



## ARABIC USE IN MOROCCAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY

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### Abstract:

This study examines the use of Arabic in Moroccan English language classrooms, focusing on its extent, pedagogical functions, and the factors influencing its use. It investigates whether teacher-related variables such as gender, age, and teaching experience affect the use of Arabic in English Language Teaching (ELT), as well as the reasons for its use across language skills (reading, listening, speaking, and writing) and linguistic components (grammar, vocabulary, and functions). The study also considers students' use of Arabic and its possible relationship with classroom management issues, particularly disruptive behaviors such as noise. To address these objectives, a mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining classroom observations conducted in high schools in Fez with a questionnaire administered to English language teachers from different regions of Morocco, varying in gender, age, and teaching experience. The study aims to provide a clearer understanding of the role of Arabic in English language teaching and learning in the Moroccan context.

**Keywords:** Arabic use; English Language Teaching; mother tongue; classroom interaction; teachers' attitude towards L1 use in ELT

### 1. Introduction

English has become one of the most influential languages in the modern world, playing a central role in education, communication, business, and globalization. Consequently, the interest in learning English as a second or foreign language has significantly increased

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over the past decades (Hasman, 2000). As a global lingua franca, English enables communication among people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and it has become “*a key part in educational strategy in most countries*” (Graddol, 2006, p. 70). This growing emphasis on English language learning has generated considerable debate regarding effective teaching methods and approaches, particularly concerning the medium of instruction and the role of learners’ first language (L1) in the foreign language classroom. In this regard, two major opposing perspectives have emerged: the monolingual approach, which discourages the use of L1 in target language learning, and the bilingual approach, which views L1 as a supportive pedagogical tool. Scholars such as Ellis (1984), Krashen (1982), and Yaphantides (2009) argue that the use of L1 may hinder exposure to the target language (TL), whereas others, including Atkinson (1987), Auerbach (1993), Deller and Rinvoluceri (2002), Phillipson (1992), Prodromou (2002), Swain and Lapkin (2000), Vanderheijden (2010), and Weschler (1997), emphasize the facilitating role of L1 in enhancing comprehension and language acquisition.

Within the context of Arabic-speaking learners, the use of Arabic in English language teaching remains a particularly contested yet practical issue. Although some educators perceive Arabic as a defective means for learning English, its use can become necessary when communication breaks down, especially at the beginner stages of language learning. In such situations, Arabic may help learners understand abstract concepts, unfamiliar vocabulary, and complex clauses or sentences more effectively. However, its use should remain carefully regulated and primarily employed by the teacher rather than the students. Moreover, literal word-for-word translation is discouraged, as meaning-based translation is considered more pedagogically appropriate. The use of Arabic can also provide psychological reassurance to learners, since students often search mentally for Arabic equivalents of English words, and successfully identifying such equivalents may create a sense of achievement and satisfaction. Nonetheless, teachers are encouraged to minimize reliance on Arabic once students become familiar with English vocabulary and structures. Therefore, the teacher’s role is to employ Arabic strategically and contextually in ways that support comprehension while maintaining sufficient exposure to English in order to conduct the classroom effectively and successfully.

## 2. Literature Review

Research on second language acquisition further demonstrates that learners exposed to more than one language from an early age are capable of developing new grammatical systems naturally through linguistic exposure. Nevertheless, language educators continue to debate the extent to which L1 should be used in L2 classrooms. While some teachers advocate an English-only approach to maximize learners’ exposure to the target language, others believe that the strategic use of L1 can support learning under certain conditions. Indeed, the use of native language in foreign language classrooms has been examined from multiple perspectives, leading scholars to conclude that L1 use is often “*an unavoidable reality of L2 classrooms*” (Hall & Cook, 2013).

Similarly, Shin *et al.* (2019) argue that the judicious use of L1 by teachers can facilitate L2 learning and classroom interaction. Teachers' attitudes toward L1 use, however, differ according to educational context and professional experience, as "*these vary according to context and develop with experience*" (Gallagher, 2020, p. 3). Such differing perspectives highlight the need for further research into teachers' beliefs and practices concerning L1 use in diverse EFL settings.

The differing perspectives regarding the use of L1 in EFL classrooms are not merely pedagogical preferences; rather, they are anchored in broader theories and approaches to learning and acquisition. Therefore, exploring the use of L1 in EFL contexts, such as Morocco, requires a systematic discussion of the major theoretical frameworks and language teaching approaches that have influenced perceptions of L1 in second and foreign language learning contexts.

## 2.1 The Grammar-Translation Method

The Grammar-Translation Method is widely regarded as the oldest approach to language teaching. Although its use has declined, it continues to be employed in certain educational contexts. As its name suggests, the GTM places primary emphasis on the study of grammatical rules and the translation of texts as a means of demonstrating comprehension (Zainuddin *et al.*, 2011). Accordingly, developing communicative competence in the target language was not considered a central objective. Therefore, the instruction was conducted mainly in the learner's native language, and little attention was given to the accurate pronunciation or oral use of the target language. Within the Grammar-Translation Method, the study of grammar constitutes the central focus of instruction. Considerable emphasis is placed on the memorization of grammatical rules, including verb conjugations and the recitation of rules governing language structure and usage. The method relies heavily on translation into and from the learners' first language, alongside the systematic learning of grammatical forms. Translation exercises involving sentences, phrases, and selected passages are therefore fundamental components of this approach. In the context of English language learning, for example, students may be required to translate texts from Arabic into English and vice versa. Such translation activities are primarily based on the grammatical rules previously studied by learners. A typical classroom practice associated with the Grammar-Translation Method is described by Lado as follows:

*"In the Grammar-Translation Method, the book begins with the parts of speech, declensions, conjugations, rules, and exceptions. Often, each unit has a paragraph which will be translated into the native language. These paragraphs illustrate the grammar rules studied in the unit. The student is expected to apply the rules on his own. This involves a complicated mental manipulation of the conjugation and declension in the order memorized, down to the form that might fit the translation."* (Lado, 1964)

Historically, the GTM occupied a dominant position in the field of language teaching and learning. For many years, it served as a foreign language teaching. As Sharma notes:

*“Towards the end of the nineteenth century ‘Grammar translation method’ had become the popular method of teaching foreign languages. Forger Ascham and William Bath in the sixteenth century, and Comenius and John Locke in the seventeenth century, advocated the use of translation as a means to teach Latin, which by the time had become a dead language. Thus from the formal teaching of Latin and Greek, till the beginning of the twentieth century, ‘Grammar translation method’ was developed in vogue throughout the world to teach a foreign language.”* (Sharma, 2005)

In light of the previous quotes, one can draw the conclusion that the Grammar-Translation Method emphasizes the teaching of the grammatical structures of a second language, while its principal technique is the translation of texts to and from the target language. However, several characteristics distinguish this method from other language-teaching approaches. In practice, reading and writing constitute the primary focus of instruction, whereas little or no systematic attention is given to speaking and listening skills (Anthony, 1963). Furthermore, learners' native language is maintained as the principal reference system throughout the process of second-language acquisition. Within this framework, learners tend to assume a passive role, while teachers are viewed as the primary authority and source of knowledge. Consequently, the Grammar-Translation Method is generally regarded as a teacher-centered approach.

