

# Functions of L1 Use in the L2 Classes: Jordanian EFL Teachers' Perspectives

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## Abstract

This qualitative study investigated teachers' perspectives on the functions of first language (L1) use in the second language (L2) classroom. Data were collected from seven Jordanian English as foreign language (EFL) teachers, where each teacher participated in one classroom observation and two rounds of interviews, one pre-observation and one post-observation. Interviews were transcribed and coded for recurrent themes. Thematic analysis identified six functions of L1 use that teachers used to enhance teaching and learning: translating, explaining metalinguistic information, overcoming teaching challenges, giving instructions, improving motivation, and avoiding words in the L2 that sound taboo in the L1. This research contributes to a more complex picture of L2 teaching in Jordan and potentially other similar EFL settings. The findings could also guide L2 academics, policymakers, and practitioners in better understanding the role of the L1 in the L2 classroom, particularly in foreign language (FL) contexts.

**Keywords:** EFL, L1 use, L2 Classroom, Teacher Attitudes, L1 Functions

## 1. Introduction

The role of learners' first language (L1) in second language (L2) classrooms was ignored in the literature for a long time (Cook, 2001) because of scholars' doubts about its value. In the last three decades, however, scholars in the field of L2 teaching and learning have questioned the effectiveness of the monolingual L2 paradigm. Phillipson (1992) argued that monolingual instruction was a "fallacy" (p. 185) and criticized calls for the exclusive use of the L2 in the classroom. Cook (2001) also disputed banning L1 use in the L2 classroom, claiming that using L1 in the L2 classroom enables teachers and learners to overcome teaching and learning challenges. Forman (2012) maintained that the L1 can serve many essential L2 classroom functions, such as translating and explaining major lesson points.

Recent studies (e.g., Algazo, 2022; Izquierdo, Martínez, Pulido & Zúñiga, 2016; Lo, 2015; Ma, 2019; Tasçı & Aksu Ataç, 2020; Wong, 2020) have investigated the issue of L1 use for a greater understanding of its role in L2 classrooms. Lo (2015), for example, conducted a study in Hong Kong about how teachers use students' L1 in response to their students' needs. Izquierdo, Martínez, Pulido, and Zúñiga (2016) observed the amount of L1 (Spanish) used in L2 (English) classrooms in secondary schools in Mexico. Wong (2020) conducted a study in three Hong Kong Chinese medium secondary school to investigate the role L1 in English reading lessons and attitude of teachers and students toward it. Collectively, these studies examined learners' L1 use from different perspectives, including teachers' attitudes toward and responses to it and the amount of learner L1 usage in the L2 classroom.

However, to date, little research has considered the functions of teachers' L1 use in the L2 classroom, particularly in EFL contexts where L1 use is quite common. The most characteristic feature of the foreign context is that teachers and students usually share the same L1, which gives the L1 a significant role in the L2 classes (Sali, 2014). The present study, which continues the work of Algazo (2018), investigates the pedagogical functions of Jordanian EFL teachers' L1 (Arabic) use in the L2 (English) classroom in public schools.

### 1.1 The Education Context of Jordan

Jordan's education system has developed significantly in the last decades. Today, over a third of Jordanian citizens—for context, the total population is nearly 11 million—are students (Jordanian General Statistics Department, 2015). However, Jordan has very limited natural and economic resources (Al-Hassan, 2019), and so the government budget for public education is limited. Additionally, millions of refugee children from Syria, Palestine, and Iraq (Davis, Benton, Todman & Murphy, 2017) have further strained the public school system—e.g., limited resources, inadequate facilities, poor teacher-to-student ratios, outdated teaching methods, and so on (Amr, 2011). These challenges have affected the education system's outcomes, including low levels of English language proficiency among public schools' students (Alhabahba, Pandian & Mahfoodh, 2016; Algazo, 2020).

