Tang (2002)	• Giving instructions • Explaining meanings of words • Explaining complex ideas and complex grammar points • Facilitating and supporting learning

For both teachers and students participants in the present research, Arabic is seen as a necessary tool, without which the teaching-learning process would not be as effective as it is hoped to be. It has already been revealed in Chapter Five that many teachers as well as students have indicated that the use of Arabic is necessary for the progress of the EFL teaching-learning activity. The use of Arabic by these respondents may therefore not be attributed to teachers' incompetence or laziness as it might be suggested. In fact, both teachers and students stressed that the use of Arabic in EFL classes should not only be limited but justified as well.

As a pedagogical tool that mediates learning, Arabic is mostly used by the EFL teachers to make their input comprehensible to their students. Input comprehension is essential to learning and learning development as was discussed in Chapter Two. Learning theories like the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1981), the Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982) as well as the Input Processing Model (Van Patten, 2004) all stress the importance of the comprehensibility of L2 input. Indeed, without comprehension, there is not much hope for learning to take place, and language is an effective tool for the mediation of comprehension. Providing English instruction to beginners using 'English only' has been likened to submersion (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000), which is an analogy of plunging learners under water without teaching them how to swim (Benson, 2005); they will find it difficult if not impossible to learn the target language.

As it has also been mentioned in Chapter Five, EFL teachers have reported that they feel the need to use this pedagogical tool as it is the only way to get the message through to their

students. In fact, teachers as well as students have reported that the use of 'English only' hampers comprehension, and may sometimes even result in confusion and a lack of classroom interaction. Conversely, they have also reported that when Arabic is used, comprehension is facilitated, students' faces lighten up with relief, and teachers feel relieved too.

In addition to the above, the findings suggest that teachers use Arabic to explain grammar and vocabulary. This allows them to fulfil their teaching duties quickly but efficiently. Most of all, Arabic is used as a pedagogical tool when nothing else seems to work. Teachers reported that the use of Arabic saved the situation when they ran into a teaching impasse; when they couldn't properly deliver their lesson or explain its content. Hence, classroom experience allowed them to develop a flair for when Arabic use is required and thus justified.

This use can sometimes prove crucial as Arabic and English don't share many linguistic similarities. For instance, the verb 'to be' does not have a direct equivalent in the Arabic language. If this difference is not pointed out to the students in the early stages through the use of examples in Arabic, they will continue producing sentences similar to 'I student.', while they mean to say "I am a student." The first sentence would be perfectly acceptable in Arabic where both the verb 'to be / (am)' and the indefinite article 'a' are implicitly understood, but are not explicitly produced.

The findings of this research also indicate that Arabic is used by both teachers and students to explain abstract vocabulary and notions that carry cultural connotations. It is important to stress that the explanation of one difficult vocabulary item could go a long way towards creating a positive atmosphere in the classroom, and thus motivate interaction and learning. On the other hand, the confusion caused by the misunderstanding of a word can cause a class to fail. Many cases of the latter situation have been reported by both teachers and students, and it was also observed during class observations as it has been reported in Chapter Five. The use of Arabic in the instances where the students are confused due to a lack of comprehension has been considered necessary by the majority of the participants in this research. However, all the respondents who were in favour of the use of Arabic in EFL classes stressed that such use has to be measured and justified.

8.2.1.1 The Principled Use of Arabic in EFL Classes

On the whole, this research confirms the most common view reported in recent literature that L1 does have a role to play in foreign language teaching (e.g. Auerbach, 1993; Atkinson, 1987 and 1993; Burden, 2000; Butzkamm, 2003 and 2007; Cook, 2001 and 2002; Cummins, 2009;

Ellis, 1994 and 1998; Macaro, 2005, 2007 and 2009; Mckay, 2003; Nation, 2003; Schweers,1999; Tang, 2002; Turnbull, 2001; Wigglesworth, 2003). However, such role needs to be defined and confined to certain functions and levels. In other words, 'unless the mother tongue can enhance the quality of the learning experience in the classroom, it should be avoided' (Duff, 1989) cited in (Harbord, 1992, p. 355). This simply means that L1 needs to be used in L2 classes consciously and strategically by teachers to facilitate comprehension and interaction. Duff suggests that the mother tongue should be used 'to provoke discussion and to develop clarity and flexibility of thinking and to increase our own and our students' awareness of inevitable interaction between the mother tongue and the target language that occurs during any type of language acquisition'(Ibid). Equally, Hadley proposed that 'judicious use of the native language is acceptable where possible' (2001, p. 117).

In addition, it has been argued that L1 can be used to teach L2 only when the need arises calling therefore for a judicious use of this pedagogical tool (e.g. Eldridge, 1996; Bolitho, 2003; Widdowson, 2003). This research has found that the use of Arabic, the students' L1 in EFL classes, is useful particularly with low-level students and this corroborates the findings of the research studies that preceded it (Wescheler, 1997; Burden, 2000; Cook, 2001; Nation, 2003). This is also in agreement with the view that calls for the principled and judicious use of the students' L1 in EFL classes, commonly known as the 'judicious use theory' (Atkinson, 1993, p. 21). Such practice has gained acceptance and sometimes even preference among scholars and practitioners (Cook, 2001).

As it has been uncovered in Chapter Five, the majority of the participants in this reseearch have reported that the use of Arabic has more benefits than drawbacks. Even the participants who initially expressed their opposition to such practice recognised that there is at least one possible use for Arabic in the EFL classes (e.g. explaining vocabulary). Even though there was a near-unanimous consensus among the participants about the benefits of the use of Arabic, most of them indicated that there should be some sort of limitations or conditions to this practice.

For instance, the students who expressed support for the use of Arabic in EFL classes stressed that such use needs to be principled, and that it is not advised for all levels. The default language in the EFL classes should be English except when the use of 'English only' does not work. According to one student, '*some Arabic may be used but not all the time*' (SC, S9) or, suggested another, Arabic *'may be used but not throughout the lecture and the discussion should be carried out in 'English only''* (SC, S80). Another student suggests that

Arabic could be used only for the preparatory year students: '*I prefer the use of Arabic for preparatory year students. Only 40% of the students understand English as they had successful experiences with the learning of English. The remaining 60%, for various reasons, just don't understand English.*' (SC, S14).