It should be noted that the Grammar-Translation Method has been the subject of considerable criticism from language-teaching reformers. Critics argue that the method often creates frustration among learners by reducing language learning to the memorization of extensive lists of grammatical rules and vocabulary items, resulting in a monotonous and unengaging learning experience. Moreover, its limited range of practice techniques does little to free learners from dependence on their first language. Other scholars contend that the method pays insufficient attention to the development of communicative competence. Despite these criticisms, the Grammar-Translation Method continues to be widely practiced. One reason for its persistence is that there is no inherent contradiction between grammar instruction and communicative language teaching. Indeed, explicit grammar instruction can complement communicative approaches by raising learners' awareness of the forms and structures of the target language (Christopher, 2002). Additionally, the first language can serve as a useful reference system, helping to reduce misunderstandings during the learning process. Likewise, the analysis of grammatical features and the use of translation activities may engage learners in active problem-solving tasks.

Finally, the Grammar-Translation Method is relatively straightforward to implement and places few demands on teachers, which may explain its enduring popularity. In the analytical section of this paper, the application of the principles of the Grammar-Translation Method in Moroccan English language classrooms will be

examined. Particular attention will be given to the extent to which Moroccan teachers of English employ translation from English into Arabic as part of their instructional practices.

## 2.2 The Direct Method

The Direct Method began in the early twentieth century as a response to the Grammar-Translation Method. This method emphasizes language learning by establishing direct contact with the foreign language in meaningful situations. The fundamental idea of the Direct Method, according to Lado Robert (1964), is the combination of words and sentences with their meaning through demonstration, dramatization, and painting, etc. The Direct Method, with its use of language in meaningful contexts, such as pictures and posters, approximately reduced the use of translation in language learning. Although the direct method generally rejected the use of translation in language teaching, limited forms of translation continued to be employed.

As the principles of the Direct Method spread, there was more and more compromise with them in order to meet the growing demands for measurable standards of accuracy. Vocabulary exercises and systematic grammar drills were added, and a more advanced level of translation was included (Mackey, 1967).

The Direct Method is based on the principle that a second language should be learned in a manner similar to the acquisition of the mother tongue. For instance, a child acquires their first language without relying on any other language for mediation or translation. In this regard, Binod (2004) clearly explains that:

*“Direct Method is a method of teaching a foreign language, especially a modern language, through conversation, discussion and reading in the language itself without use of the pupil’s language, without translation and without the study of formal grammar. The first words are taught by pointing to objects or pictures or by performing actions.”*

One should note that the direct method is seen as an essential shift from the Grammar-Translation Method by the use of the target language as exclusively a tool of instruction (Larsen-Freeman, 2000) and communication in the classroom. It also rejects the use of the learner’s first language and translation as instructional techniques. In other words, it marks a transition from the study of literary language to the use of spoken, everyday language as the primary object of early instruction. Within this approach, language learning is often conceptualized as mirroring first language acquisition. Consequently, the learning processes involved are frequently interpreted as having a strong psychological dimension.

The Direct Method represented an initial attempt to turn language learning into a process of actual language use rather than mere analysis. It required considerable creativity on the part of teachers and contributed to the development of new instructional techniques, such as the use of visual aids (pictures and objects), question-and-answer exchanges, oral narratives, dictation, and imitation. However, this method raises two important questions. First, how can misunderstanding be avoided without translation,

particularly when dealing with abstract concepts that may be difficult to convey without reference to the learners' first language? Second, how can this approach be effectively applied beyond the elementary stages of language learning? Moreover, the Direct Method presupposes that teachers are either native speakers or possess near-native proficiency in the target language. In practice, however, these conditions are difficult to meet, especially in contexts such as Morocco, where English language teachers are typically non-native speakers.

### 2.3 The Audio-Lingual Method

The Audio-Lingual Method emerged in the 1930s and 1940s as a result of increased international communication and advances in the study of foreign language use. It was presented as a more scientific, oral-based approach intended to replace the Grammar-Translation Method. By the 1950s, it had gained considerable popularity in the teaching of English as a foreign language. However, the method was later criticized for its limited effectiveness in developing learners' ability to engage in natural conversation, an objective that had not been fully prioritized at its inception (Spolsky, 1989). In line with its principles, proponents of the Audio-Lingual Method generally rejected the use of translation in the early stages of language learning. Supporting this view, Brooks (1964) argues that translation between languages is of little value until learners have acquired a substantial understanding of both systems. He further says:

*"Translation, meaning restating code B, what has already been stated in code A, has no place in the early stages of language learning. Two languages are neither thought nor spoken simultaneously, and the process of matching one with another is, in fact, destructive as the control of both."* (Brooks, 1964)

In this respect, the perceptions of the teachers play a very important role in the teaching-learning process. What they perceive gives rise to their knowledge and beliefs, and these concepts guide and help them in their teaching methods. Such a perspective is defined by different scholars, such as Chee (2002), who has stated clearly that *"The reception of stimuli that can be influenced by an individual's mental awareness, experience, knowledge, motivation and social interactions"* (Chee, 2002). One can conclude that the perceptions of an individual could ultimately alter and, more importantly, give rise to an individual's attitudes.

Given the monolingual principle advocated by proponents of the audio-lingual method, which emphasizes the exclusive use of the target language in the classroom, the analytical section of this study will examine the extent to which Moroccan teachers of English adhere to this restriction on the use of the teacher's native language. More specifically, it will investigate to what extent Arabic is excluded from classroom instruction.

## 2.4 The Communicative Approach

The Communicative Approach is currently one of the most influential and widely promoted approaches to language teaching. Its theoretical foundations can be traced to Chomsky's critique of Skinner's theory of verbal behavior. In this regard, Chomsky (1965) emphasized the creative nature of linguistic competence and viewed language learning as a process of acquiring conscious control over the phonological, grammatical, and lexical systems of a language. Emerging in the 1970s, the Communicative Approach placed particular emphasis on language learning through interaction, meaningful communication, language use, group work, peer collaboration, and the learning of grammatical structures alongside their communicative functions. For this reason, it is often referred to in Europe as the functional-notional approach.

