

TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' PRACTICES AND ATTITUDES TOWARD ARABIC (L1) USE IN ELT

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ABSTRACT

The debate over whether or not English language classrooms should include the students' first language has been a controversial issue for a long time. Findings in research reveal two opposing views: On one end of the continuum are those who believe that the primary language of instruction should be the L2 exclusively and call for L1 prohibition, and on the other end are those who believe L1 is a useful resource that should be allowed in the L2 classrooms. However, a conclusive position regarding the issue of L1 is still absent and thus makes teachers reluctant and wonder when, why, and how to use L1. It is within this context that this study was set to examine teachers' and students' attitudes toward the use of Arabic (L1) in ELT classrooms in the UAE. The purpose was to find out to which extent teachers' attitudes matched their practice in teaching English and whether there was any difference between their attitudes and those of students. This empirical study surveys students' and teachers' perceptions toward L1 use in English language (L2) classrooms. Findings obtained from classroom observations, teachers' interviews, and questionnaires revealed that L1 is indeed prohibited in the English language classrooms in the public schools in the UAE. Moreover, students revealed negative attitudes toward L1 use and disapproved its use by their teachers. By contrast, teachers revealed mixed attitudes toward L1. They approved its use at times and within limits. Even though teachers criticized L1 prohibition, they acknowledged its usefulness in certain contexts, but they were not ready to use it in their teaching.

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