For another student, the use of Arabic could benefit the students whose proficiency is low: '*70% of the students can understand English. While 30% are below average and need the use of Arabic*' (SC, S15). That is perhaps why another student proposed that such use be restricted to the beginner level: *'The use of Arabic is needed to teach mainly beginners, in some difficult circumstances and when students are not concentrating. It is also useful to animate the classroom and motivate the students.'* (SC, S22).

Quite similarly, Arabic should be used only in '*extreme cases*' and in a '*restricted and justified*' manner, or as a student put it: *'The use of Arabic could be useful in extreme cases to explain difficult words. Some restricted and justified use of Arabic may be welcome'* (SC, S26). Another student suggested that the use of Arabic should be confined to the lower levels where the teaching/learning processes need to be mediated: *"English only' should be used with higher levels while Arabic should be used with the prep year students as their proficiency levels in English are very low'.* (SC, S96)

The evidence drawn from the interviews suggests that the policy makers too call for a principled use of Arabic in EFL classes. As a matter of fact, they acknowledged the usefulness of Arabic in rendering EFL teaching material comprehensible and emphasised that the use of Arabic is necessary mainly for beginners to make the teaching content comprehensible:

> *I think it is a must with the beginners until they reach the level where they could use English instead of Arabic. That will lead them to try to understand terminology, ask about the meaning of words and practice using that later. With beginners, yes I agree with it, and I think learning outcomes will be higher than if they use only English, especially for beginners because the teacher will spend more time to explain to them in English while the students don't know the language. It's a kind of wasting time and effort for teachers.* (Interviews, PM1)

The statement above suggests that adopting the 'English only' approach with beginners would be a waste of time and effort for EFL teachers. On the other hand, this participant added that the use of Arabic would not be suitable for students at higher levels: '*For level 2, I am suggesting right now, it will be good for them not to use the Arabic language. It's better to use the English language only, you see because actually that will enhance their English language capabilities'.* (ibid)

Another policy maker concurred with the view expressed above and maintained that although the use of Arabic could be allowed at beginner level, this learning support has to be withdrawn gradually:

> *Prep year students yes, but it still has to change because prep year is a whole year, you know. I would go with this idea in the beginning in 001 and for some time until the teacher decides that the students' English can be used with an English dictionary. So again, I will go for a gradual thing ok? And then wean them. You allow them to use the dictionary first in English and then in Arabic, ok? But this thing you have to get rid of it slowly.* (Interviews, PM3)

Regarding the significance of the principled use of Arabic in EFL classes, the EFL teachers who participated in this research propose that while such use is necessary and useful for beginners, it should be used sparingly and in a justifiable manner: '*It's advisable at the beginning I would say, at a starting point/ stage for the students. I mean step by step you try to give them your hand to shovel them to use the language'* (Interviews, T 1). According to these teachers, the use of Arabic in the EFL classes is not subject to the whims and desires of the teacher, it is justified and principled as the reality in the classroom would require. It is certainly the reality in the EFL classroom that defines when to use Arabic and when not to use it. This point was highlighted by a teacher who indicated that he only makes use of Arabic as a last resort:

> *I don't use L1 to convey instructions. I first use English and if they don't understand then as a last resort I use L1. I do not resort to L1 as an easier way out. I do it out of compulsion when other things are not working, so why not use L1?* (Interviews, T3)

With the same mind set, another teacher indicated that the use of Arabic in EFL classes needs to be focused and should not mean reverting to the Grammar Translation method. This teacher referred to the bilingual methods that allow teachers, and not students, to make use of the students' L1 to facilitate the teaching of L2. He explained for instance that the students shouldn't be allowed to use the Arabic equivalent for an English word that has already been explained and understood:

> *When I said we should use a required and suitable amount of mother tongue, I meant we shouldn't degenerate to the Grammar Translation method. In grammar translation method you are supposed to translate word for word and teach grammar through rules. The other day we were discussing these bilingual methods which say that only a teacher must make a suitable use of mother tongue when it's necessary. Once the learners get the idea, afterwards, the teacher must give them a lot of drilling and the students must not be allowed to use that word again and*

again. (Interviews, T6)

T6 added that EFL teachers should be allowed to use Arabic with beginners but they will eventually need to move away from it gradually: '*The teacher should be allowed to use some Arabic in the beginning but gradually reduce it as a gradual weaning' (Ibid).* This pragmatic approach was also echoed by another teacher who indicated that practicality is what guides his practice. He explained that using Arabic as a teaching tool does not mean to turn the EFL class into an English class taught in Arabic:

> *As I said 10% use does not make it teaching English in Arabic. I am teaching English in English but at times, I am using it as a tool...All the time you cannot resort to English, but keep L1 to the minimum. But when it's indispensable to use L1 as a tool, use it. As I said pragmatism is the principle. So, if something is not working for you and you are stubborn and keep on using it, you are wasting your time.* (Interviews, T3)

During the class observations undertaken by this research, the practice of a principled use of Arabic in EFL classes has been observed in most classes where Arabic was made use of by the teachers and/or the students. While teachers adhered to the justified and purposeful use of Arabic as a pedagogical tool, it cannot be stated with certainty whether such behaviour was a normal practice or whether the researcher's presence and that of the camera provoked this behaviour. What can be confirmed nevertheless is that the behaviour observed in the EFL classrooms in relation to the principled use of Arabic tallies with what most teachers stated during their interviews. It was observed that in all cases where Arabic was made use of, it was used as a last resort to clarify instructions or terms and notions that the teachers failed to explain in English. Examples of these justified uses have already been discussed in Chapters Five and Six. Alongside this sporadic but targeted use of Arabic, it was also observed that English was the default language of instruction most of the time, and all of the time in two of the classes observed.