The Communicative Approach gained prominence in language teaching because it recognized the need to focus on communicative competence rather than merely mastering grammatical structures. Its primary objective is to develop learners' ability to communicate effectively in real-life situations. To achieve this goal, the approach promotes teaching procedures that integrate the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—while acknowledging their interdependence. In other words, it encourages the use of meaningful tasks and activities centered on authentic communication. Furthermore, it assumes that language learning is facilitated when learners engage with meaningful content. Within this framework, learners are expected to act as negotiators of meaning, while teachers assume multiple roles, including those of facilitator, organizer, counselor, classroom manager, and researcher.

With regard to the use of the mother tongue in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), the Communicative Approach has adopted a more flexible position than previous methods. Rather than imposing a complete ban on the learners' first language, it advocates its judicious and purposeful use. Hastings (1997), for example, argues that the first language should be employed intelligently and strategically in the language classroom. From this perspective, the mother tongue may serve as a valuable tool for checking learners' comprehension and facilitating understanding when necessary. Hastings further contends that the use of the native language is a natural aspect of the language-learning process, since learners often rely on their first language as a foundation for acquiring a second language. Consequently, the Communicative Approach rejects the strict prohibition of the mother tongue found in earlier methods, while maintaining that its use should remain limited, purposeful, and pedagogically justified. In the analytical section of this study, the extent to which Moroccan teachers of English adhere to these principles will be examined. Particular attention will be paid to whether their use of Arabic in the classroom is consistent with the Communicative Approach's recommendation that the mother tongue be used sparingly and only when it contributes to the learning process.

### 3. Hypothesis

The study also tries to explore the factors that may contribute to the use of Arabic in English Language Teaching. In particular, it examines whether variables such as gender, age, and years of teaching experience influence teachers' reliance on Arabic in Moroccan high school English classrooms. In addition, the study attempts to identify the pedagogical reasons underlying teachers' use of Arabic, assuming that it may be employed in the teaching of the four language skills– reading, listening, speaking, and writing– as well as other language components, including grammar, functions, and vocabulary. Equally important, students' use of Arabic is recognized as a common phenomenon in Moroccan high school English classes. Therefore, the paper investigates the relationship between the frequent use of Arabic and classroom management issues, particularly disruptive behaviors such as excessive noise. Through this analysis, the study aims to provide a clearer understanding of the role of Arabic in English language teaching and learning within the Moroccan high school context.

Ultimately, the paper seeks to address the following research questions:

- 1) To what extent do Moroccan high school teachers of English use Arabic in their classroom instruction?
- 2) To what degree is Arabic used in Moroccan English classrooms?
- 3) What are the reasons for the use of Arabic in Moroccan English classes?
- 4) Does teaching experience influence teachers' use of Arabic in English Language Teaching?
- 5) Does the teacher's gender affect the use of Arabic in ELT classrooms?
- 6) Is there a relationship between students' frequent use of Arabic in English language classrooms and the occurrence of disruptive behaviors, such as noise and classroom misbehavior?

### 4. Methodology

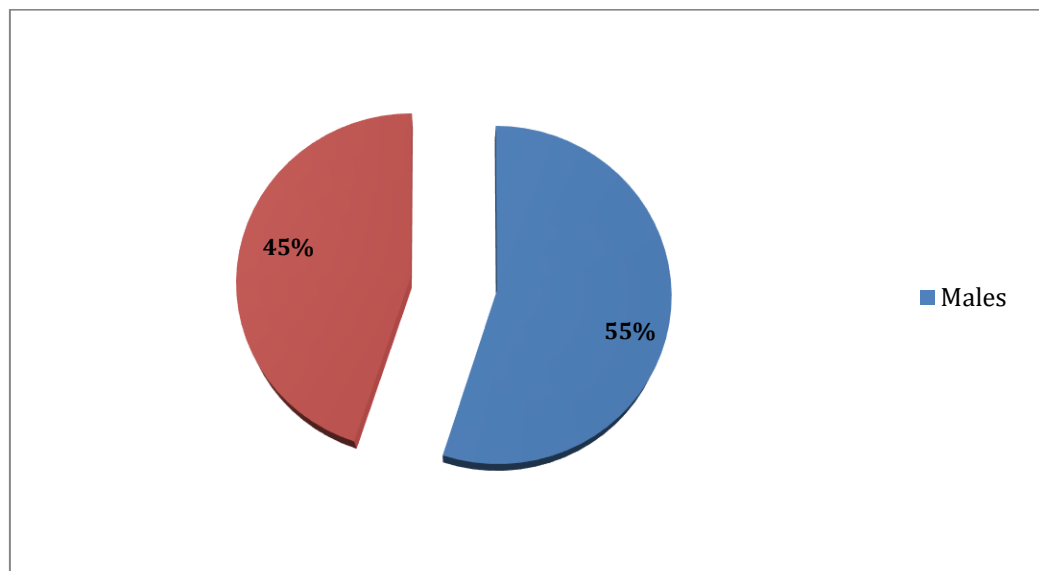
The above research questions are addressed and investigated through a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. The qualitative component consists of classroom observations conducted in different high schools in Fez from January to mid-June 2024. The quantitative component involves a questionnaire distributed to teachers from various regions of Morocco, taking into account differences in gender and age (see Appendix 1).

#### 4.1 Demographics

This study was designed to investigate the use of Arabic by Moroccan teachers of English in their classes. This study's data were collected during the 2014 spring through a questionnaire and classroom observations.

A questionnaire in English was distributed randomly to high school teachers of English between the ages of 21 and 45. The sample consists of 35 high school teachers of English from different geographical areas in Morocco: 16 are females (45) and 19 are

males (55) (see figure 1). The participants differ in terms of their years of teaching experience: 14 participants have less than 6 months (40), 5 participants have between 1 and 2 years (14.28), 2 participants have between 2 and 5 (5.71), and 7 participants have between 6 and 10 (20), and 7 participants have more than 10 years of experience (20) (see table 2).



**Figure 1: Gender Distribution**

**Figure 2: Years of Experience**

Less than 6 months	14	40
Between 6 months and 2 years	5	14.28
Between 2 and 5 years	2	5.71
Between 6 and 10 years	7	20
More than 10 years	7	20

The study also relied on classroom observations. Two male and two female English teachers were observed in their classrooms in order to collect data on the use of Arabic and the underlying reasons for its use. All four teachers had more than ten years of teaching experience, and each was observed over three classroom sessions. The classroom observations were used to complement and triangulate the questionnaire data, as well as to help interpret and explain the findings.