The school system consists of two years of optional preschool (i.e., KG1 & KG2), the basic stage (i.e., Grade 1-10), and a secondary stage (i.e., Grades 11-12). The basic stage is compulsory and free for all Jordanians in public schools, and the secondary stage is free but not compulsory (Al-Hassan, 2019). English is taught as an obligatory foreign language in all public and private schools from Grade 1 to Grade 12 (Al-Hassan, 2019), where the total number of weekly classes varies between four and six classes of 45 minutes each (Alhabahba, Pandian & Mahfoodh, 2016; Algazo, 2020). English is also widely taught in Jordanian colleges and universities, and it is the language of instruction for degree programs such as medicine and engineering (Tahaineh & Daana, 2013).

### 1.2 Teachers' Functions of L1 Use

Many studies have explored teachers' attitudes toward L1 use in the L2 classroom in post-secondary education (e.g., Al-Amir, 2017; Alshehri, 2017; Köylü 2018) as well as elementary and secondary education (e.g., Ahmed, 2015; Al-balawi 2016; Tasçi & Aksu Ataç 2020). Most of these studies concluded that teachers generally have a positive attitude toward the role of the L1 in the L2 classroom. Two studies of EFL teachers in Saudi Arabian universities (Al-Amir, 2017) and secondary schools (Al-balawi, 2016) found that most of the teacher-participants supported the use of L1(Arabic) in their L2 (English) classes. Teachers at both levels felt that L1 use was beneficial in the L2 classroom by helping to achieve pedagogical functions that enhance teaching and learning, such as increasing students' comprehension of L2 input (Ahmed, 2015; Lo, 2015).

Several studies (e.g., Algazo, 2020; Bruen & Kelly, 2017; Forman, 2012; Ölmez & Kirkgöz, 2021; Ma, 2019; Tasçi & Aksu Ataç 2020) have further explored the particular functions of L1 use in L2 teaching and learning. Ma (2019) examined L1 use in a beginner ESL class for adult migrants in Australia and found that the L1 was mainly used by the teacher for eliciting answers, giving classroom instructions, and explaining the meaning of vocabulary items. Tasçi and Aksu Ataç's (2020) study of three EFL teachers' L1 use in primary schools in Turkey showed that L1 use performed nine different functions: translation of unknown words, translation of sentences, classroom management, checking understanding, eliciting responses, drawing attention, giving feedback, and grammar instruction.

A slightly different approach was taken by Algazo (2020), who studied Jordanian secondary school EFL teachers' L1 use from the perspective of their students (N=104). The students identified seven functions of their teachers' L1 use: 1) explaining grammar, 2) defining new vocabulary items, 3) explaining difficult concepts or ideas, 4) giving instructions, 5) praising and motivating the students, 6) translating written texts, and 7) explaining similarities and differences between Arabic and English.

The abovementioned studies and others with similar findings (see, for example, Adriosh & Razi, 2019; Bruen & Kelly, 2017; De Jong & Zhang, 2021; Forman, 2012) suggest that L1 usage in L2 classrooms can serve many useful functions, whether nine (Tasçi & Aksu Ataç 2020), seven (Algazo, 2020), or four of them (Ölmez & Kirkgöz, 2021). Variation in the literature regarding the number and type of functions may be a reflection of differences in learners' proficiency, learners and teachers' attitudes toward the role of the L1, teachers' experience, and more (Algazo, 2022; Lo, 2015; Wong, 2020). Learners' age may also account for some variation (Algazo, 2020; Tekin & Garton, 2020). For example, Ölmez and Kirkgöz (2021) found that their EFL teacher-participants used the L1 to maintain discipline in their classrooms of young learners, yet Algazo's (2020) upper secondary student-participants did not mention their teachers using the L1 for disciplinary functions. Varied findings may also be due to simple differences in the number of participants or data collection and analysis methods (Kılınc & Fırat, 2017).