8.2.2. Learning Expansion

As Table 8.1 at the beginning of this chapter shows, teachers make use of Arabic as a scaffold to help students expand their learning and progress through their learning of English by providing learning support in Arabic. Similarly, students use Arabic to expand their EFL learning through the use of prior knowledge and by seeking help from their classmates. There is a fine line between learning mediation and learning expansion as both processes occur simultaneously. Expansion takes place at the same time as mediation, but it is considered rather illusive; and 'because of its elusiveness, expansion is traditionally not

considered a proper object of scientific investigation' (Engeström, 1994, p. 4). In this research, expansion stands for the process of using what is already known to acquire new knowledge through the use of Arabic as a mediating pedagogical artefact. To use Vygotsky's terms, it can be claimed that the use of Arabic helps the students' progress through their ZPD (1978). In this sense, Arabic constantly changes roles from a mediating tool that facilitates comprehension and learning to an expansion tool that supports learning development and progress. This role further highlights the importance of Arabic for learning in EFL classes.

For EFL teachers who frequently experience the difficulty to teach English as a foreign language to beginners and false beginners, Arabic is more than a mere teaching tool that is used to explain abstract words and concepts. For these teachers, Arabic serves as a conduit through which prior knowledge is brought into the EFL classroom; and allows the teachers to build the new knowledge on the existing one. In this case, Arabic for the learners serves as a scaffold or a Language Acquisition Support System (LASS) (Bruner, 1983). In fact, the use of Arabic takes into consideration the students' past learning experiences, learning strategies, learning styles and learning habits. The students use that *which they already know to carry out* new and challenging tasks especially through writing and speaking activities. When their prior knowledge that exists in Arabic is capitalised on through the basic English they possess is used to solve a writing task or perform a speaking assignment, the result is learning expansion through progressing from a basic knowledge level to a higher order one.

Data collected by this research suggest that Arabic plays a significant role in expanding learning in EFL classes as it allows teachers to capitalize on the students' learning experiences, learning styles and learning strategies. The EFL teachers who adopt approaches that make use of Arabic deal with the students as individual learners who possess considerable previously acquired knowledge that needs to be taken into consideration and built on, and not as empty vessels that need to be filled with new knowledge.

The findings of this research also suggest that, in its role as a learning expansion tool, Arabic helps teachers and students to provide meaningful and clear instruction to support and facilitate the learner's development. Usually, this scaffolding or learning expansion role manifests in allowing the learners to attempt learning experiences that are just beyond the level of what they already know (Olson and Pratt, 2000), thus helping them to progress through their ZPD (Bransford, Brown, and Cocking, 2000). Arabic in this case is used as a scaffold to EFL learning.

Vygotsky defined scaffolding instruction as the '*role of teachers and others in supporting the learner's development and providing support structures to get to that next stage or level*' (Raymond, 2000, p. 176). Scaffolding makes uses of tools and aids that are usually temporary (Chang et al, 2002, p. 7). As the learner's knowledge and learning competency increases, the educator gradually reduces the support provided (Ellis et al, 1994); once the learner has developed '*...more sophisticated cognitive systems, related to fields of learning such as mathematics or language, the system of knowledge itself becomes part of the scaffold or social support for the new learning*' (Raymond, 2000, p. 176). For instance, the use of Arabic in EFL classes as a learning support tool is progressively withdrawn as learners become able to complete the task or master the concepts independently. In this case, the use of Arabic is temporary and serves mainly to help the students build their own competence in the English language. At such stage, Arabic is not be required any more as a scaffold to EFL learning, given that English takes over and serves the same pedagogical purpose of facilitating input instruction.

8.2.3 Contradictions

Many studies have relied on the AT's principle of contradictions to bring sense and meaning to the complexities of change brought about by the use of new pedagogical tools (ICT for instance) in education (Murphy, 2008). However, few researchers have used this principle to investigate the role of L1 in L2 (Copland and Neokleous, 2010), and I could not find any published research that used it to investigate Arabic in EFL classes.

This research has uncovered that there are many contradictions within and between the components of the EFL teaching as an educational activity. It seems that the contradictions and tensions between the learning needs of the students and the past teaching habits of the EFL teachers led to some change that favours the use of Arabic in order to attend to these learning needs. As far as the policy makers are concerned, they seem to be in flagrant contradiction with the perceived college policy which promotes the use of 'English only'. In their interviews, the policy makers indicated that a judicious use of Arabic could be allowed in the EFL classes at the beginner's level. This change of heart could be attributed to another contradiction that exists between the 'English only' policy and the reality in the EFL classrooms. The fact is that the students join the preparatory year English program with very low proficiency levels in English and therefore require the use of Arabic to mediate EFL input comprehension. This pedagogical reality compels EFL teachers to resort to the use of Arabic as a pedagogical

response to the learning needs of their students. In so doing, they act in contradiction with the college policy.

On a positive note, it could safely be argued that the contradictions and the tensions created by the use of Arabic in the EFL classes have developed to bring about positive changes in the attitudes of the stakeholders. For instance, it could be claimed that these arising contradictions have helped in encouraging changes in the teachers' professional practice regarding the use of Arabic in EFL classes. They have argued that, as educational practitioners, they need to consider their students' expectations and beliefs in relation to the using of Arabic as a pedagogical tool in their EFL classes (Basharina, 2007).

These contradictions may also have resulted in a shift in the teachers' and students' roles resulting from the use of Arabic as a mediating tool. This shift of roles was caused by a contradiction between the tools and the division of roles as students have become teachers of other students, given that some teachers don't speak Arabic well enough to use it efficiently themselves. As a result of these contradictions, teachers have lost their position of control and they have shared the teaching task with their top achieving students who assist them with their teaching. Equally, weak students are getting information from both teachers and students as two sources that complement each other most of the time.