## 5. Analysis

### 5.1 The Use of Arabic in Moroccan English classes

To measure the frequency of Arabic use in Moroccan English Language classrooms, the questionnaire asked the participants to indicate whether they use Arabic and if so, to provide the frequency of its use per session (always, usually, often, sometimes, or rarely). The answers are charted as follows:

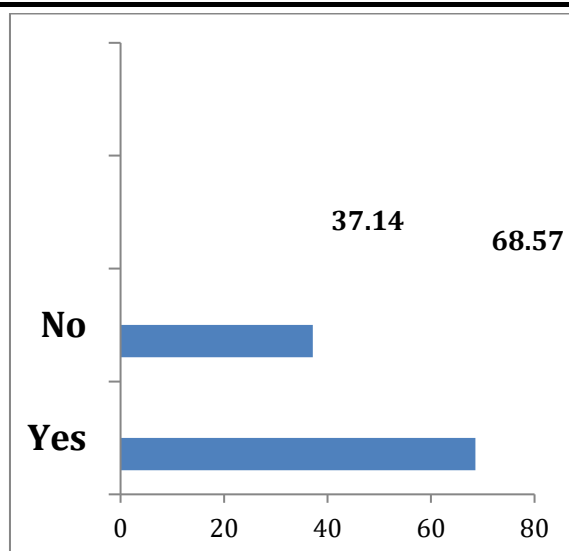


Figure 3: The use of Arabic by Moroccan teachers in English classes

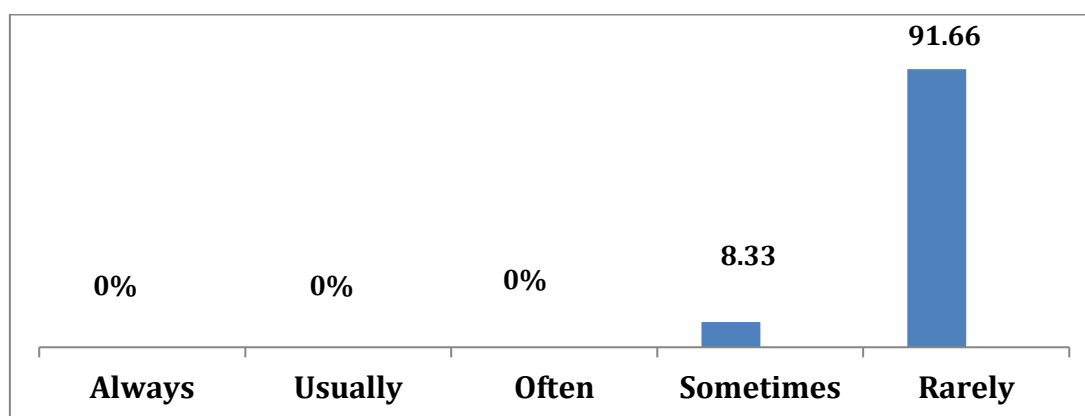
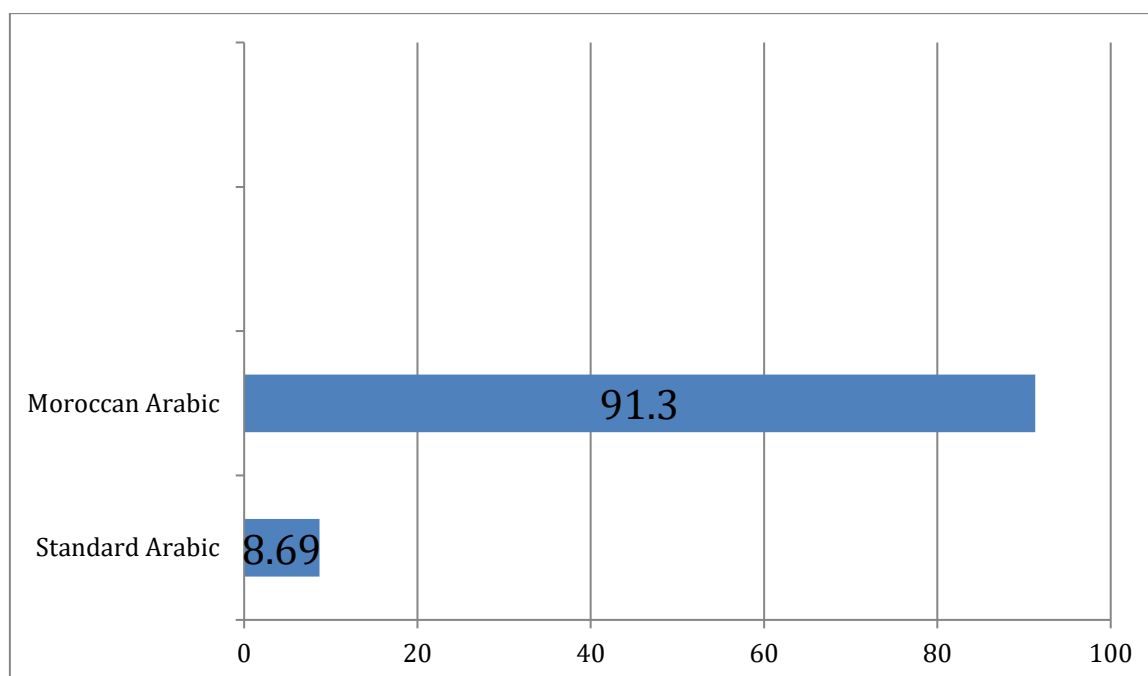


Figure 4: The frequency of the use of Arabic by Moroccan Teachers of English in their classes

From the data presented above, it is evident that Moroccan teachers of English use Arabic in their English language classrooms (see Figure 3). A majority of respondents (68.57%) reported using Arabic in their classes, compared to a smaller proportion (37.14%) who indicated that they do not use Arabic. This finding is consistent with Al Nofaie's study, which suggests that the first language is sometimes necessary for teachers of second languages to facilitate the learning process. Although Moroccan teachers of English do use Arabic, the data also indicate that its frequency is generally limited to classroom sessions. A large majority of participants (91.66%) reported using Arabic "rarely," while 8.33% reported using it "sometimes" during a lesson. These results are further supported by classroom observations. It appears that the observed teachers tend to use Arabic only occasionally, often limited to no more than one sentence per session. Overall, Moroccan teachers of English do use Arabic in their classrooms; however, its use is infrequent.

This finding highlights the importance of the limited use of the mother tongue in English language teaching within Moroccan classrooms. It suggests that Moroccan teachers of English do not always adhere strictly to ministerial guidelines, which consistently emphasize the use of the target language in language instruction. Several

factors may account for this result. First, Moroccan teachers may have moved away from the principles of the Audio-Lingual Method, which strongly discourages the use of the mother tongue in second language teaching. Second, contemporary teachers may be influenced by the Communicative Approach, at least at the pedagogical level, which permits the judicious and limited use of the learners' first language when it serves instructional purposes. A third explanation, supported by classroom observations, is that students' low proficiency levels may sometimes necessitate teachers' occasional use of Arabic to facilitate comprehension and maintain the flow of instruction. It is also worth noting that when Moroccan teachers of English use Arabic, they tend to rely more on Moroccan Arabic (Darija) than on Standard Arabic (see Figure 5 below). This preference may be explained by the fact that Darija is the teachers' natural means of everyday communication and is therefore perceived as a more accessible and effective medium for classroom interaction than Standard Arabic.



