

## STUDENT'S EXPERIENCES IN USING MALAY LANGUAGE (L1) IN ARABIC LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Pengalaman Murid Dalam Menggunakan Bahasa Melayu (Bahasa Pertama) Di Dalam Bilik Darjah Bahasa Arab

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### ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study sought to explore how the student responds towards the use of Malay language (L1) in Arabic language (L2) classroom. This study enriches the literature by investigating the experience of Arabic language classroom students regarding the utilization of Arabic and Malay languages in their Arabic classes. The data gathering consists of a semi-structured interview with a student selected through purposive sampling based on her extensive experience of more than ten years in learning Arabic as a second language. A qualitative approach was utilised to analyse the data. The data were analysed and coded using thematic analysis to identify overall themes and patterns throughout the data. The finding of this study yields into four parts; learning aid for explaining vocabularies, L1 use as a socialization tool, reducing anxiety and improving self-confidence, and the negative aspect of using L1. However, more research should be carried out to see if the results are similar or even if there are other uses of L1. Another option that can be considered as further research is the quantity of the use of L1 in regard to students' level of language proficiency.

**Keywords:** second language acquisition, first language acquisition, language transfer, language of instruction.

### ABSTRAK

*Kajian penyelidikan kualitatif ini bertujuan untuk meneroka bagaimana tindak balas murid terhadap penggunaan bahasa Melayu (L1) dalam bilik darjah bahasa Arab (L2). Kajian ini memperkayakan literatur dengan menyiasat pandangan murid bilik darjah bahasa Arab mengenai penggunaan bahasa Arab dan Melayu dalam kelas bahasa Arabnya. Pengumpulan data merangkumi temu bual secara separa struktur dengan seorang murid yang dipilih melalui persampelan bertujuan berdasarkan pengalamannya yang luas selama lebih dari sepuluh tahun dalam mempelajari bahasa Arab sebagai bahasa kedua. Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Data dianalisis dan dikod menggunakan analisis tematik untuk mengenal pasti tema-tema dominan dan corak yang lazim. Kajian ini menghasilkan empat bahagian; bantuan pembelajaran untuk menjelaskan kosa kata, penggunaan L1 sebagai alat sosialisasi, mengurangkan kerisauan dan meningkatkan keyakinan diri, dan aspek negatif penggunaan L1. Walau bagaimanapun, penyelidikan lebih lanjut perlu dijalankan untuk melihat sama ada hasilnya serupa atau jika terdapat kegunaan L1 yang lain. Pilihan lain yang boleh dipertimbangkan sebagai penyelidikan lanjut adalah kuantiti penggunaan L1 berdasarkan tahap kemahiran bahasa pelajar.*

**Kata kunci:** pemerolehan bahasa kedua, pemerolehan bahasa pertama, pemindahan bahasa, bahasa pengajaran.

## INTRODUCTION

Nazary (2008) stated that within the realm of second language acquisition, there exist several prevalent methodological classifications concerning the incorporation of the first language (L1) in the L2 classroom. These classifications include Traditional methods or the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), Direct Method (DM), Audio-lingual Method, and Communicative Methods (CM). The GTM primarily involves instruction conducted in the students' L1, aiming to enhance their understanding of their native language through translation and analysis of L2 grammar. Students typically learn grammar rules deductively, memorizing them and then practicing through grammar drills and translation exercises between the two languages. L2 usage is minimal, with instruction predominantly in the students' L1. The focus lies more on the structure of the translated sentences rather than their meaning. GTM has two main goals. Firstly, they aim to enhance students' reading proficiency so they can engage with literature in the target language effectively. Secondly, they seek to cultivate students' overall cognitive abilities.

Research has increasingly highlighted the pedagogical benefits of incorporating L1 in L2 instruction. For example, Cook (2001) and Nation (2003) emphasize the strategic use of L1 to facilitate comprehension and reduce cognitive load, enabling learners to better grasp complex L2 concepts. Cook (2001) argued that L1 can serve as a valuable resource in explaining difficult grammar points, translating unfamiliar vocabulary, and managing classroom interactions, thus making the learning process more efficient and less stressful for students. Nation (2003) further supported this by demonstrating that the use of L1 can enhance the learning experience, particularly at the initial stages of language acquisition when students' proficiency in L2 is still developing.

