

TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE USE OF FIRST LANGUAGE IN ARABIC CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

The use of the target language has long been considered an important principle of second language (L2) instruction. Previous research has attempted to quantify the amount of the first language (L1) used in the classroom and has explored the purposes or functions of teachers' 'lapses' into their students' L1. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the teachers' attitudes towards the use of Bahasa Indonesia in Arabic language classroom. Data was collected based on the interviews of the teachers. The respondents of this study were two experienced teachers who have more than 15 years of teaching experience. The findings indicated that teachers prefer using Arabic language itself in Arabic language classroom. The Direct Method was applied as teaching strategies. As a result, students are able to speak Arabic without any sense of shame and fear.

Keywords: First language, target language, Arabic classroom, qualitative.

INTRODUCTION:

The issues on whether to use or not to use students' first language (L1) in second language (L2) classroom have generated increasingly debates among researchers and language teachers for many years. Some teachers feel that L1 can be used in certain circumstances. For instance, it can be used to increase students' comprehension and learning of L2 (Cook, 2001; Tang, 2002), present new vocabularies, explain difficult grammar and give instructions as well as suggestions (Mirza, Mahmus, & Jabbar, 2012). According to Cole (1998), L1 is most useful for novices since students at this level have little or no knowledge about L2. It also can be used to introduce the major differences between L1 and L2, to save a lot of guessing, to motivate students and to reduce their anxiety. On the other hand, Mahadeo (2006) asserts that the use of L1 is a barrier to learning L2 and it also prevents the student from acquiring the valuable input in the L2 (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Although there are a number of studies discussed the use of L1 in EFL classroom, but the use of Bahasa as a students' L1 in Arabic as a foreign language (AFL) classroom has not been studied enough to inform AFL pedagogies. This study is a contribution to filling the existing knowledge gap. It investigates the attitudes of AFL teachers and seek to determine the role of Bahasa in AFL classes.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

THE USE OF L1 IN MAJOR L2 METHODOLOGIES:

Language teachers have been debating whether or not to use the L1 in the L2 teaching. Some teacher have the opinion that L1 may be used under certain limitations and appropriate (Cole, 1998) and others feel that L1 should not be allowed at all because it prevents students to learn L2 (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Nazary (2008) asserted that in the field of L2, there are several common classifications of methods which deal with the role of L1 in the L2 classroom: Traditional methods (Grammar Translation Method (GTM), Direct Method (DM), Audio-lingual Method and Communicative Methods).

The GTM is usually conducted in the students' L1 to help them understand their L1 better through translation and analysis of the L2 grammar (Hadley, 2001). Grammar rules are learned deductively; students learn grammar rules by rote, and then practice the rules by doing grammar drills and translating sentences to and from the target language. There is little use of L2 and the instruction is given in the students' L1 (Celce-Murcia, 1991). More attention is paid to the form of the sentences being translated than to their content. There are two main goals to grammar-translation classes. One is to develop students' reading ability to a level where they can read literature in the target language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The other is to develop students' general mental discipline. According to Hamdallah (1999), this method depends heavily on translating to the students' L1.

The DM of teaching is not limited to but often used in teaching L2. This method refrains from using the learners' L1 and uses only the L2. The aim of this method is to emphasize language use by direct contact with the L2 in meaningful situations. It represents critical reaction to the teaching methods of the ancient Grammar Translation Method which produced knowledge about language rather than knowledge of language. The general goal of the direct method is to provide learners with a practically useful knowledge of language. They should learn to speak and understand the target language in everyday situations

The audio-lingual method is a style of teaching used in teaching foreign languages. It was developed in an attempt to address some of the perceived weaknesses of the direct method. It is based on behaviourist theory, which professes that certain traits of living things, and in this case humans, could be trained through a system of reinforcement—correct use of a trait would receive positive feedback while incorrect use of that trait would receive negative feedback. This approach to language learning was similar to the direct method. Like the direct method, the audio-lingual method advised that students be taught a language directly, without using the students' native language to explain new words or grammar in the target language. However, unlike the direct method, the audio-lingual method didn't focus on teaching vocabulary. Rather, the teacher drilled students in the use of grammar.