**Figure 5:** The varieties of Arabic used by Moroccan Teachers of English in their classrooms

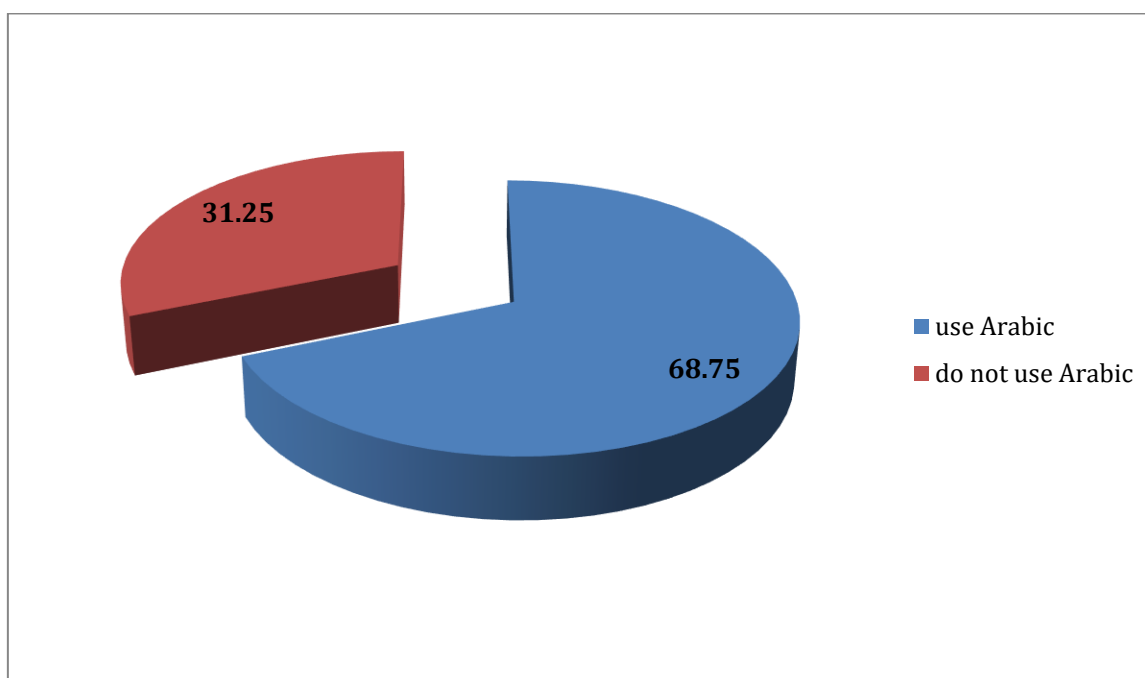
## 5.2 Gender and experience

Concerning the factors behind the use of the mother tongue in second language teaching, gender has always been considered of paramount importance. In this respect, Quadumi's study (2007) indicates that the use of the mother tongue in TESL is avoided and considered anti-pedagogical by female teachers of English. Quadumi attributes these results to the fact that female teachers tend to adhere to the pedagogical guidelines and recommendations of their supervisors.

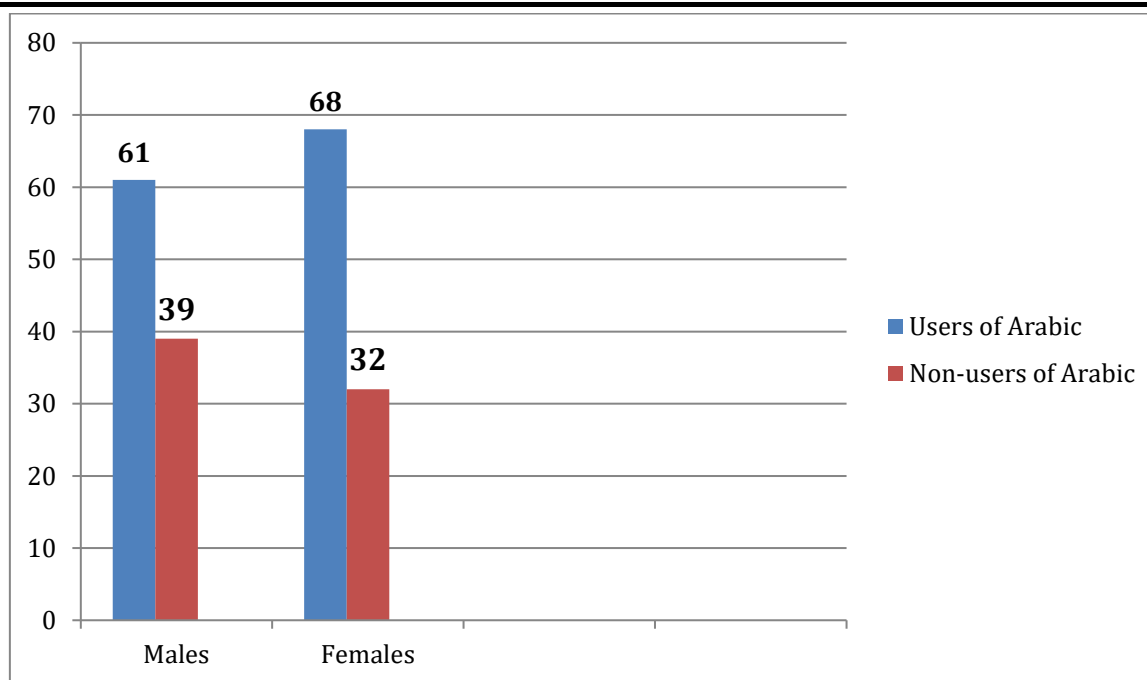
Accordingly, the third and fourth questions of the questionnaire aimed to investigate whether there is a difference between male and female teachers in the use of Arabic in English classes. The results have refuted Quadumi's conclusion, showing that there is no significant difference in using Arabic in TESL due to the gender determinant.

An important finding in the present questionnaire is that a majority of 11 female participants (68.75) confirm their use of Arabic in English language teaching, versus just 5 female participants (31.25) who identify themselves as non-users of Arabic in English language teaching (see figure 6). The same result was deduced through classroom observations. 2 male and 2 female English teachers were observed, and all of them tended to use Moroccan Arabic in ELT without any differences due to the gender determinant. Also, there is no significant difference between males and females in the use of the mother tongue in ELT since 61 of the male participants are users of Arabic, versus 68 of the female participants who are users of Arabic (see figure 7).