There were also contradictions caused by the teacher's attitudes and behaviours as some teachers said one thing and practiced another. Some teachers acted in contradiction to the policy in place and allowed the use of Arabic in their classes through the delegation of such use to their bright students. Others behaved in contradiction to their students' expectations and in contradiction to the reality in their classroom. They proposed arguments that are commensurate with the 'virtual position' (Macaro, 2009). However, some other teachers who initially stated that they only use English in their EFL classes made use of some Arabic during their observed classes. This discrepancy between what foreign teachers say they do and what they actually confirms the suggestions made by Polio and Duff (1994), where the authors proposed that L2 teachers are not always aware of the extent of their use of L1 in their L2 classes. Edstrom also reported that 'language teachers often find that their perceptions of their classroom practice do not match up with what they usually do' (2009, p.9). Other participant EFL teachers, especially the Arab ones, refrained from using any Arabic throughout their observed classes. This could be due to the stigma attached to these teachers that they overuse Arabic out of incompetence and laziness (AL-Abdan, 1992). Lower amounts of confidence and feelings of guilt also characterize the behavior of non-native teachers (Copland

and Neokleous, 2010). This pushed some teachers to adopt the 'English only' policy in order to appear to be politically correct and not purely out of conviction of its pedagogical benefits.

Finally, the policy makers have embraced a pragmatic view by acknowledging that the use of 'English only' with beginner students who don't understand what the teacher says is a waste of time and energy (PM1, Interviews). This is consistent with other findings that suggest that instructors display conflicts between their beliefs and their classroom practice (Russell and Schneiderheinze, 2005). However, through the implementation of the 'English only' policy, these policy makers acted in contradiction with the reality in the EFL classrooms where the proficiency level of the students requires the use of Arabic to achieve many pedagogical goals.

8.2.4 Teachers Cognition and the Post Method Era

In addition to finding an answer to the question about the role of Arabic in EFL classes, the research has also revealed reasons underpinning the participants' EFL teachers' attitudes and beliefs. It has emerged that the majority of the teachers were in support of the use of Arabic in EFL classes one way or another, while very few were against the practice. This brings to the discussion the notion of teachers' cognition, which includes the pedagogical principles that impact their teaching (Borg, 2006). The research has revealed that these EFL teachers fall along a 'continuum of perspectives' (Macaro, 2009). Thus, on one hand the majority of the teachers who support the use of Arabic in EFL classes would fall at the end of the continuum called 'the maximal position'. On the other hand, the few teachers who uphold the monolingual approach and promote "English only" in their EFL classes would fall at the other extreme of the continuum labelled 'the virtual position'. What is equally worth mentioning is that the teachers who adopted the maximal position, by using and allowing the use of Arabic in their EFL classes, have chosen to do so with full awareness that the college policy requires them to follow the virtual position that bans this practice.

The findings of this research have also revealed that the majority of the EFL participant teachers have taken ownership of their teaching by adopting an eclectic approach that suits their learners' needs and the realities in their classrooms. Such stance is symptomatic of the post method era that has already been discussed in Chapter Two. Many of these teachers have stated in their interviews, as a justification for their support for the use of Arabic in their EFL classes, that they have learned through experience what works for their students and therefore use it in their EFL teaching. It seems that these teachers feel confident enough to defy the 'English only' policy adopted by the college. In fact, they have subscribed to a pragmatic approach by using Arabic as a pedagogical tool that facilitates both teaching and

learning. This new-found perspective accounts for the number of contradictions involving these teachers, as it has already been identified in Chapter Seven. The 'beyond methods condition' (Kumaravadivelu, 2003), described here, has been brought about by the teacher's dissatisfaction with version of the communicative approach to EFL teaching that excludes the use of L1, and which has become the favoured method in Saudi Arabia.

The above mentioned findings have come to add to the discussion that has long been initiated around what constitutes the best method in foreign language teaching (Prabhu, 1990). According to Kumaravadivelu (2006), foreign language practitioners' attitudes towards the established methods have changed tremendously over the last two decades. The teaching of English of the speakers or other languages has moved from the domination of the communicative language teaching era that has been termed the post method era where critical and appropriate pedagogy appears to be the preferred practice. Critical pedagogy is based on a critical discourse towards language pedagogy wherein teachers have gained awareness of what is more effective in their classrooms and have adopted it as their own teaching method. In fact, EFL teachers need to draw on many disciplines and use all the contextual information and factors that affect their teaching. It seems that the EFL teachers who participated in this research do just that when they make use of Arabic to make their EFL teaching more effective and facilitate and hasten the learning of students. They capitalise on the fact that Arabic is at the core of Saudi students' learning strategies, and acts therefore as the code through which they learn. In addition, they also build their instruction on the students' prior learning that has been accumulated primarily in Arabic. This practice empowers the students and recognises them as knowledgeable learners and not simply as empty vessels or clean slates that need to be filled with new knowledge.

8.3 Implications and Recommendations

A direct implication of the findings of this research would be the call for a 'systematic' integration of L1 in L2 classes that Collins (1993) called for. Perhaps what is needed in the college that hosted this research - and other similar institutions in Saudi Arabia is a clear framework or protocol that gives guidance as to the specific purposes, functions and circumstances in which the use of Arabic is both acceptable and beneficial. On the whole, the implications of the findings of this research are listed below:

- Raising the awareness of all EFL education stakeholders about the value of Arabic as a useful pedagogical tool

- Inspiring EFL teachers to pilot the experience of the judicious use of Arabic in their EFL classes
- Including guidelines on L1 use in the training programmes of EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia and that of foreign teachers who are about to take jobs in Saudi Arabia
- Informing the college policy vis-à-vis the use of Arabic in EFL classes
- Teaching preparatory year students how to make proper use of Arabic as a learning strategy and as a scaffold for their EFL learning

Apart from the local implications of the findings summarised above, the research has also produced findings that could have far reaching implications. One of these findings is the usefulness of AT as a research tool for studying EFL classes. In fact, the research did not only reveal new roles played by Arabic as the students L1 in EFL classes, it has also proved that the significant value of AT in studying complex social phenomena such as the dynamics of the EFL classes as an educational activity system.