Additionally, contextual factors such as L2 teaching policies might impact the role of the L1 in the L2 classroom and, consequently, its functions. Several studies (e.g., Littlewood & Yu, 2011; McMillan & Rivers, 2011; Wei & Lin, 2019) have noted that L2 teaching policies often discourage L1 use in the L2 classroom. Policy makers tend to advocate for a monolingual approach for reasons such as using the L1 may be perceived as a sign of insufficient training or proficiency on the part of teachers, as non-native L2 teachers may not have a high level of proficiency in the L2 (McMillan & Rivers, 2011). Another argument is that L1 use has a detrimental effect on L2 acquisition by reducing learners' exposure to the target language (Al Masaeed, 2016). Overall, discouraging L1 use in L2 teaching policies can lead teachers to feel guilty for using the L1 in the classroom (Cook, 2001). In brief, teachers' practices are impacted by these policies, which may ultimately deprive L2 teachers and learners of the potential beneficial functions of L1 use.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Setting and Participants

The participants of this study were seven EFL teachers from four public secondary schools (Schools 1, 2, 3, and 4) in a northern city in Jordan. This area was chosen because the author was previously a student in that area and knew that English (L2) teachers and students often relied on Arabic (L1) as a teaching and learning tool. Table 1 summarizes the teacher-participants' demographic information. All names are pseudonyms.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Teacher-participants (n=7)

Name	Gender	School	Teaching Experience (years)	Academic Qualifications
Mohammad	Male	1	22	MA English Methodology BA English Language & Literature
Sarah	Female	1	23	Higher Diploma in Technology and Communication BA English Language & Literature
Rula	Female	1	12	Higher Diploma in Technology and Communication BA English Language & Literature
Samia	Female	2	15	BA English Language & Literature
Salma	Female	2	6	BA English Language & Literature
Ali	Male	3	14	Higher Diploma in English Methodology BA English Language & Literature
Yasmine	Female	4	20	Higher Diploma in Technology and Communication BA English Language & Literature

All participants' L1 was Arabic. All the participants had a bachelor's degree in English language and literature, a programme offered at almost all Jordanian universities. Graduates of this program are certified to teach EFL in public and private schools in Jordan at the elementary and secondary levels (Alhabahba, Pandian, & Mahfoodh, 2016). Some of the participants held additional degrees, such as diplomas or master's degrees. Teachers' experience ranged from six to twenty-three years in the classroom. Mohammad, Sarah, and Rula worked at the same school (School 1), while Samia and Salma worked at a different school (School 2), and Ali and Yasmine worked at other schools (Schools 3 and 4, respectively). As a result, the participants represented a range of perspectives.

### 2.2 Data Collection

This qualitative study employed two methods of data collection: interviews and classroom observations. Each teacher participated in two semi-structured interviews, one pre-observation and one post-observation. Both interviews were conducted at the teachers' respective school. The pre-observation interview questions were adapted and modified from Al Sharaeai (2012), and the post-observation interview questions were developed based on the author's notes taken during the classroom observation. Observations consisted of one 45-minute observation of each teacher-participants' Grade 10 or 11 EFL class.

### 2.3 Data Analysis

The researcher audio-recorded and transcribed all pre- and post-observation interviews. As per Charmaz (2014), transcripts were coded for emergent themes in two stages: initial coding, in which the researcher closely examined the data, looking for themes in segments and jotting down words that reflected the recorded actions; and focused coding, in which the researcher focused on the most salient themes. During the coding process, key direct quotes from the participants' interview responses were identified and used to support the reporting of findings.

## 3. Findings

Analysis found that teacher-participants used the L1 in their L2 classes in order to achieve the following functions: translating, explaining metalinguistic information, overcoming teaching challenges, giving instructions, motivating students, and avoiding L2 words that sound taboo in the L1. Each function is described in turn in the sections that follow.

**Translating.** Teacher-participants Mohammad, Sarah, and Samia explained that they used the L1 in class for translation purposes, which they explained made the teaching process more fruitful in two ways. First, using the L1 for translation helped them to explain the meaning of L2 items, such as new words, phrases, or proverbs that have more than one equivalent in the L1 and may provoke misunderstandings among their students. The teacher-participants considered translation a way to enable students' understanding of the meaning of these items and learn them better. Notably, the teacher-participants claimed to not translate all new L2 items encountered in class, nor use translation randomly; rather, they used translation intentionally to overcome only particularly challenging L2 items. For example, Mohammad referred to using the L1 for translation in class when he had to explain the meaning of English word *raw*. The English word *raw* glosses two different meanings in Arabic: it may gloss as "نيء" *Naie* which refers to uncooked meat, or it may gloss as "خام" *Kham*, which means not processed, as in "raw material". Mohammad explained that if he had not translated *raw* in that particular lesson, his students would not realize that there were two meanings of the word.