To determine whether there is a relationship between years of teaching experience and teachers' use of Arabic, the questionnaire asked the participants to specify their years of experience before providing a response to the use of Arabic in ELT. The answers suggest that there is a close relationship between experience and teachers' use of Arabic in ELT. The results show that all teachers with more than 6 years of experience (20 of the participants) use Arabic in their English classes, while 13 out of 14 teachers with less than 6 months of experience do not use Arabic at all. This finding may be attributed to the fact that less experienced teachers tend to abide by ministerial instructions, and they are a little bit cautious about the pedagogical risks of the use of L1. This finding also shows quite the opposite of the hypotheses, which suggest that lack of experience is the reason why teachers of English use L1.



**Figure 6:** Female teachers' use of Arabic in English language teaching



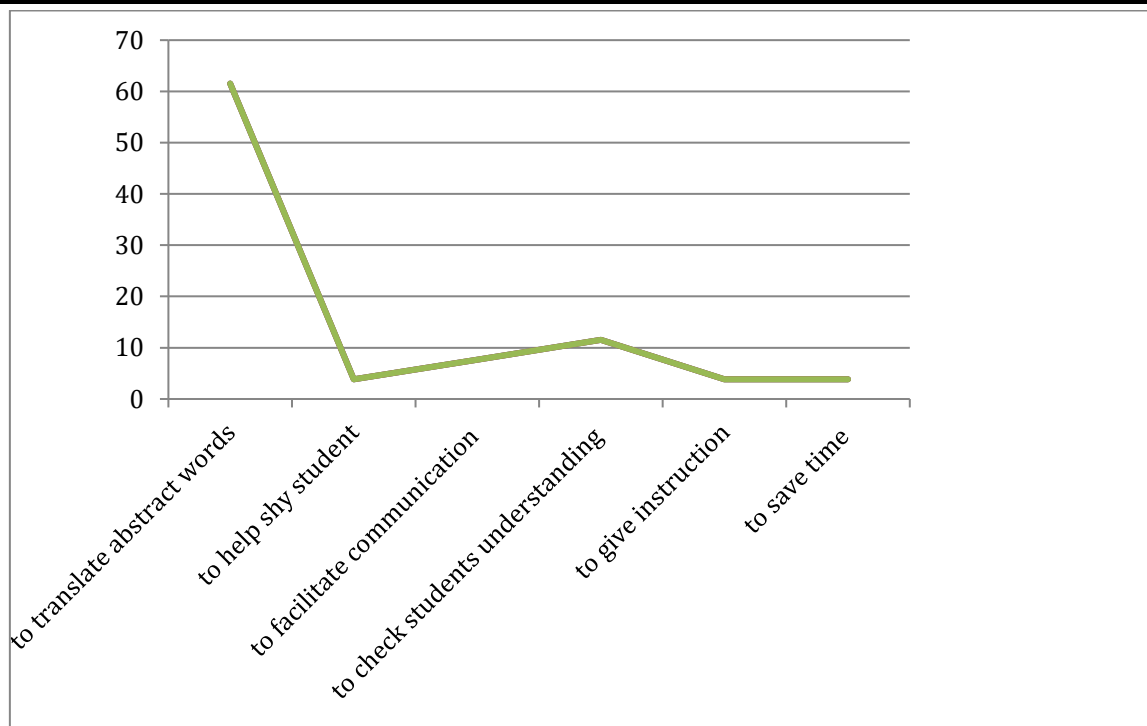
**Figure 7:** Male and Female Teachers' use of Arabic in English language teaching

### 5.3 Reasons behind Moroccan teachers' use of Arabic in ELT

In recent years, many studies have been carried out to investigate the reasons why teachers of English use their mother tongue in their instructional practices.

Several explanations have been proposed for the use of the mother tongue in second language teaching. One of the most cited reasons in applied linguistics is "*time saving*". Shimizu (2007) comes to the conclusion that time-saving is one of the most frequent reasons why teachers of second languages resort to the mother tongue. Another common reason for teachers' use of L1 in ELT is to facilitate communication between students and their teacher. In this regard, Nation (2003) considers that the use of the mother tongue in TESL is needed to enhance communication and reduce barriers between students and teachers. The mother tongue is also frequently used in TESL in order to explain or translate unknown or abstract words. Accordingly, Turnbull (2001) notes that "*it is efficient to make a quick switch to L1 to ensure that students understand an unknown word*".

There are also several other reasons for the use of the mother tongue in Teaching English as a Second Language, including checking students' understanding, supporting shy learners, giving instructions, and explaining grammatical rules. To address the question of the reasons behind Moroccan teachers' use of the mother tongue in TESL, the questionnaire asked participants to select the main reason for using Arabic in their English classes and to indicate the language areas in which it is used. The responses are presented below:



**Figure 8:** The reasons for using Arabic in Moroccan classes of English

**Table 9:** Language skills and components in which Moroccan teachers of English use Arabic

Aspects or skills of language	Participants	Percentage
Grammar	1	3.70
Listening	0	0
Writing	0	0
Reading	0	0
Speaking	0	0
Writing	0	0
Vocabulary	26	96.30

The data above shows that the main reason why Moroccan teachers of English use Arabic is to translate abstract words. This result is substantially justified with 61.53 of Moroccan teachers of English using Arabic to translate abstract words. There are other reasons for the use of Arabic by Moroccan teachers of English, but they are not very common: 3.84 of teachers use Arabic to help shy students, 7.69 to facilitate communication, 11.53 to check students' understanding, 3.84 to give instructions, 3.84 to save time, 3.84 to explain grammar, and 3.84 use Arabic for other reasons (see figure 8). Thus, using Arabic to translate abstract words was one of the most common reasons why Moroccan teachers of English use Arabic in their classes.

Respondents were also asked about what aspects or skills of language they use Arabic in TESL. A striking majority of respondents (96.3) in this questionnaire confirm that they use Arabic for vocabulary teaching, versus just 3.7 of respondents who use Arabic for grammar explanation. Respondents also confirm that they are not interested in using Arabic to teach the four skills: reading, speaking, reading, and writing (see table

and figure 9). It is clear then that Arabic is used by Moroccan teachers of English mainly for vocabulary teaching.

Interestingly, Classroom observations of the four classes of English come in agreement with the questionnaire results. Moroccan teachers of English use Arabic for teaching vocabulary. It was observed that the four observed English teachers used Arabic when students failed to grasp unfamiliar, abstract, or cultural concepts. For example, having explained the word "altruism" in English through pictures and demonstrations, one of the observed teachers asked his students, "What is charity in Arabic?" and a student replied with a correct answer. Almost similarly, another observed teacher pronounced the word "culture" in Arabic to his students. In this way, the use of Arabic in TESL is used in a vocabulary teaching context to make sure that students have understood an abstract word or to translate difficult or vague words.