As it has already been indicated in Chapter Three, AT has been hailed as the academia's best kept secret by Engeström (1993), but has mostly been used to investigate learning and learning expansion in places of work as research contexts. Recently, its use in educational research has been confined to the research of computer mediated communication (CMC) and computer mediated learning through the analysis of the role of the computer as an artefact that mediates learning (e.g. Murphy, 2007; Robertson, 2008). To the best of my knowledge, the present research is the first research project that has made use of AT and its principles of mediation, expansion and contradiction to investigate the role of L1 in L2 classes. It is therefore the first study that has demonstrated that AT is a research tool is suitable for studying complex phenomenon such as the EFL classrooms.

The immediate implication of this claim is that future studies of this phenomenon, or similar phenomena, would benefit a lot from adopting AT as a conceptual framework seeing that it allows a holistic but flexible approach to studying complex educational matters that involve human goal-oriented activities. Such initiatives would contribute a great deal to the understanding of EFL classroom dynamics and would as well present insights from varying perspectives and angles.

Another key implication of the findings of this research is the need for a new pedagogical framework for EFL education in Saudi Arabia. In fact, most of the participants who opposed the use of Arabic in EFL classes showed a lack of awareness about the pedagogical significance of this tool. Most of these attitudes could be the result of the CLT's argument that English can

only be taught - and therefore learned - through English, and that the students' L1 is a learning hindrance in EFL classes; because its use usually results in language interference (Swan, 1985). In order to change this view and raise the awareness of all stakeholders in EFL education, a new pedagogical framework that includes the use of Arabic as a useful teaching aid needs to be developed.

The data collected by this research together with the evidence from the literature point towards the need for a protocol that presents a more methodical approach to the use of Arabic in EFL classes, following pre-defined and specific purposes, in line with Wigglesworth's (Wigglesworth, 2003) view that L1 is inevitable in L2 teaching and learning situations. This means that, EFL teachers will have to develop the skill of making the right decisions about when to use and when not to use this tool. This framework could be seen as an alternative pedagogy that seeks to tailor classroom pedagogies to the needs and requirements of the teaching-learning activity in that specific context.

The beginning of this approach could be seen in the statement made by the teachers to justify their support for the role of Arabic in their EFL classes. For instance, T2 stated that *'the issue of Arabic in EFL classes depends on the teachers themselves. If we think it's useful, it's up to the teachers to decide whether to use it or not'*. At the same time, T2 stressed that he only allows the use of Arabic when he feels that such use is necessary: *'Sometimes when they start using Arabic in class, I ask them if it's possible to use English. I tend to force them sometimes to think about the correct expression in English instead of using Arabic'* (Interviews, T2). This pragmatic approach was also echoed by T3 who explained: *'I am pragmatic, pragmatic in relation to teaching. I will use anything that works well for my students and my teaching and makes it more efficient, for that I'll use L1'*; however, Arabic *'shouldn't dominate your teaching it's a tool. It's just like using a tape recorder or a marker. So L1 is a pedagogical tool'* (Interviews, T3).

Such framework could follow the suggestion made by Atkinson (1993) who proposed a number of justifications for the use of L1 in L2 classes as shown by Table 8.1. Atkinson argued that such use can help to build rapport between teachers and students, facilitate comprehension and hence communication and interaction, and enhance students' motivation. These are all factors that support the view that L1 is an effective teaching tool in L2 classes. Atkinson's suggestion implies that novice teachers will need training and clear guidelines on how to make proper use of the students' L1 more than seasoned teachers would do. A strategy of choosing the language of instruction as the need arises in the EFL classroom

would be relevant for this purpose, although the target language, English in the case of this research, should be the default language. There is also need to consider Kumaravadivelu's argument for a pedagogy that is particular, practical and possible (Kumaravadivelu, 2001), or Wescheler's Functional Translation Method (1997) which focuses more on the use of language and just learning about it. The method also suggests using L1 to help learners to understand the meaning of words and use them to communicate. This new framework will also need to cater for a form of bilingual education that could provide significant pedagogical advantages (e.g., Baker 2001; Cummins 2000; CAL 2001).

In addition to the framework described above, these findings could as well contribute to the formulation of a college policy which would systemise the use of Arabic in EFL classes, through clearly distinguishing the judicious use of Arabic as a helpful pedagogical tool in EFL class and its misuse. The students', teachers' and policy makers' perceptions regarding the importance of Arabic use in EFL classes support the evidence used that supports that L1 plays important pedagogical roles in EFL classes. This is also consistent with what has now become the position adopted by a number of scholars (e.g., Cook, 2001; Collins, 1993; Cole, 1998; Schweers, 1999 and Wigglesworth, 2003). In fact, a policy maker suggested that the results of a research on the topic could be considered for piloting and perhaps even adoption:

> *If there is a research for any reason, whether it be a research paper to be published in a journal or for a PhD research project, a researcher who would investigate what the best practices in the field are in other institutions and come with an idea regarding the issue, we will try to use it here; customize it and try to apply it.* (Interviews, PM 1)

Finally, the findings of this research can also inform the recruitment and the training of EFL teachers. Thus, the findings are in line with Turnbull's view that teacher educators must help novice as well as experienced teachers to make principled decisions about the judicious use of the L1 in their L2 classes (Turnbull , 2001). For example, a direct implication of the findings could be the review of the teachers' training programme in Saudi Arabia or those planning to take up EFL teaching jobs in Saudi Arabia. Such training is crucial, given that the controversial issue for the EFL teachers in this part of the world has always been deciding on how to strike the right balance between using English and Arabic in their EFL classes and misusing it. In addition, it has long being argued that instructors moving to use new tools in their classes might need professional development opportunities to help them develop strategies to support their students' learning through the use of such tools (Murphy and Rodriguez-Manzanares 2008; Peruski, 2003). This much holds true for the EFL teachers in Saudi college preparatory

year programs who realise the pedagogical need to use Arabic as a teaching-learning tool in their classes. However, they all need training and guidance so that they are informed of the benefits of its judicious use and the drawbacks of its injudicious use.