The communicative method is an approach to the teaching of foreign languages that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. According to Hamdallah (1999) and Hadley (2001), the communicative approach is one of the most popular language teaching approach today. This approach has raised the ban on using L1 in the L2 learning, however limited L1 use is allowed in the L2 classroom (Celce-Murcia, 1991; Hamdallah, 1999; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The use of L2 in the foreign language classroom needs to be maximized in order to develop their language skills. According to Medgyes (1999), the use of mother tongue in classroom has been one of the greatest dilemmas in the foreign language class for nearly a century. Although learners should be exposed to the second language as much as possible, but Nation (2001) argued that the L1 play an essential role in communicating meaning in L2 teaching.

REASONS FOR USING L1 IN THE L2 CLASSROOM:

The bilingual approach has been accepted by researchers who believe that specific use of L1 is a helpful technique in the L2 classroom. Thus, Many researchers have figured ways out to use L1 into the L2 teaching efficiently. For instants, Tang (2002) often use L1 in low and medium proficiency level in English classes to give instructions, explain meanings of words, explain complex ideas and explain complex grammar points. Students will understand better when the explanations of the subject matters are given in their own language. Alshammari (2011) and Machaal (2012) argue that the use of L1 can save teachers' time of explaining, increase students' understanding and make the learning process more effective. The use of L1 with novices has verified to be a very useful and valuable device in enhancing students' understanding. Another significant reason for teachers' use of the L1 in the L2 classroom is to build natural relationship between teachers and their students. There is no obstacle between teachers and their students (Turgut & İrgin, 2009). The communication between teachers and students become easier (Nation, 2003). Accordingly, students feel free to ask their teachers.

The proponents of the code-switching theory argue that when teachers use code-switching to put their message across, their behaviour is similar to naturally occurring code-switching activities that take place in various real-life situations (Macaro, 2009). This optimal use of L1 was defined as one "where code-switching in broadly communicative classrooms can enhance second language acquisition and/or proficiency better than second language exclusivity" (Macaro, 2009, p.38). A number of scholars seem to share this view (Atkinson, 1987; Auerbach, 1993; Cook, 2001). Furthermore, the usefulness of L1 as a cognitive and mediating learning tool has been gaining significance for some time already (Macaro, 2009). For instance, Swain and Lapkin acknowledged 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.

Harbord (1992) concluded that there are three reasons for using L1 in the classroom. They are: facilitating communication, facilitating teacher-student relationships, and facilitating the learning of L2. Cook (2001) elaborated further by stating teachers should use L1 to convey meaning and organize the class. Students can use it for scaffolding (building up the basics, from which further learning can be processed) and for cooperative learning with fellow classmates. Perhaps the biggest reason for using L1 in the classroom though, is that it can save a lot of time and confusion (Harbord, 1992).

TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS L1 USE IN THE L2 CLASSROOM:

There have been a number of researches on the use of L1 in L2 classes. Harbord (1992) for example, indicated that many second language teachers have attempted to create English-only classrooms but unfortunately, it led to students misunderstanding. He, therefore, drew the conclusion to use translation method to make student understand better. This view was in line with researches done by Cameron (2001) and McCann (2005) who proposed that translation can be used positively in explaining the structures of language and giving feedback. Turnbull (2001) stressed that teachers may use L1 in appropriate ways to help students understand unfamiliar words.

Al-Nofaie (2010) carried out a study to examine the attitudes of three teachers and 30 students in Saudi

school toward using L1 in English classes. The results showed that the participants' use of L1 seems to be systematic. Teachers preferred using L1 with novices and low achieving students to assist them comprehend the new language, and for specific reasons. For instants, L1 was used to explain grammatical terms, introduce new vocabulary and give exam instructions. Alshammari (2011) investigated the opinions of teachers and students about the use of mother tongue in foreign language classroom. The findings revealed that the proper use of L1 in L2 classroom seems not to affect students' exposure to the L2. It may be needed to increase students' comprehension.