Recent studies continue to affirm the beneficial role of using the first language (L1) in second language (L2) classrooms. For example, Yüzlü and Atay (2020) found that the judicious use of L1 significantly aids in promoting L2 oral production and comprehension, particularly for students at lower proficiency levels. This study highlighted that students exposed to L1 use had better speaking skills and more positive perceptions of L2 learning environments compared to those taught exclusively through L2. Similarly, Kerr (2019) reported that strategic code-switching between L1 and L2 enhances understanding and retention of complex L2 structures. This approach helps reduce cognitive load, making it easier for students to grasp difficult concepts in the target language.

However, despite these demonstrated benefits, there remains a preference among some educators for minimizing L1 use in L2 classrooms. Hall and Cook (2012) discussed the prevalence of monolingual teaching approaches that prioritize exclusive L2 use, based on the belief that maximum exposure to the L2 is crucial for effective language acquisition. This approach aims to immerse students in an L2-rich environment, which some argue mimics natural language acquisition processes. Similarly, a study by Goh and Burns (2012) emphasized the continued use of immersion models in language teaching, where L1 use is minimized to create a more authentic L2 learning experience.

While several studies have examined the utilization of the native language (L1) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, there has been relatively little exploration of this issue in the context of Arabic language instruction as a foreign language. Zaini et al. (2019) observed that many instructors still underutilize Arabic in their teaching, particularly neglecting listening and speaking skills under the assumption of their insignificance. Recent research has started to address the use of the Malay language in Arabic language classrooms. For example, Mat and Ahmad (2023) explored the positive impacts of integrating Malay in Arabic instruction, highlighting enhanced student comprehension and reduced anxiety levels. Similarly, Baharudin (2017) found that strategic use of Malay in Arabic classrooms improved vocabulary retention and facilitated better understanding of complex grammatical structures.

Given the scarcity of research addressing these concerns in Arabic language classrooms, this study aims to fill this gap by conducting a thorough investigation into the use of the Malay language in Arabic language instruction. Additionally, while there is a substantial body of literature focusing on

teachers' experiences regarding the use of the first language in Arabic language instruction, there has been less attention given to students' viewpoints. Examining this phenomenon from the students' experiences will enrich understanding in the field, as it is essential to consider both educators' and students' experiences and the factors influencing them. The anticipated outcomes of this research are expected to inform educational policymakers and prompt a re-evaluation of instructional strategies in line with the students' needs—the primary participants in the classroom and the learning process. In light of this, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature by investigating Arabic language students' attitudes towards the use of Arabic and Malay in their Arabic language classes.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Reviewing the literature will pull us back towards the theories of bilingualism. There are many theories about bilingualism and, therefore, different opinions. The Common Underlying Proficiency model introduced by Cummins (2000) describes a potential mechanism through which cross-language transfer could occur. According to this model, proficiencies in the first language (L1) and second language (L2) are not distinct skills. Despite surface differences between languages, L1 and L2 are inherently interconnected. As proficiency in one language grows, so does language-independent knowledge (termed as the Common Underlying Proficiency), which aids in the acquisition of skills in both languages. Exposure to either L1 or L2 contributes to the development of this Common Underlying Proficiency, potentially enabling individuals to transfer knowledge across languages. The main idea behind this theory is that when students learn one language, they acquire a bank of skills and implicit metalinguistic knowledge that they can draw upon when they learn subsequent languages. This Common Underlying Proficiency provides the base language support for both the first and the second language. Anything that is learned in either language would then become part of this bank to be drawn upon when needed across languages. This theory has also been used to explain why it becomes easier to learn a third or fourth language.