The second benefit of L1 translation according to Mohammad, Sarah, and Samia was that it helped their students develop appropriate translation skills and strategies. The three teacher-participants explained how, from time to time, they translated or asked their students to translate words or sentences to give their students opportunities to practice translation between the L1 and L2. For example, Samia was intentional about developing her students' translation skills in the class. In her post-observation interview, she explained how in class, she had asked her students for the Arabic translation for "the red castle" because "I teach how to translate from English to Arabic and vice versa."

In sum, three of the seven teacher-participants in this study held the attitude that using the L1 for translation may not only facilitate the understanding and learning of certain new L2 items, but also enable students to acquire and develop translation skills.

**Explaining Metalinguistic Information.** According to interviews, teacher-participants switched to the L1 from the L2 for metalinguistic functions, i.e., to talk about the L2. This occurred in four teaching scenarios: grammar lessons, pronunciation lessons, punctuation lessons, and explanations of cultural similarities and differences.

**Grammar lessons.** Ali and Samia taught grammar lessons during their classroom observations. When describing his classroom L1 use post-observation, Ali said he usually uses "about 50% in grammar classes while 20% in reading classes." Samia said her L1 use was "not more than 20%. This could be in teaching all aspects of language but not grammar." Ali and Samia both explained that the L1 helped their students focus on targeted grammar and sentence structure. For contrast, the other five teacher-participants taught reading lessons, perhaps to make more limited use of the L1.

**Pronunciation lessons.** Rula in this study referred to sounds from L1 to teach L2 pronunciation for the sake of comparing the linguistic systems. In her post-observation interview, she referred to reverting to Arabic in her class to explain how the English word "therapeutic" was pronounced. She said, "Sometimes I use alternative Arabic sounds to help my students to pronounce [English] words correctly. They connect the pronunciation with Arabic sounds, so they cannot forget that, because they connect it with similar sounds in Arabic." Rula's practice may be related to the fact that she was not a native speaker, and so her use of the L1 for L2 pronunciation was a good technique for her and her students alike.

**Punctuation lessons.** Adam was the only teacher who indicated in interviews that he relies on the L1 to teach students about L2 punctuation. He described using the L1 to compare the use of punctuation marks between the two languages. However, since neither he nor any of the other teacher-participants taught a punctuation lesson in the classes that were observed, it is unclear how and the extent to which they actually make use of the L1 for this purpose.

**Cultural similarities and differences.** In pre-interviews, three of the teacher-participants—Mohammad, Samia, and Sarah—indicated that they sometimes revert to the L1 to explain relevant cultural similarities and difference. However, in post-observation interviews, only Sarah pointed to a moment in her observed class where she relied on Arabic in order to talk about English culture, as she said, “to show the differences in cultures or the similarities”. Sarah’s class was reading the novel *Oliver Twist* by English writer Charles Dickens. In class, Sarah talked about the novel and the author, and asked her students to give an example of an Arabic writer. Her students answered Najeeb Mahfouz. Sarah then talked—all in Arabic—about Najeeb Mahfouz, how he received a Nobel Prize and has written many great works, and so on. In her post-observation interview, she justified her approach: “Students should know that as we have English writers who write in a certain style, unique style in English language, we similarly have writers in Arabic language [...] that helps the students to understand the English culture.” According to Sarah, providing examples from the Arabic cultural context would help improve her students’ understanding of aspects of English culture as well as abstract concepts such as the place of famous writers in a given culture. Once her students knew that Charles Dickens holds a similar place in the English context as Najeeb Mahfouz in the Arabic context, they could better understand the concepts and significance of the lesson.

**Overcoming teaching challenges.** In addition to translation and metalinguistic functions, the L1 helped teacher-participants in this study overcome two main teaching challenges in their L2 classrooms: their lack of knowledge of some topics (e.g., science topics in a reading lesson) and checking their student’s understanding of the lesson.