This research has also aimed to pave the path for more empirical research to be conducted in this area. Such endeavours will contribute to gaining further insights into the extent to which a controlled and judicious use of Arabic could contribute to tangible learning outcomes in EFL classes. In addition, similar research involving female participants are needed to investigate whether gender differences could have an impact on the results.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a summary of the main findings of the research. It highlights that while the conclusion that Arabic plays the role of a mediating pedagogical tool in the EFL teaching-learning process is consistent with the findings of similar previous studies, the roles of Arabic as a tool that helps to expand EFL learning and as a source of contradictions among the different parts of the EFL teaching-learning activity have not received much attention. This research can therefore claim to be the first initiative to uncover these roles for Arabic as a students' L1. The findings have also been interpreted and related to the socio-cultural and educational context where this research took place in order to propose that the use of Arabic in Saudi EFL classes is both useful and necessary. This claim is due mainly to the established pedagogical reality in EFL classrooms. In fact, it has been observed that while EFL teachers would make use of all pedagogical means available to them (visuals, illustrations through examples, miming, etc.) to explain a language item or notion, the students would still fail to understand because they have been used to the use of Arabic as a teaching tool. It has also been suggested that the implications of the research findings are expected to impact on EFL teacher education and training programs. They should also contribute to the development of a new teaching framework that takes into consideration the useful role that Arabic has been found to play in EFL classes. Finally, the findings would contribute to raising the awareness of all EFL stakeholders regarding the role of Arabic in EFL education.

All in all, this thesis has presented the findings of the research that was carried out between 2008 and 2010 in a college in Saudi Arabia. It has sought to contribute to the understanding of the role of Arabic in EFL classes, and has indeed shed some light on the issue by providing evidence to help explain the attitudes of the students, teachers and policy makers. The research made use of a mixed methods approach to collect its data, and has also adopted the activity theory as a conceptual framework to analyse, discuss and interpret its findings.

The final conclusions suggest that Arabic plays a significant role in EFL classes through its mediation of the teaching-learning activity, its facilitation of the expansion of learning and as an instigator for change through the conflicts and contradictions its use engenders at various levels. It is suggested that these findings can serve to inform EFL teacher training courses, EFL teachers' recruitment as well as professional development programs for EFL in-service teachers. Finally, further research endeavours are encouraged to build on the findings of this research and contribute more to the understanding of the role of Arabic in EFL classes.

The present research also proposes that the socio-cultural heritage of teachers and learners influences their attitudes towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes. Findings suggest that teachers as well as students use Arabic as a mediating tool for the EFL teaching-learning activity as they are aware of its usefulness. Arabic is part of the learners' socio-cultural background, so they use it as a springboard or scaffolding to build new learning through the acquisition of new language functions. Equally, both teachers and students use Arabic to expand their learning of English. Finally, the use of Arabic in EFL classes has been identified as a source of contradictions at many levels, and these contradictions may initiate changes in both policies and attitudes.

The impetus of the research dates back to 2006, the year I started teaching English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. In the beginning, I only wanted to find out for myself whether there was a role for Arabic in EFL classes or not. This quest gradually developed and became a PhD research project in 2008. The research went through various stages of preparation, piloting, data collection and data analysis as is reflected by the present thesis. In fact, the thesis has been written to imitate the development of the project in the course of the various research stages that have already been mentioned.

Throughout the various parts of this research, there has been much anecdotal evidence that I find appropriate to share at this juncture. This class of evidence can be divided into three main categories: evidence that denotes the need to uphold the status quo and discourage investigating the use of Arabic in EFL classes, evidence that emanated mainly from EFL teachers who welcomed the idea and shared their thoughts on the findings, and more recent evidence that shows the usefulness of the study and the practicality of its findings.

Right from its inception as an idea, the research received negative comments related to the choice of the topic. These comments ranged from simple questions such 'why did you choose this topic in particular? Is it because you are Arab?', to cautions and warning such as 'you will get fired', the management wouldn't approve of this topic', or ' be ready to bear the

consequences'. These questions and comments did not put me off as I used to think the same way as the people who asked these questions. Going by the popular belief, I was a staunch believer that English should be taught in 'English only' and that only incompetent or lazy teachers would make use of Arabic to teach English. However, I soon realised that the reality in the classroom required a more pragmatic and practical approach that allowed a principled use of Arabic, especially with the students who are at the lower levels.

During the piloting stages of the research, it became clear to me that the majority of the EFL teachers who participated in this research have equally developed the same attitude towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes. Most participating students too have expressed their support for the idea. This became more evident during the data gathering stage of the main study. In preparation for an EFL conference held in Saudi Arabia, I presented the preliminary findings of the research to the EFL teachers in the college and their reactions were very encouraging as nearly all the present EFL teachers agreed with these findings. During the EFL conference, I had a unique opportunity to present these preliminary findings to EFL teachers from all over Saudi Arabia. These teachers gave me a standing ovation at the end of the presentation, and came to greet me at the front of the conference hall and expressed their gratitude to me for doing the research and for confirming that Arabic does have a role to play in EFL classes in Saudi Arabia. They added that the findings reflected their beliefs and expressed a viewpoint they have always wanted to put across but could not as the topic is controversial in nature. In fact, they reported to me that in some universities, EFL teachers have lost their jobs simply because they suggested the usefulness of Arabic in EFL classes. In fact, similar evidence was related to me by a participant teacher who did not accept my invitation for an interview. He explained that he had lost a job he loved because he expressed his views openly.

Following the conference presentation, I received emails from female colleagues who expressed their wish to carry out the same study involving female participants in order to investigate whether gender differences would have an impact on the role of Arabic in EFL classes. Incidentally, I have already mentioned in Chapter Four, that due to religious and cultural reasons, all my participants were male. Another female colleague who helped in proof-reading the final chapters of the thesis sent me few emails to express her agreement with the findings and report that she could identify with what has been reported by the research. She would also share incidents that took place in her EFL classes. Recently, she wanted to know if she could replicate the research on the female campus of the college that hosted this research.