Upon careful examination of the literature, it becomes apparent that there are two predominant perspectives concerning the utilization of the First Language (L1) in English as a Foreign Language classrooms (EFL). The pessimistic viewpoint (Harmer, 2001; Swain et al., 2011; Littlewood & Yu, 2011) contends that permitting the use of L1 does not enhance learners' cognitive abilities but may result in the inappropriate transfer of undesirable language patterns from L1 to L2, thus advocating for its exclusion. This group argues that integrating L1 into EFL classrooms fails to significantly benefit students' acquisition of the target language. Mahadeo (2006) further posited that reliance on L1 acts as a barrier to Second Language (L2) acquisition and may impede students from accessing valuable input in the L2 (Krashen, 1983). In contrast, the optimistic perspective argues that when L1 is used judiciously and indispensably in EFL classrooms, it proves advantageous rather than obstructive (Afzal, 2013; Elridge, 1996; Spahiu, 2013; Voicu, 2012). Brookes-Lewis (2009) asserted that the inclusion of L1 in L2 classrooms is inevitable and can even positively contribute to L2 learning. Similarly, Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) noted that the utilization of L1 can provide students with supplementary cognitive support, enabling them to analyze language and operate at a higher level compared to when they are confined to using only their L2.

Cole (1998) also proposed that L1 is particularly beneficial for beginners, as students at this stage typically possess limited or no knowledge of L2. It can serve to introduce key distinctions between L1 and L2, alleviate guesswork, boost motivation, and alleviate anxiety. These researchers, along with others (Burden, 2000; Cianflone, 2009), advocate for the allowance of L1 in classrooms due to its positive impact on learners' cognitive development, suggesting that second language learning should emulate first language acquisition. Moreover, they argue that delineating between first and second languages is essential to highlight the disparities for students (Burden, 2000). Rather than advocating for the outright exclusion of L1 in EFL classrooms, these researchers propose criteria for determining when and to what extent L1 should be employed. Such criteria often consider factors such as the intended purpose of L1 usage, students' proficiency levels, and the duration of foreign language

instruction (Afzal, 2013). Code-switching is suggested as a potential approach based on the criteria outlined in the literature.

The initial investigation to quantify the utilization of L1 within the classroom setting was conducted by Duff and Polio (1990). Selecting 13 diverse university language classrooms, each dedicated to teaching a distinct language, Duff and Polio observed these classes on two occasions and subsequently administered questionnaires to both students and teachers. Additionally, they conducted interviews with each teacher following the second observation, delving into aspects such as background, training, and attitudes. Their sample was confined to second quarter classes instructed solely by native speakers of the respective languages. Employing a coding system, they measured the teachers' speech every 15 seconds to ascertain the extent of L1 usage. The findings revealed significant variability in both L1 and L2 utilization in the classrooms, ranging from 100% L2 usage to as low as 10% L2 usage. Interestingly, they discovered that students often inaccurately perceived the extent of L2 and L1 usage by their teachers. For instance, some students in classes where L2 was exclusively used reported that their teacher utilized English "frequently," while over half of the students in classes with only 10% L2 usage indicated that their teacher used English "some of the time."

Furthermore, the authors observed a lack of awareness on the part of the teachers as to how, when, and to what extent they actually use English in the classroom. Another notable finding from the study was that more than 71% of the students expressed satisfaction with the current level of English usage in the classroom, irrespective of the proportion of L2 used. This suggests that, for these students, the instructor's language choices established a norm to which the students adhered and found satisfactory. Following the completion of the study, Duff and Polio (1990) conducted a series of interviews with the participating instructors to inquire about the purposes behind their use of L1 and L2 in the classroom and to elucidate the reasons for the varying ratios of L1 and L2 usage. The researchers determined that multiple factors contributed to the fluctuations in this ratio, including the linguistic distance between L1 and L2, departmental policies, lesson content, materials, and the formal training received by the teachers.

Recent studies have expanded the exploration of L1 use to Arabic language classrooms, particularly focusing on the use of Malay. Hamidin (2015) investigated students', teachers' and parents' perspectives of teaching and learning Arabic language in the classroom at SMKA. The participants of the study consist of three students, three teachers and three parents from three different religious government schools (SMKA)s in Selangor. The study revealed that one of the most effective techniques of teaching and learning in the Arabic classroom is translation. The student participant mentioned that teaching and learning in class is easy if the reading material they are using is easily understood. Hence, translation is one of the techniques to reach the comprehension and facilitate the process of teaching and learning in class. Hamidin (2015) also noted that making translation as a group activity can inculcate co-operativeness among peers in the group. This provides the opportunity for students to speak Arabic and sharing knowledge between peers of the same group and thus, creating a student-centred learning environment.