**Lack of knowledge.** In interviews, Mohammad and Rula explained that some of their L2 lessons include technical concepts or topics about which they do not have sufficient knowledge; in these cases, the L1 enables them to explain L2 items with more confidence. Mohammad explained:

Last week I was teaching the students a scientific text about volcanoes, the lava, and the magma which is difficult for me and my students [...] I asked my colleagues who teach science to give me some information about this topic [...] then I tried to convey [...] the information [in Arabic] I got from my colleagues to my students.

For Mohammad, Arabic played a significant role in simplifying scientific topics and vocabulary items in English reading texts and made them more comprehensible for students. Rula likewise claimed that the L1 helps her overcome the difficulty of teaching unfamiliar scientific topics in her reading lessons.

**Student comprehension checks.** Teacher-participants in this study also used the L1 to gauge the extent to which their students were understanding the lesson as it progressed. For example, in her pre-observation interview, Salma stated, “I need to use it [L1] in the class to make sure that students understand what I mean and what I am talking about.” In her post-observation interview, she described how in class she provided the Arabic meanings for some English words in the lesson “to make sure that the students understand the question which I asked.” The L1 helped Salma and her students surmount L2 comprehension barriers.

**Giving instructions.** Another function of L1 use identified in this study is giving students classroom instructions. Teacher-participants gave instructions in the L1 for three primary reasons: to use limited class time more efficiently, to reinforce important instructions, and to ensure students’ full understanding of task requirements.

**Limits on classroom time.** Limited class time is one of the key challenges that teacher-participants in this study described facing in their classrooms. In Jordan, a class lasts 45 minutes, which some of the teacher-participants considered to be limited. Yasmine, for example, stated in her pre-observation interview: “I use it [Arabic] to help them to get the idea or to save time as you do not have time to waste it. Time is limited for classes.” In her post-observation interview, she described how in her observed class she spoke few sentences in Arabic to give instructions about a task. She justified her actions, saying that Arabic enabled her to manage the class time effectively—in this case, by finishing the assigned material on time and consequently achieving her class goals.

**Reinforcement of important instructions.** The L1 was also described by teacher-participants as a way of emphasizing important classroom instructions. Yasmine, for example, described in her post-interview how she gave serious instructions about academic integrity to her class in Arabic: “When I said لا تحاول الغش [LA tuhawel Alkhash] *don't cheat*, I wanted to insist that they should not look at the text [...] I used Arabic to insist on this important issue.” Yasmine believed that her students would take a speech made in their L1 more seriously than the same speech in the L2.

**Students’ understanding of task requirements.** Teacher-participants also presented L1 use as a way of ensuring that students have a full understanding of how to do a given L2 task or exercise. Salma, for examples, said she “give[s] instructions in Arabic so the students can know what they are listening to and what they are supposed to do after the listening exercises.” In other words, Salma wanted to ensure students’ full understanding of what she was teaching and she considered the L1 an effective tool to achieve this function.

**Motivating Students.** This study found that teacher-participants used the L1 to boost their students’ motivation in two situations: in teacher-student interactions and in student-student interactions.

**Teacher-student interactions.** In Mohammad’s pre-observation interview, he articulated how the L1 boosted student motivation in his

interactions with students. He said, “They [his students] are shy because they need to be motivated, they need to be encouraged to break the ice as you know.” In his post-observation interview, he referred to a specific moment in his observed class: he asked his students a question, and when the students raised their hands to answer, he said, “أريد الطلاب الي ما سمعت صوتهم” [Aureed Altulab Eli ma Esma’t SutaHum] *I am willing to hear new voices*. In saying this, Mohammad was indicating that he wanted to hear from students who had not yet raised their hands; in saying it in the students’ L1, he was trying to encourage them to engage in the classroom discussion.

Salma similarly described how her students often use Arabic words while talking to her in English. For example, in her post-observation interview, Salma reflected on a time in her observed class when her students used Arabic when responding to her questions. Salma explained, “some students do not have the confidence to answer in English...and because this lack of confidence some of them answer in Arabic.” For Salma, the L1 facilitated teacher-student interactions in both directions and, consequently, may have motivated her students to interact more with her.