The fact that Moroccan teachers of English use Arabic to translate or explain an abstract or difficult word finds some echoes in other previous studies, which supported the mother tongue's use in TESL to clear up the meaning of abstract or difficult concepts and words (Cook, 2001). To use Arabic most commonly in vocabulary teaching is also, in general, in agreement with the labels of the communicative approach, which allows the use of L1 in a limited way in order to avoid vocabulary vagueness and difficulty.

The result also reveals that the use of Arabic by Moroccan teachers of English to explain grammar is substantially lower among respondents (3.7). This lower rate can be attributed to teachers' awareness of language or grammatical interference, which applied linguists, most of the time, try to avoid. Al Harbi (2010) defines language interference as "*the automatic transfer, due to habit, of the surface structure of the first language onto the surface of the target language*". For this reason, although Cook (2001) and communicative language approach advocates permit the use of L1 in SLT, they insist on the division between the mother tongue and the L2 in teaching grammatical structures so as to avoid language interference. Conclusively, it could be said that Moroccan teachers do not use Arabic in grammar teaching very frequently since they have been theoretically and pedagogically assimilated in the communicative language teaching approach.

In general, Moroccan teachers of English report using Arabic in a limited way, mainly in the context of vocabulary instruction. Most teachers use it to translate abstract words or to explain difficult concepts. This type of use is consistent with the theoretical and pedagogical principles of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. The finding is further supported by teachers' attitudes toward the use of Arabic in TESL, which reflect a belief in the limited and judicious use of the first language, a key principle of the Communicative Approach. The results are illustrated in the figure below.

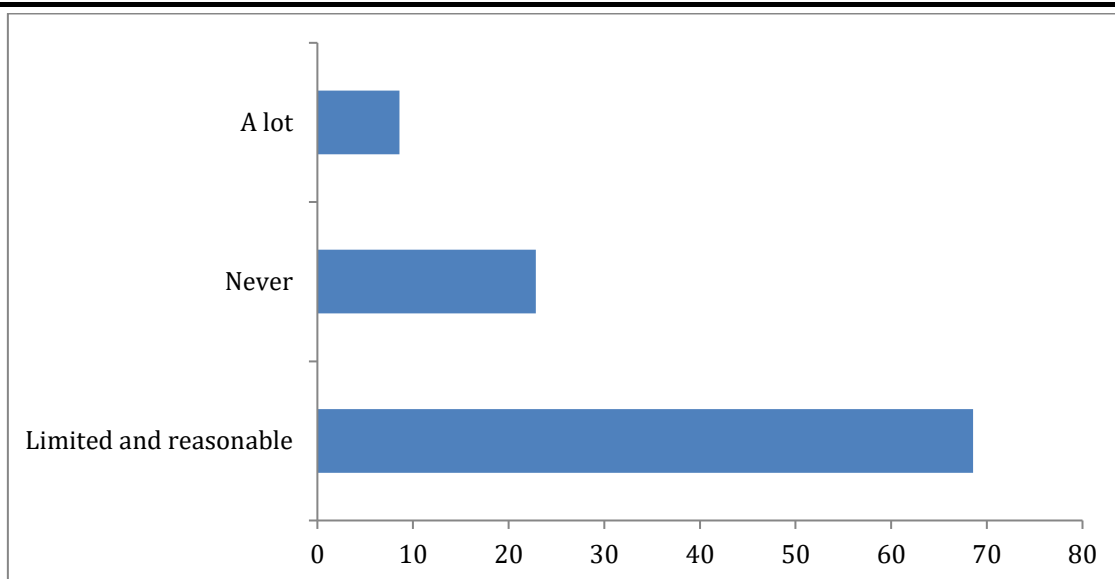


Figure 10: Attitudes of Moroccan Teachers of English towards the Use of Arabic in TESL

#### 5.4 Students' Use of Arabic in TESL and Classroom Misbehaviours and Noise

Most Moroccan students of English as a second language tend to use Arabic in English language classrooms. This is strongly confirmed by the present survey, in which the majority of respondents answered the question "Do your students use Arabic in your English class?" in the affirmative. This finding is clearly supported by the following data:

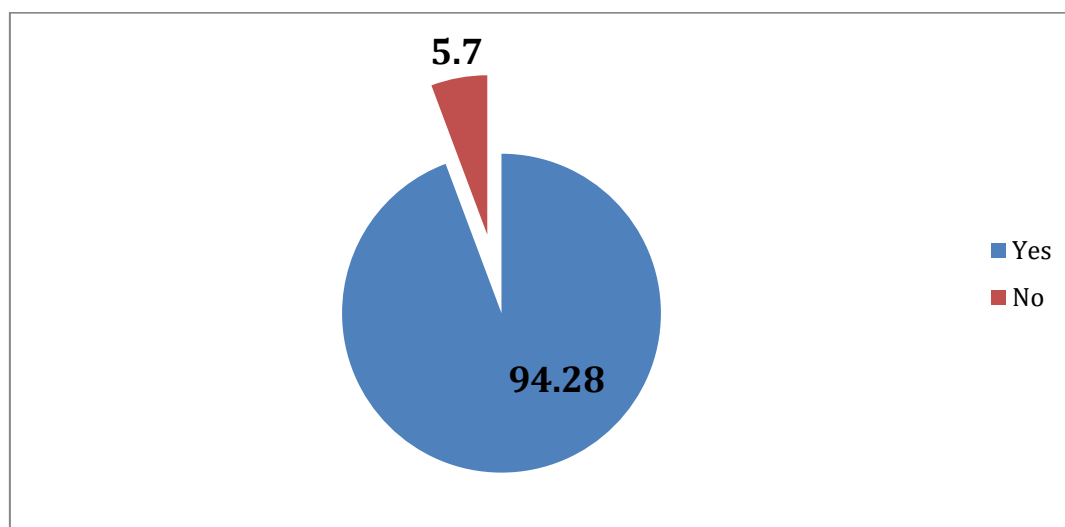
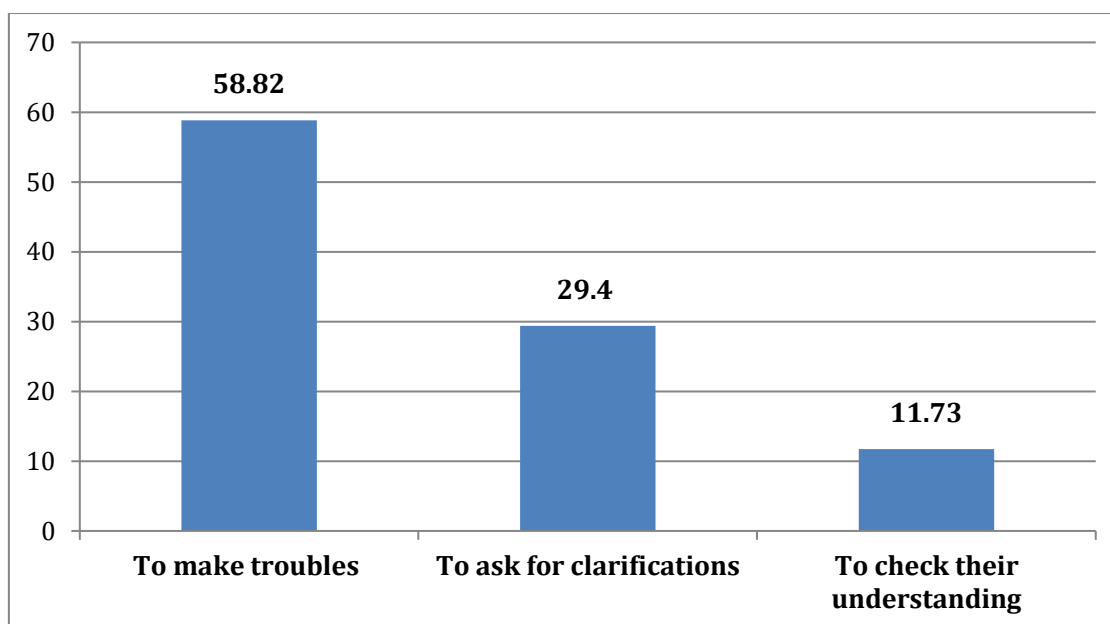