Another quantitative investigation carried out by Noli, Farrah Dieba, Sharifah Intan & Roslan Sadjirind (2013) seeks to explore the attitudes of English as a Second Language (ESL) learners towards the functions of code-switching employed by English language instructors at the tertiary level. This study addresses two primary research inquiries: (1) What do ESL learners think about code switching in the English classroom? (2) When does code switching best function in the English classroom for the ESL learners? Forty-five diploma students were randomly chosen as participants for this study. A survey questionnaire, focusing on students' attitudes, usage, and opinions regarding code-switching in the classroom, was administered. The findings revealed that a majority of ESL learners hold favourable attitudes towards code-switching and believe that it aids in their comprehension of the target language. These results indicate that code-switching is deemed necessary when circumstances dictate the use of the first language in the classroom, facilitating learners' confidence in mastering English. Drawing from the aforementioned studies, this research aims to delve deeper into learners' experiences to address gaps in the literature and understand how students react to the use of both L1 and L2 in L2 classrooms. In

conclusion, considering that some Malaysian teachers also incorporate L1 in their classroom interactions (Then & Ting, 2009; Lee, 2010), and several scholars (Crystal, 1987; Burenhult & Flyman-Mattsson, 1999; Levine, 2003; and Sert, 2005) view its utilization positively, alongside the Common Underlying Proficiency model's principles, it becomes imperative to thoroughly examine and consider students' opinions regarding the use of L1 and L2 in L2 classrooms on an individual basis. This study aims to address this gap in the existing literature.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

1. The research objective is to find out how the student responds to the use of Malay language in Arabic language classroom?

### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

1. How does the student respond to the use of Malay language in Arabic language classroom?

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research utilized a qualitative case study methodology, which, as described by Nik Suryani et al. (2008), involves a detailed examination to elucidate the intricacies of the research topic. It entails an intensive investigation over a defined period focusing on a specific individual, entity, social group, or phenomenon. Consequently, the researcher employed a qualitative case study to delve deeply into how students react to the use of both their native language (L1) and the target language (L2) in L2 classroom settings, aiming to understand the significance of L1 in L2 acquisition. Additionally, the case study design was chosen because it does not require a predetermined hypothesis, facilitating an analysis of ongoing events.

#### **Research Participant**

This study included a 17-year-old female Malay student who had been studying Arabic at Sekolah Menengah Agama Tengku Ampuan Fatimah in Pekan. The student was chosen through purposive sampling to meet the specific criteria required for this research. A 17-year-old Malay student who had been learning Arabic since primary school and had accumulated over ten years of experience in studying Arabic as a second language was selected to offer comprehensive insights into the case being investigated.

#### **Research Instrument**

Data collection involved conducting a semi-structured interview with a female student from Sekolah Menengah Agama Tengku Ampuan Fatimah (SMATAF). In this study, the student was instructed through a recorded in-depth interview session to verbally convey her own opinions, thoughts, and experiences on the issue. The interview was conducted at a specific time and location, with the researcher carefully listening to each response and adapting subsequent questions based on the participant's input. While the interviewer had prepared a predefined list of questions, the interview was intended to be conversational in nature, allowing flexibility in question wording and sequence to foster a more natural dialogue. This approach enabled the researcher to gather comprehensive information relevant to the research question, while also allowing the participant to communicate freely and openly. For this study, the researcher utilized a paper-based interview guide during the semi-structured interview. It is generally recommended to record the interview and later transcribe it for analysis, as semi-structured interviews often involve open-ended questions and discussions that may diverge from the interview guide. The use of a semi-structured interview guide provides clear instructions for the researcher or interviewer, thereby ensuring the generation of accurate and comparable qualitative data.