**Student-student interactions.** Several teacher-participants spoke about ignoring and sometimes encouraging L1 usage between students during pair and group work. Samia was supportive, saying that “using Arabic is very beneficial for the students in group work.” Rula was slightly more passive, allowing her students to use the L1 in group work, although she did not explicitly encourage it: “When I see some of the students speak Arabic to help their partners, I ignore that.” Three teacher-participants—Mohammad, Salma, and Sarah—all reflected in their post-interview on moments during their observed class when they had asked students to work on a task in pairs and groups and the students began using the L1 almost exclusively amongst themselves. All three teacher-participants described how they noticed this was happening but chose not to interfere. Like Samia, Mohammad felt justified that his students’ L1 use in pair and group work was beneficial because it helped the students increase their comprehension of the activity.

**Avoiding taboo words.** A final function of L1 was noted in Sarah’s pre-observation interview when she suggested that she and her students sometimes encounter English words that sound taboo in Arabic, such as “maniac”, “unique”, and “knack”. In such cases, Sarah explained, switching to Arabic is beneficial to reduce potential misunderstandings or avoid students skipping these words out of shyness. She suggested that teachers may find reverting to the L1 a good way to explain these words, which sound bad in the L1, but do not have the same meaning as in the L2.

#### 4. Discussion

Based on interviews, the teacher-participants pointed to six main functions of the L1 in the L2 classroom: translating, explaining metalinguistic information, overcoming teaching challenges, giving instructions, motivating students, and avoiding L2 words that sound taboo in the L1.

Translation is a common function of the L1 in the L2 classroom, where teachers find translation an effective way to enable their students to understand L2 meanings quickly (Cook, 2001). Teachers’ intentional use of translation can also enable students to overcome the problem of literal translation between the L1 and L2, which in turn can help correct misaligned beliefs about language equivalencies, i.e., that every word in the L2 has an exact equivalent in the L1 or vice versa (Cook, 2009). In this study, Samia made an explicit effort to improve her students’ translation skills, which may have been out of an awareness that translation is a potential future job opportunity for her students.

The explanation of metalinguistic information is another function of L1 use in this study. According to the data, this function occurs in four teaching scenarios: grammar lessons, pronunciation lessons, punctuation lessons, and explanations of cultural similarities and differences. First, L1 use to teach L2 grammar was found to be a widespread practice among this study’s L2 teachers as well as in other foreign language contexts (see, for example, Forman 2012; Sail, 2014). A large amount of L1 use during L2 grammar classes may occur because grammar lessons require ample effort on the part of teachers to explain grammar points and make them comprehensible to students; thus, teachers may find that using the L1 for conducting comparisons between L1 and L2 grammar rules, for instance, is an effective (and efficient) way to increase their students’ comprehension.

Second, several teachers in this study referred to using the L1 to teach L2 pronunciation by referring to sounds from L1 for the sake of comparing the linguistic systems. Teaching L2 pronunciation may be the most difficult skill that teachers contend with in L2 classes, and it has been noted that some teachers feel insecure when they teach L2 pronunciation (Burgess & Spencer, 2000; Derwing & Munro, 2005; Foote, Holtby & Derwing, 2011). In this study, teachers and students were not native to the language and may have poor pronunciation abilities, which might be a source of confusion. Thus, L1 use may increase the teachers’ confidence in teaching L2 pronunciation.

Third, in this study, the L1 was used to explain differences between the L1 and the L2 in terms of their writing systems, especially punctuation, and how the cultural contexts associated with each language lead to different punctuation marks and functions. These differences are significant between Arabic and English, and so the teachers may have felt that L1 use (e.g., to draw comparisons, bridge the two punctuation systems) would help lighten the heavy learning burden on the students.

Fourth and finally, this study’s teacher-participants (e.g., Sarah) used the L1 to talk about cultural similarities and differences related to the L2. Previous studies (Hlas 2016; Liu & Zeng 2015) found that using the L1 for this purpose may facilitate students’ understanding of L2 cultures. Although of the limitation of this teaching method (Fichtner, 2015), Sarah, in this study, and perhaps many teachers in similar contexts still find it fruitful method to enable their students of understanding the L2 culture.