Figure 11: Students' use of Arabic in English language classes

During classroom observations, it was noticed that most students use Arabic commonly mainly for one of these three main reasons: to make trouble, to ask for clarifications, or to check their understanding. For this reason, the question of the relationship between classroom misbehavior and students' use of Arabic came to the forefront. On that basis, it was of paramount importance to investigate the relationship between classroom misbehaviors and students' excessive use of Arabic in ESL. To answer this rising question, the questionnaire asked the respondents to identify one of the three

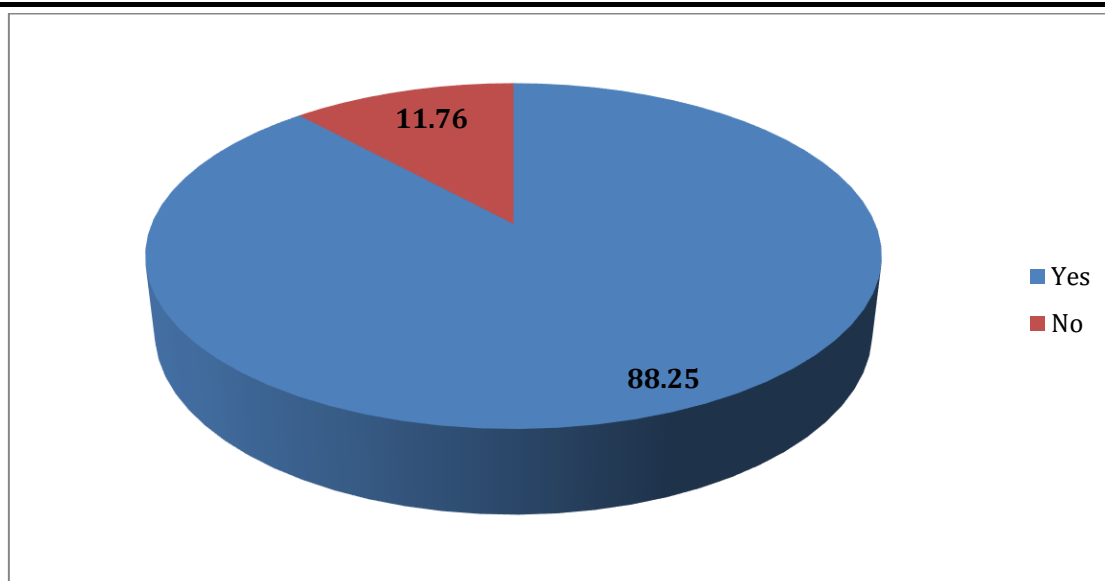
mentioned reasons as the main reason behind students' use of Arabic in English language teaching. The results were as follows:



**Figure 12:** Reasons behind Moroccan Students' Use of Arabic in English Language Classes

To the question "For what reasons do your students use Arabic?", the majority of respondents (58.82) ticked "to make trouble" as a main reason behind students' use of Arabic. Only 29.4 of Moroccan teachers attributed students' use of Arabic to "asking for clarification" versus a drastically low rate of 11.73 of respondents who justified students' use of Arabic with students' "checking understanding". The same result was gigantically assured during classroom observations. Students' use of Arabic in English classrooms, most of the time, was hiding behind it an attempt to misbehave, to laugh at teachers, to talk to their classmates, or to make noise. For example, most of the observed students used Arabic in English classrooms to comment on the teachers' appearance, to parrot the English sounds in Arabic, to comment on their classmates' answers, or even to insult each other. In this way, misbehavior in class can be directly linked to students' frequent use of Arabic in ELC.

This is clearly shown by our respondents' positive responses to the question "Does the Moroccan students' frequent use of Arabic in ELC motivate them to make a lot of noise?" (see figure 12):



**Figure 12:** Does Students' Frequent Use of Arabic in ELC motivate them to make a lot of Noise?

The association between students' use of Arabic in English language classrooms (ELC) and disruptive behavior can be explained in several ways. First, frequent use of Arabic may encourage students to engage in off-task discussions, thereby diverting attention from the lesson objectives. Second, when Arabic is used extensively by students, the level of formality in teacher–student interactions may decrease. As a result, students may become more likely to ask questions unrelated to the lesson content or to intrude into their teachers' personal lives. Third, the frequent use of Arabic in ELC may reduce constraints on students' oral participation, thereby transforming the classroom environment from a formal instructional space into a more informal one. Given these potential negative effects, it is advisable that Moroccan teachers of English regulate students' use of Arabic to support effective classroom management.

## 6. Conclusion

Through the analysis of the data presented above, this study has revealed that the use of Arabic is a common phenomenon in Moroccan English language classrooms. The findings show that most Moroccan teachers of English, regardless of gender, use Arabic in their classes, although infrequently, and mainly for the teaching of new vocabulary items. The results also reject the assumption that lack of teaching experience is a determining factor in teachers' use of Arabic in English language classrooms. Interestingly, the study indicates that more experienced teachers are, in fact, more likely to use Arabic than less experienced ones. Overall, these findings suggest that Moroccan teachers of English generally do not fully adhere to a monolingual teaching approach that strictly prohibits the use of the mother tongue. Instead, their practices are more consistent with the Communicative Language Teaching approach, which allows for the limited and judicious use of the first language when pedagogically justified. The findings further reveal a weak or non-existent relationship between students' frequent use of Arabic in

English language classrooms and the occurrence of classroom misbehavior. This result may be explained by the relatively low level of informality introduced by students' use of Arabic, which does not necessarily disrupt classroom order or discipline.

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### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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