## **Credibility and Reliability**

Ensuring the credibility of the data is crucial for addressing concerns regarding trustworthiness. In this research, credibility is established through interviews with selected respondents. The findings are not based on the researcher's personal opinions but rather on insights provided by the individual directly involved with the institution under study. A 17-year-old Malay female student, who has been studying Arabic since primary school and has over ten years of experience in learning Arabic as a second language, was chosen to offer extensive insights into the subject at hand. With experience comes a greater maturity in expressing viewpoints compared to other students, rendering the selected student a credible source of information for the research. Consequently, the information gathered from the interview is considered credible. Reliability, on the other hand, pertains to the ability to replicate the findings. To establish the reliability of the research, a pilot study was conducted by the researcher in April 2021 at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Ahmad, Pekan, Pahang. For this pilot study, a pilot interview was conducted with another 17-year-old female student who also had over ten years of experience in learning Arabic and attended Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Ahmad. The respondent was comfortable with the interview questions during the pilot study. The results of the interview session with this student indicated a preference for teachers to incorporate both L1 and L2 when teaching Arabic.

## **Procedures of Data Collection and Data Analysis**

In this study, the researcher used a semi-structured interview. Prior to conducting the semi-structured interview, the purpose of the research was explained to the participant, and assurances were provided, both verbally and in writing, regarding the confidentiality of her participation and any contributions made during the discussion. The participant was informed that her identity would remain anonymous, and she was given the option to withdraw from the discussion at any point. Upon agreement, the student consented to participate in the study. The semi-structured interview, comprising 12 questions, took place in the early month of May and was recorded using a phone sound recorder application. Subsequently, the interview was transcribed by the researcher and shared with the participant for verification of accuracy. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse and code the data, aiming to identify overall themes and patterns within the data. The themes and key points identified were then compiled in relation to the research question.

## **FINDINGS**

The student's responses are presented based on four primary themes which emerged from the data. This data provided insight as to how the participating students viewed the use of L1.

### **Learning Aid for Explaining Vocabularies**

There are often words that are hard to explain in L2. Therefore, teachers would opt to use L1 to explain them. The excerpt shows how the use of L1 is employed by the teacher when the students do not understand the vocabulary.

'... As for my Arabic language teachers, most of them teach in Malay, especially when there are words that are not understood or they find it difficult to explain the meaning of words and sentences in Arabic. So, when such situations occur, they choose to speak in Malay.'

The student's responses highlight a practical use of L1 as a tool for clarifying difficult vocabulary in L2. Teachers resort to Malay when explanations in Arabic fall short, ensuring that students grasp the meanings of complex words. This indicates that L1 serves as an effective bridge to understanding, preventing gaps in comprehension that might arise from an exclusive use of L2. The student also prefers the teacher to use two languages in class. She mentioned how L1 is useful when trying to understand unfamiliar vocabularies.

‘... Sometimes I quite like it when teachers use Malay as well. Because sometimes when the teachers explain in Arabic, I get confused and I don't understand. Then, when they use Malay, I can grasp it.’

This excerpt underscores the student's personal preference for the use of Malay when faced with confusion in Arabic explanations. The student's comfort with L1 helps alleviate misunderstandings, suggesting that strategic use of L1 can enhance clarity and facilitate smoother learning experiences, particularly when encountering new or complex concepts.

### **Reducing Anxiety and Improving Self-Confidence**

There are students who experience language anxiety when learning L2. Besides helping in understanding language components, L1 can act as a mean to reduce this anxiety. The student mentioned that she is not confident enough to fully use L2 in the classroom.

‘... Why do I use Malay? It's because the majority of my friends are Malay too. So, I use Malay to make it easier. I want to communicate with them but at the same time I feel anxious and I'm not confident enough to speak fully in Arabic.’

Here, the student reveals an emotional aspect of language learning: anxiety and lack of confidence. The use of L1 provides a sense of security and ease in communication among peers, highlighting the psychological comfort that L1 can offer in L2 learning environments. This suggests that incorporating L1 might help mitigate language anxiety and build confidence, creating a more supportive classroom atmosphere.

### **L1 Use as Socialization Tool**

Based on the data from the semi-structured interview, the student commented that the reason she uses L1 is because it is a way to socialize with her classmates during her lessons. In the excerpt below, one can see how L1 is used to interact.

‘... If I'm with friends, I don't really use Arabic. I will certainly use my mother tongue.’

The student's reliance on Malay for social interactions with peers illustrates how L1 functions as a vital social tool. It indicates that L1 is the preferred medium for casual, everyday communication, fostering social bonds and a sense of community among students. This reliance on L1 for socialization points to its integral role in maintaining peer relationships and facilitating group dynamics within the classroom. Additionally, the next excerpt reinforces the notion that the use of L1 among classmates is driven by practicality and ease of communication.