These views were supported by Machaal (2012) and Salah & Farrah (2012). Machaal (2012) verified the attitudes and beliefs of the students, foreign language teachers and policy makers towards the use of first language in foreign language classes. The findings showed that most participants agreed and supported the use of L1 in L2 classroom. They accepted that L1 should be used when necessary and it could be useful in explaining vocabularies and facilitating comprehension. While Salah & Farrah (2012) in their study aimed to investigate teachers' perceptions toward using mother tongue in the target language classroom. The study found that L1 should be occasionally used to simplify the teaching and learning processes.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST USING L1:

Some researchers argue that using L1 in the L2 classroom might affect students' learning process negatively since it reduces the learners' exposure to the L2 and reduces their opportunities for using the target language (Deller & Rinvoluti, 2002; Polio & Duff, 1994). According to Krashen & Terrell (1983), L1 should not be used in the L2 classroom to enhance students' exposure to the L2, since students acquire the L2 through the same way they acquire their L1.

Another argument is interference from the mother tongue. Interference can make difficulty in the L2 learning and to avoid that, L1 should be separated in L2 learning (Cook, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). According to Harbord (1992), student maybe assume that word by word translation is a meaningful techniques if teachers overuse L1 in their teaching, therefore they will work towards transferring meaning in L2 learning. Phillipson (1992) asserts that the more L2 is taught the better the result. In line with his study, Auerbach (1993) indicates that students will learn more quickly if the more they are exposed to L2; as they hear and use L2, they will internalize it and begin to think in L2. Similarly, Polio & Duff (1994, p. 322) show that using L1 "prevent students from receiving input they might be exposed to in social situations outside the classroom".

RESEARCH QUESTION:

The current study attempts at answering the following questions:

CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION:

What is the teaching Arabic as a foreign language to non-native Arabic teachers in Higher learning Institution in Indonesia?

SUB RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- 1.What are the attitudes of the teachers towards the use of Bahasa Indonesia in Arabic language classroom?
- 2.How do the teachers conduct the AFL classes?
- 3.What resources and teaching methodologies used by the teachers?
- 4.What are the teachers' suggestions to enhance the teaching of AFL to the non-native learners in the Institution?

METHODOLOGY:

PARTICIPANTS:

The study was carried out in a higher learning institution in Indonesia. For selecting the institution and

the participants, a purposive sampling was applied. The study included two experienced lecturers who have more than 15 years of teaching experiences. The opinion of the experienced teachers are helpful and it should be taken into consideration (Nunan, 1992). The participants were chosen based on their position in the institution. In administrative position, the informant 1 is a deputy rector and informant 2 is a head of Arabic department.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT AND PROCEDURES FOR DATA COLLECTION:

Interviews method was applied for data collection. Teachers' attitudes were investigated qualitatively through semi-structured interviews only due to their small number. The interview sessions were conducted during 30-45 minutes. The interviewees' responses were recorded during the interviews. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed, summarized and coded. All transcripts were read several times to obtain a thorough understanding.

INTER-RATER RELIABILITIES:

Inter-rater reliabilities was used in this study to assess the degree to which two or more evaluators using the same rating scale give the same rating to an identical observable situation. The inter-raters were given the full transcript to state the agreement with the themes developed by the researcher. The raters were Associate Professors from Malaysia Public Higher Education Institution. They were experts in Arabic as a second language and were knowledgeable in developing themes. The inter-raters reliability was calculated using a formula as follow:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Number of agreement}}{\text{Total number of agreement + disagreement}} \times 100$$

The first rater produced 88.24%, and the second rater generated 100%. The average of the two raters is 94.12% which indicate a good reliability.

PILOT STUDY:

A pilot study is designed to test logistics and gather information prior to a real study, in order to establish the issues to be addressed in the real study. A good research strategy requires careful planning and a pilot study will often be a part of this strategy. According to Wiersma (2000), a pilot study should be done to detect some unclear statements, poorly understood sentences, repeated question or unneeded questions. Therefore, the pilot study was carried by interviewing an Associate Professor from a Malaysia Public University who has more than 15 years of experience in teaching Islamic studies and Arabic language.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

What are the attitudes of the teachers towards the use of Bahasa Indonesia in Arabic language classroom?