This type of reaction was not only very encouraging to me as a researcher, but it was also extremely relevant for the research as the reactions came from EFL teaches working colleges and universities within the same context in which the research took place. For if the research has not been welcomed by practitioners who are insiders to the same socio-cultural and educational context, the impact of its findings would not have much value, and the research would therefore not contribute to changing the perceptions and perspectives it was intended to do.

As a matter of fact, this change of perspectives has materialised recently when I was called upon to set up and head the English Language Centre at the college where the research took place. With the support of the college dean, the centre has presented me with an opportunity to put the findings into practice through the initiation of a new beginners' level that allows the use of Arabic in EFL classes in order to build the basic skills of the students. Following a placement test that is held at the start of each semester to place the new students who are then divided into three levels: beginner or false beginner (currently called English Intro), elementary and pre-intermediate. The students who are registered in the first level have been deliberately assigned to bilingual teachers who could make use of Arabic to mediate the teaching learning process as they see fit. This implementation is also encouraging as this offered a unique opportunity where research findings from the EFL classroom have immediately found their way back to inform EFL education.

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Appendices

Note

In addition to the appendices below, all collect data either in print or digital form is available and will be made available if needed. Interview transcriptions, students' comments translations in English and classroom observation transcription and notes are also available. Due to their size, they could not be included here as appendices.

Appendix 1: Permission to do Research

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Yanbu Industrial City

The Royal Commission at Yanbu

Yanbu University College

22/01/2009

Dear Brahim Machaal,

With reference to your letter requesting access to YUC's classrooms, teachers and students for your research purposes, the Applied Linguistics Department is pleased to grant such access in order to help you with your research project.

Wishing you the best of luck!

Dr Majzoub Omer

Head of the Applied Linguistics Department

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

Dear participant,

This information sheet seeks to inform you about how the data that was collected/ recorded previously through questionnaires, interviews as well as audio and video recordings, and in which you were involved, will be used. If you agree with the content of this information sheet, please sign it to indicate that you agree with its content.

The present research project is set to investigate the role of Arabic in the teaching English as a foreign language at a Saudi college. It has been undertaken the background that while the usefulness of the mother tongue in foreign language teaching is well documented in many parts of the world, the official policy in Saudi Arabia still proscribes the practice. However, the reality in the EFL classrooms indicates that Arabic is used by both teachers and students to facilitate the teaching-learning process. It is therefore the purpose of this inquiry to assess this usage, find out what impact it has on the teaching-learning of English in the context mentioned above, and establish how this role shapes the attitudes of the stakeholders towards the practice.

There is very little research regarding the role of Arabic in Saudi EFL classes. This research will be an ambitious attempt to draw the attention to the topic as it can serve as an important foundation for future research in the field as well as benefit EFL teachers, EFL policy makers, EFL recruiters in Saudi Arabia and other similar contexts.

All data collected (via questionnaires, interviews as well as audio and video recordings) will be strictly kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of the research. Teacher identities will not be used as only codes (T1, T2, PM1, etc.) will be used in the in the final thesis to keep the anonymity of the participants. For the participants who would like a copy of the summary of the research, this will be provided after the research is completed.

In addition, data collected on paper (questionnaires) or in electronic form (audio and video recordings) will be stored for a period of ten years after the study. All data will be kept in a secured storage and will be destroyed after the expiry period.

As a research student at London Metropolitan University, this research has been approved by the London Metropolitan University Research Ethics Committee. Should you have any concerns about the way the research is being conducted, please contact the chairman of the Research Ethics Committee at London Metropolitan University at a.Hogan@londonmet.ac.uk . Further information regarding the research can be provided by my supervisor Dr Fiona English at f.English@londonmet.ac.uk

I thank you for your participation.

Brahim Machaal

Date: Signature:

Appendix 3: Participant Consent Form

Project Title: Assessing the Role of Arabic in EFL Classes: An Activity Theory Approach

Researcher: **Brahim Machaal**

Supervisor: **Dr Fiona English**

- I have read the Information Sheet related to the Research Data collection and I understand its content and implications.
- I am aware that the recorded/ collected data will only be used for this research project and I have no objection to such.
- I am aware that my identity and details will be kept confidential, although the information gathered will be published.
- I am aware that collected data will be securely stored that they and they will only be accessed by the researcher and authorised people.

The participant:

Signature.....**Date**.....

The research participant has been made aware of the use of the data collected, and has signed above to indicate that he grants the research permission to use the data involving him.

Signed by the researcher .....**Date**.....

Appendix 4: Students' Questionnaire (the Arabic version)

يندرج هذا الإستجواب في إطار بحث أكاديمي لتحضير شهادة دكتوراه مسجلة بجامعة لندن متروبوليتان ببريطانيا و يبحث جدوى إستخدام اللغة العربية داخل فصول اللغة الإنجليزية بالمرحلة التحضيرية (Engl 001 و Engl 002).

تنويه:

- المقصود باستخدام اللغة العربية هو الاستعانة بها بشكل محدود و في الحالات القصوى داخل فصول اللغة الإنجليزية.
- الرجاء عدم كتابة الإسم او الرقم الاكاديمي.
- الرجاء الاجابة عن الأسئلة التالية بما يتوافق مع موقفك الشخصي و بشكل يعبر عن وجهة نظرك الخاصة.

أ- معلومات عن الطالب

ما تقييمك لمستواك في اللغة الإنجليزية؟ ☐ ممتاز ☐ جيد ☐ متوسط ☐ ضعيف

المستوى الجامعي : ☐ Engl 002 ☐ Engl 001

ب- موقفك من إستخدام اللغة العربية داخل فصل اللغة الإنجليزية

1.1 يمكن للمدرسين و الطلبة إستخدام اللغة العربية داخل فصول اللغة الإنجليزية بالمرحلة التحضيرية.