‘... Why do I use Malay? It's because the majority of my friends are Malay too. So, I use Malay to make it easier.’

The shared linguistic background among students makes Malay the default language for interactions, emphasizing L1's role in simplifying communication and promoting inclusivity in the classroom setting.

### **The Negative Aspects of Using L1**

Within the data analysis, there are a few excerpts that highlighted the negative aspects of using L1. The two excerpts below suggest that excessive use of L1 can lead to disengagement and a lack of challenge, underscoring the importance of integrating L2 to keep students actively involved and intellectually stimulated.

‘... So, in my opinion, when the teachers use only their mother tongue, I'm not excited anymore.’

‘... I will become bored when the teacher uses Malay language during the entire class.’

The student's lack of excitement when teachers exclusively use Malay suggests that over-reliance on L1 can diminish engagement and interest in the L2 learning process. This points to the need for a balanced approach, where L2 is prominently featured to maintain student enthusiasm and foster an immersive learning environment. Additionally, the student also emphasized the shortcomings of direct translation.

‘... But if a teacher just translates directly from Arabic to Malay, I don't see it as very effective. Sure, it's quick for students to understand and grasp immediately. But it's not stored in their long-term memory because once they hear it, it's done.’

While direct translation may offer immediate comprehension, it fails to promote long-term retention and deeper cognitive processing. This suggests that effective L2 teaching should go beyond mere translation and involve strategies that encourage active engagement with the language. Moreover, the student also highlights a critical downside of excessive L1 use: it hampers the development of L2 speaking skills. While L1 may facilitate initial understanding, it ultimately disrupts the immersive experience necessary for acquiring fluency in L2. The excerpt below underscores the importance of balanced L2 exposure to ensure that students are adequately prepared for active language use.

‘... If the use is entirely in Malay, where the teacher uses Malay entirely during Arabic language teaching sessions, then, I feel that it would be disruptive, especially as I mentioned earlier, it would disrupt the students' understanding. Perhaps they might understand easily, but when they need to speak in Arabic, they can't.’

Similarly, the excerpt below also recognizes the value of listening to Arabic for language acquisition, noting that exposure to L2 is crucial for developing speaking skills. The potential negative impact of conducting lessons entirely in Malay on the student's proficiency highlights the need for ample L2 input to build language competence. This suggests that a predominantly L2 environment is essential for fostering higher levels of proficiency.

‘... So, I actually learn a lot of Arabic through listening as well. When I present anything, I can speak a little bit of Arabic too because I've always listened, listened to how teachers present in Arabic, right? So, if, for example, Arabic lessons are taught in Malay, then, I feel it would impact my proficiency level in Arabic. I'm not fluent, but it will be even more difficult because I haven't heard it, right?’

In summary, the student's responses reflect a variety of experiences on the use of L1 in L2 classrooms. While L1 serves as an effective aid for comprehension and socialization, over-reliance on it can lead to disengagement and hinder long-term language acquisition. A balanced approach that strategically incorporates L1 while maintaining a strong presence of L2 appears to be optimal for enhancing learning outcomes and fostering language proficiency.

## DISCUSSION

The main purpose of the study was to find out how the student responds to the use of L1 in the L2 classroom. The data collection process involved a semi-structured interview with a student from Sekolah Menengah Agama Tengku Ampuan Fatimah (SMATAF). The findings of this study reveal a multifaceted response towards the use of the first language (L1) in second language (L2) classrooms, highlighting both its benefits and potential drawbacks. These results are contextualized within Cummins' (2000) Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) theory, which suggests that skills acquired in one language can support the development of another. This chapter will discuss the themes identified in the findings, connecting them to the existing literature and the CUP theory. There are four themes identified in the findings; learning aid for explaining vocabularies, reducing anxiety and improving self-confidence, L1 use as a socialization tool, and the negative aspect of using L1.