THEME 1: PROHIBITION OF USING BAHASA:

The study revealed that the participants are very strict about using L1. In this study, the teachers are reluctant in allowing students to use L1 in or outside the classroom. Students must use Arabic when they want to interact among them or with teachers. They are forced to use Arabic in their daily activities. They will be punished when using L1 in the school area. Teachers prohibit students from using L1 to increase students' exposure to the L2 and provide them with sufficient opportunities to practise Arabic. Students will learn more quickly when they are exposed to the L2, because they hear and use Arabic, they try to think in Arabic. This finding supports the belief that L2 is best learned through the exposure to the language itself (Polio & Duff, 1994).

THEME 2: LANGUAGE OF RELIGION:

Arabic language is the Quranic language. It is a language of religion. All Islamic studies subjects are taught in Arabic. Arabic language and Islamic studies cannot be separated. Students need to learn the

Arabic language before understanding Islamic knowledge. For example, Informant 1 stated:

...Arabic language is more important because it is a language of religion. (I1, DU 102)...Islamic jurisprudence use Arabic. Exegesis, Tajweed also use Arabic, Hadith use Arabic. .. All Islamic studies subjects are in Arabic (I1, DU 103)

How do the teachers conduct the AFL classes?

THEME 1: OBLIGATION OF USING ARABIC LANGUAGE:

The use of Arabic language is compulsory either in classroom or outside classroom. Students are required to write, read and speak Arabic. The reason of this obligation is to provide students with sufficient opportunities to practice Arabic language. Monolingual approach results in increasing confidence in speaking and listening skills, creating more realistic environment for the students.

THEME 2: HABITUATE:

The frequently use of Arabic language in Arabic classroom whether in writing, reading or speaking, will lead the students familiar with Arabic language and they can get accustomed to the Arabic language. The focus on target language can increase students' communication and stimulate both conscious and unconscious learning.

THEME 3: MINIMUM TRANSLATION:

Arabic must be used as much as possible in the Arabic language classroom to expose students to sufficient Arabic. But in a few cases, if students did not understand the meaning of a word, and it cannot be explained by a body language, pictures, drawing or other techniques, teacher were allowed to use L1 sometimes and for specific reasons. For example, Informant 2 stated:

...They can translate it into Bahasa Indonesia, but should be one time only. For instance, the word "jauhar" (diamond), it is difficult to explain in Arabic, and there is no object can be used to explain it... so, they translate it into Bahasa Indonesia...and it could not be written in the whiteboard. (I2, DU 53)

THEME 4: DRILL AND PRACTICES:

Drills are usually repetitive and are used as a reinforcement tool. Effective use of drill and practice depends on the recognition of the type of skill being developed, and the use of appropriate strategies to develop these competencies. Teachers use drill and practice activities to help their students master the materials at their own pace. The drill and practice activities mainly for the beginning learner or for students who are experiencing learning problems. In this institution, after every Morning Prayer, students will be provided with the drills and tests to help improve their Arabic language efficiency. They are usually assisted by senior students who are more experts and more knowledgeable.

What resources and teaching methodologies used by the teachers?

THEME 1: DIRECT METHOD:

Teachers use direct method when teaching Arabic language. Meaning that, L1 is inhibited in teaching L2. The purpose of using direct method is to make the learning of Arabic interesting and lively by establishing direct bond between a word and its meaning. Informant 1 stated:

... by means of direct method, so, see and speak, or see and imitate, that's all, no translation. So, translation in our method is prohibited (I1, DU 40)

The central of Direct Method is the association of words and sentences with their meaning through demonstration, dramatizing, painting, etc. Direct Method involves all discussion in the target language.

The teacher uses examples of language in order to inductively teach grammar; students are to try to guess the rules of the language by the examples provided. Teachers interact with the students a lot, asking them questions about relevant topics and trying to use the grammatical structure of the day in the conversation. Accuracy is sought and errors are corrected.

THEME 2: ROLE PLAY:

In order to let students speak Arabic, teachers have to conduct some events such as Arabic drama or Arabic series. The reason behind this event is not only to let students speak, but also to let them see and hear what are showed in Arabic drama or series. The more they hear, the more they get familiar with Arabic language.

THEME 3: TEXT BOOKS:

Teaching language must be in the real context. This institution uses non-classical books as students' textbook, such as *kitab an-nahw al-wadih* for teaching Arabic syntax. Some students' textbooks are written by teachers such as morphology books and rhetoric book. The self-written textbooks are based on the real context so that students may understand better.

