

Use of L1 in ESL classes: A study of teachers' perceptions and practices

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Abstract

This study attempted to gain understanding of the place of Arabic in low-proficiency English classes in a specific language centre in Oman by focusing on a sample of ten Arab teachers. The teachers were chosen from two programmes where the students are more or less beginners in English. To achieve the aim mentioned above, this study made use of two qualitative research methods: two group interviews and four classroom observations. Each group interview consisted of five teachers with different teaching experiences. The study revealed that teachers do use Arabic in their lessons as a last resort after they try various teaching methods first. When they realise that their students could not understand a specific language item after using those methods, they resort to Arabic. However, they perceive it negatively in the classroom when students start using it, fearing that it will destroy the students' opportunities to practice the target language. Arabic, as the study highlighted, is used for both teaching purposes, such as teaching some grammatical structures and non-teaching purposes, such as throwing jokes. It is recommended that more research should be done on ways of using Arabic in a specific language skill, especially grammar and vocabulary rather than focusing on all the skills in a single study. It is also suggested that when writing a policy regarding the scope of using Arabic in English classes, the choice should be left to teachers when and how to use it (239).

Keywords: Arabic, L1, English, L2, perceptions, Language Centre, beginning students

Themes: Education Theory and Practice