### **Learning Aid for Explaining Vocabularies.**

The findings indicate that the use of L1, in this case, Malay, is beneficial for explaining complex vocabulary in Arabic. This is similar to the qualitative study by Adnan, Mohamad & Mamat (2014) that explores the attitudes of secondary school Arabic teachers in Malaysia towards L1 use, focusing on Bahasa-speaking students. The findings revealed that L1 is employed to explain complex grammar concepts and translate new vocabulary, ensuring students grasp unfamiliar terms. Moreover, this also aligns with Cook (2001) and Nation (2003), who emphasize the strategic use of L1 to facilitate comprehension and reduce cognitive load. The student reported that teachers resort to Malay when explaining difficult Arabic words, enhancing understanding and preventing gaps in comprehension. According to the CUP theory, proficiency in L1 aids in acquiring L2 skills because both languages draw from a common cognitive framework. When teachers use Malay to explain Arabic vocabulary, they tap into the student's existing linguistic knowledge, making it easier to grasp new concepts. This approach leverages the student's L1 proficiency to build L2 competence, demonstrating the interconnected nature of language learning as posited by Cummins.

### **Reducing Anxiety and Improving Self-Confidence**

The student's responses highlighted that using L1 in the classroom can reduce anxiety and build self-confidence, particularly when interacting with peers. This finding is supported by Mat and Ahmad (2023), who found that L1 use can foster an inclusive environment, enhancing student participation and confidence. The CUP theory suggests that cognitive and linguistic skills are transferable across languages. By using Malay, the student's anxiety is reduced, enabling her to participate more actively and confidently in class. This psychological comfort allows the student to better engage with Arabic, supporting the theory that a strong foundation in L1 can facilitate L2 learning.

### **L1 Use as a Socialization Tool**

The study found that students often use Malay for social interactions, which reinforces peer relationships and group dynamics. This aligns with the findings of Hamidin (2015) who noted that strategic use of L1 in L2 classrooms enhances student engagement and comprehension. Cummins' CUP theory implies that social interactions in L1 can bolster cognitive development in L2. When students use Malay to socialize, they strengthen their overall linguistic and cognitive skills, which can then be transferred to their Arabic learning. This social use of L1 supports a collaborative learning environment, essential for developing proficiency in L2.

### **The Negative Aspects of Using L1**

While the use of L1 has several benefits, the findings also highlight potential drawbacks, such as disengagement and reduced challenge when L1 is overused. This echoes the concerns of Harmer (2001) and Swain et al. (2011), who caution against excessive reliance on L1, which can impede L2 acquisition. The CUP theory advocates for a balanced approach where both L1 and L2 contribute to cognitive development. Over-reliance on Malay may inhibit the immersive experience necessary for acquiring fluency in Arabic. Therefore, while L1 can support initial comprehension, a predominant use of L2 is crucial for fostering higher levels of proficiency, aligning with the theory's emphasis on balanced language exposure.

The negative aspects of L1 use, such as decreased student engagement and lack of long-term retention, align with Mahadeo (2006) and Krashen's (1983) arguments that reliance on L1 can be a barrier to L2 acquisition. These findings underscore the need for a balanced approach, where L1 is used strategically to support, rather than replace, L2 learning. This approach is crucial for ensuring that students remain engaged and are adequately challenged, promoting deeper cognitive processing and long-term retention of L2 skills.

## CONCLUSION

The information from this research, "Student's Experiences in Using Malay Language (L1) in Arabic Language Classroom", is of interest for current and future teachers of second language as it reflects the preference of the student and how L1 is useful to her in learning L2. This will allow the teachers to be conscious of their decisions as to how to use L1 in their classrooms. Apart from that, this reflective thinking will permit teachers to respond to their students' needs and to be more flexible. When considering the student's point of view in relation to the use of L1, four basic points can be summarized: 1) L1 is a specific learning tool used exclusively for clarification of meaning in class. 2) L1 can reduce anxiety and improve self-confidence. 3) L1 is used between peers of the same identity (Malay) to make communication easier between them. 4) Too much use of L1 can give a negative impact to the student. However, more research should be carried out in order to see if the results are similar or if there are other uses of L1. Another option that can be considered as further research is the quantity of the use of L1 in regards to students' level of language proficiency. It is clear that this research helps in fulfilling the literature gap in order to conduct further research that contributes the society.

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