Today, curriculum in most subjects is built around themes. For example, a teacher might teach a unit on "What Does That Symbol Mean?" involving the use of symbols in Arabic and are based on the local culture. Language teachers can tie instruction to these themes to make language instruction more meaningful and seamlessly integrated into the school day. Students not only learn the language, but also content and culture. Thematic planning makes instruction more comprehensible because the theme creates a meaningful context. When students are studying a thematic unit, they are using their new language skills in context—and not simply learning vocabulary in isolation.

THEME 4: ENVIRONMENT:

The findings showed that teachers in this institution never used language technology in teaching Arabic language. They built an Arabic environment within the campus. Students acquire Arabic language through that environment. Informant 2 stated:

... In term of teaching Arabic, we do not use language technology... We use this existing environment, like living laboratory, large laboratory (I2, DU 76)

The environment affects second language acquisition. An environment which encourages the greatest amount of use of the language is beneficial. People use an 'affective filter' that regulates how much input is received by a language processing mechanism. If the affective filter is over-used, a person tries to compose grammatically perfect sentences every times he/she speaks, and if it is underused he/she speaks without regard to the 'rules' he/she is aware of. The optimal user of the affective filter speaks naturally and often and eventually incorporates more rules into his/her speech. In this way, the brain is provided with more experience and input while also progressing toward more fluent speech

What are the teachers' suggestions to enhance the teaching of AFL to the non-native learners in the Institution?

THEME 1: COMMITMENT:

Teachers' commitment in using Arabic language with the students will help improve student language acquisition. When teachers always use Arabic in their daily activities, they show positive attitude to their students. Consequently, students will be accustomed to using Arabic when they hear the teachers speak Arabic exclusively. Informant 1 stated:

...the more important, the lecturers also speak Arabic in front of students, of course, there must have students who want to talk just like their teachers (I1, DU. 122).

Informant 2 stated:

...require teachers' commitment, as long as the teachers do not speak Malay or Indonesian with their students, the students will become committed (I2, DU 101)

THEME 2: CONTINUOUS PRACTICE:

Practice make perfect. Second language acquisition requires continuous practice. Everyone knows the importance of language practice for language learners. Repetition seems to be a one of the common tools that people use to practice. Limited repetition may have a limited role, especially with regards to some aspects of pronunciation. However the thing to remember is that language is fluid and creative. So learning language by repetition is counter intuitive. Respecting this fluidity and creativity is important and should not be under-rated.

Language is so connected to who we are that it is difficult to separate ourselves from the language we use. We speak what we think or feel and the connection between words and our experience (including actions at times) is instantaneous. So we need to be mindful that wherever possible the practice that we do needs to honour this connection. If it does not, then we are practicing in a way that does not call on the faculties that we use when we are actually using the language in real life.

CONCLUSION:

Arabic learning is increasingly gaining a place in Muslim society. Many people felt that Arabic is the language need to be learned because of its privileges as well as its importance in our daily life. Arabic language classes are also open in many schools and higher learning institutions. Many parents are aware of the importance of the Arabic language and they are racing to send their children to learn Arabic. But to what extent the teaching of Arabic language classes that have an impact on the students? Will they be able to speak well and use the right language and fluent Arabic?

Krashen & Terrell (1983) mainly focus on the meaning and the ability to communicate because they assume that communication is the main function of language. They emphasize to the importance of vocabulary and see that language as a tool to communicate and convey the meaning of the message. Therefore, language acquisition is only possible when people are able to understand a message in the second language they learnt.

The result showed that the percentage of using *Bahasa* in the teaching of Arabic is very small and almost nil. Teachers only use bahasa in a desperate situation and they are allowed only one word in a class session. They prefer using Arabic language itself to teach Arabic. They inhibit students from using L1 and focus on L2 to enhance communication and also to create confidence learners and challenge them to communicate with others through their limited language. Because of the prohibition of using L1 in the school campus, this institution is able to educate its students to master Arabic language.

Language teaching requires a continuous process and language itself should always be practiced in teaching and learning. This is to ensure that students fully master all the required skills such as reading, listening, writing and speaking skills. Learning the language would be better if teachers are able to organize lesson plans effectively, use appropriately and effectively techniques and methods of teaching and ensure lessons run properly.

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