☐ لا أوافق ابدا ☐ لا أوافق ☐ أوافق ☐ أوافق بشدة

2- إذا كنت ترى ان إستخدام اللغة العربية يساعد على تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية فلأي من الأسباب الآتية

	نعم	لا
2.1- لأنها تسهل التعلم		
2.2- لأنها تساعد على التعلم بشكل أسرع		
2.3- لأنها تساعد على التخلص من التوتر		
2.4- لأنها تساعد على الفهم		

2.5- لأسباب أخرى هي:

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3- إذا كنت ترى ان إستخدام اللغة العربية لا يساعد على تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية فلاي من النتائج التالية؟

	نعم	لا
3.1- الإتكال على الترجمة		
3.2- إحتكاك اقل باللغة الإنجليزية		
3.3- عادة دراسية سيئة		
3.4- الكسل الذهني لدى الطالب		

3.5- لأسباب أخرى هي:

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ج- فرص إستخدام ا للغة العربية داخل فصل اللغة الإنجليزية

4- هل ترى ان إستخدام اللغة العربية داخل فصل اللغة الإنجليزية يمكن ان يكون مجديا في الحالات التالية؟	نعم	لا
4.1- لشرح المفردات الغامضة		
4.2- لإختبار الفهم		
4.3- للدعابة و الترويح عن الطلاب		
4.4- لتحسيس الطلاب بالراحة و الثقة بالنفس		
4.5- لشرح التعليمات أثناء الاختبارات الدورية أو النهائية		
4.6- أثناء عمل المجموعات او الثنائيات		
4.5- لشرح بعض الفوارق اللغوية بين اللغة الإنجليزية و اللغة العربية		
4.6- لطلب المساعدة من الزملاء الطلاب		
4.7- لأسباب أخرى هي:		

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Appendix 5: Students' Questionnaire (translated)

London Metropolitan University

Students' Questionnaire

Assessing the use of Arabic in EFL Classrooms:
An Activity Theory Approach

By

Mr. Brahim Machaal
2009-2010

Part A: Demographics

College Level:	Engl001 □	Engl002 □		
English proficiency level:	Excellent □	Good □	Average □	Poor □

Part B: Attitudes

Please answer the following questions in a manner that reflects your personal opinions and attitudes toward the use of Arabic in EFL classrooms.

1.1-EFL teachers and students at prep year level should use some Arabic in the English classes.

□ completely disagree □ disagree □ agree □ completely agree

2- If you believe that Arabic may be used in English classes, is it because...?

2.1- it helps you learn easily Yes □ No □

2.2- it helps you learn quickly Yes □ No □

2.3- it makes you relax Yes □ No □

2.4- it helps you understand better Yes □ No □

2.5- Others; please specify:

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3- If you believe that Arabic should **not** be used in the EFL classroom, is it because....?

3.1 - it encourages dependency on Arabic Yes □ No □

3.2 - it diminishes exposure to English Yes □ No □

3.3- it becomes a bad learning habit Yes □ No □

3.4- it contributes to cognitive laziness (spoon feeding) Yes □ No □

3.5- Others; please specify:

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Part C: Possible uses of Arabic in EFL classes

4- In your opinion, could Arabic be useful for any of the following during EFL classes?

4.1- To explain difficult words Yes □ No □

4.2- To check understanding Yes □ No □

4.3- To crack jokes with students Yes □ No □

4.4- To make students feel relaxed and confident Yes □ No □

4.5- To explain exam instructions Yes □ No □

4.6- to help progress pair and group work Yes □ No □

4.7- To explain Arabic / English linguistic differences Yes □ No □

4.8- to seek help from fellow students Yes □ No □

4.9- Others; please specify:

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Appendix 6: Interview Protocol

1- Questions for the EFL teachers

- What is your attitude toward the use of the mother tongue in foreign language teaching?
- What is your attitude toward the use of Arabic in EFL classes?
- What 'impact does using Arabic have on English learning?
- What factors affect your language choice in class?
- How often should Arabic be used in EFL classes?
- For what purposes should Arabic be used in EFL classes?
- How would students be affected by the use of Arabic in the EFL class?
- How does the 'English only' policy affect teachers and their practices?
- What guidelines should be observed by the user of Arabic in EFL classes?
- Based on your observation, what do your students use Arabic for in EFL classes? (other questions were asked as they arose)

2- Questions for the policy makers

Departmental level

- What is your attitude towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes?
- Does the department or the college as a whole have a policy regarding the use of Arabic in EFL classes?
- What is the rationale behind this policy if any?
- In case there is no policy, what would a departmental policy look like? What would be its broad lines?
- On what grounds will this policy be based?
- What will be its impact on the EFL education in general?
- What would its purpose be?(other questions were asked as they arose)

College Level

- What is your attitude towards the use of Arabic in EFL classes?
- What is the official policy regarding the use of Arabic in EFL classes?
- If there are no such policy, what would a policy related to this issue look like?
- If there are policies in this regard, what is their aim? What are they based on?

Appendix 7: Class Observation check list

London Metropolitan University

Assessing the Role of Arabic in EFL Classes: An Activity Theory Approach

Observer: Brahim Machaal

Class observation check list

	Activity	Yes	No
1	Is the instructor Arabic speaking?		
2	Did the students seem relaxed?		
3	Did the instructor seem relaxed?		
4	Did the students and teacher give their consent to the use of the video camera?		
5	Was the instructor a native-speaker or near native-speaker of English?		
6	Was English used as a medium of instruction all or most of the time?		
7	Did the students use Arabic?		
8	Did the students use Arabic to speak to each other?		
9	Did the students use Arabic to communicate with the teacher?		
10	Did the students use Arabic during pair or group work?		
11	Did the students use Arabic to seek each other's' help?		
12	Did the instructor use Arabic?		
13	Did the instructor use Arabic to explain vocabulary?		
14	Did the instructor use Arabic to explain grammar or language differences?		
15	Did the instructor use translation to check understanding?		
16	Did the instructor assist students; rather than provide them with the translation in Arabic?		
17	Did the instructor try a variety of techniques to convey the meaning of the new words?		
18	Was Arabic used only as the last resort?		
19	Was English used the majority of the time throughout the class?		
20	Did the use of Arabic seem to have any learning benefits?		