The next three functions of the L1 in the L2 classroom identified in this study—overcoming teaching challenges, giving instructions, and

motivating students—were reported by this study's teacher-participants to increase and enrich classroom interactions and discussions, thus accomplishing both academic and management purposes. These functions have been widely supported in the literature (see, for example, Bruen & Kelly, 2017; Hlas, 2016; Forman, 2012; Tas  & Aksu Ata  2020; Wong, 2020). However, the final function, avoiding L2 words that sound taboo in the L1, was rarely reported in the literature. As indicated by the teacher-participants in this study, some English words have the tone or rhythm of taboo words in Arabic, and so switching to Arabic can be an effective solution to prevent shyness among students and misunderstandings about the words' meaning. That this function is not reported elsewhere in the literature might indicate that such cases are rare in L1 Arabic-L2 English classrooms, and perhaps even more so in other language classroom contexts where L1-L2 phonetic similarities less problematic.

While the findings of this study pointed to ways that L1 usage can be useful for L2 students, they also reinforced ways that L1 usage benefits L2 teachers, especially in challenging educational environments. The educational reality in public schools of Jordan is challenging due to the limited education budget, as reflected in large class sizes, poor buildings, small class spaces, bureaucratic rules and regulations, and limited teaching and learning resources. Additionally, in EFL contexts generally and in Jordan specifically, there can be limits to non-native L2 teachers' linguistic proficiency, which may also account in part for L2 teachers' reliance on the L1 in some classroom situations (Bateman, 2008). The teacher-participants in this study were not only non-native speakers of English, but also non-experts in some of the topics (e.g., science) they were required to integrate into their L2 classes. They found their native language to be a valuable resource for countering their lack of knowledge in some aspects of their L2 lessons.

Broadly speaking, teaching experience has been shown to be a significant factor in L2 teachers' decision to use the L1 or L2 in the classroom (Forman, 2015). In this study, three teacher-participants had 20+ years' teaching experience, three had 12+ years' experience, and the relatively less experienced Salma had 6 years' experience. For example, Samia (15 years' experience) justified her considerable use of L1 her L2 grammar class by pointing to her years of experience that taught her that grammar lessons need more L1 usage than other types of lessons (e.g., reading & writing) to proceed smoothly. This is in line with previous research that says that in L2 grammar lessons in particular, teachers learn through experience "the difficulty of making [...] grammar point[s] comprehensible through the L2" (Edstrom, 2006, p. 285), and so lean on the L1 in grammar lessons (e.g., comparing or explaining L1 and L2 grammar rules) to increase their students' comprehension (Cook, 2001; K lkvist, 2013).

Regarding the impact of educational context on L1 usage, this study did not examine the impact of Jordanian L2 educational policies on the role of L1 in the L2 classroom. However, the author knows that Jordanian L2 policies, like most national educational policies in the world, discourage L1 use. Since the teacher-participants in this study were experienced and likely fully aware of the Jordanian educational policies, and yet they significantly and intentionally used the L1 for various teaching and learning functions, it can be assumed that the policies are not fully implemented in all public schools of Jordan. A potential direction for future research is investigating the relationship between L2 teaching policies and practices regarding L1 use.

## 5. Conclusion

In summary, this study identified six main functions of L1 use in the L2 classroom: translating, explaining metalinguistic information, overcoming teaching challenges, giving instructions, motivating students, and avoiding L2 words that sound taboo in the L1. Teacher-participants perceived these functions to be beneficial in their L2 classroom by helping them to overcome challenges in the classroom, facilitate students' L2 learning of grammar, pronunciation, and culture, and generally enhance the teaching and learning process.

The findings herein are limited in their generalizability due to the small number of participants; further exploring L2 teachers' beliefs via a questionnaire with a large sample size may help to build more robust and transferrable results. The number of classes observed was also limited to one per teacher, which was insufficient to observe trends in teachers' practices. Future research could use an observational matrix to capture, for example, instances and percentage of time using the L1 vs. L2, which could be used to triangulate interview data. Limitations aside, this study may help to bridge the gap between research and practice by exploring the role of L1 in the L2 classroom and contribute to a deeper understanding of aspects of the L2 teaching reality, particularly in foreign contexts.

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