Using L1 in Teaching Vocabulary to Low-Proficiency-Level Students in The University College of Khafji for Female Students

Dr. Abeer Hamed Aldhefeir

University of Hafr Al Batin | KSA

Abstract: This qualitative research investigates the effectiveness of using the learners' first language (L1) in teaching vocabulary to low-proficiency English students at the College of Khafji, Saudi Arabia. Challenging the prevailing notion that vocabulary instruction should solely occur in English, the study explores the preferences of students regarding L1 usage in their learning process. Through qualitative open-ended questionnaires administered to twenty female students, findings indicate that L1 significantly enhances vocabulary comprehension, engagement, and confidence among learners. The use of clear definitions and contextual explanations in Arabic facilitated a deeper understanding of English vocabulary, leading to improved learning outcomes. This study contributes valuable insights to English language teaching methodologies, advocating for the integration of L1 in vocabulary instruction to better support low-proficiency learners and enhance their academic performance. The implications of these findings suggest a need to reconsider existing pedagogical approaches in vocabulary education within the Saudi context.

Keywords: Low-proficiency English learners, Vocabulary acquisition, Bilingual education, Language learning strategies, Arabic in English teaching, Pedagogical implications.

استخدام اللغة الأولى في تدريس المفردات للطلاب ذوي المستويات المنخفضة في الكلية الجامعية بالخفجي للطالبات

د/ عبير حامد الظفيري

جامعة حفر الباطن | المملكة العربية السعودية

المستخلص: يبحث هذا البحث النوعي في فعالية استخدام اللغة الأولى للمتعلمين في تدريس المفردات لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية ذوي المستويات المنخفضة في كلية الخفجي بالمملكة العربية السعودية. وتحديًا للفكرة السائدة بأن تعليم المفردات يجب أن يتم باللغة الإنجليزية فقط، تستكشف الدراسة تفضيلات الطلاب فيما يتعلق باستخدام اللغة الأولى في عملية التعلم الخاصة بهم من خلال الاستبيانات النوعية المفتوحة التي أجريت على عشرين طالبة، تشير النتائج إلى أن اللغة الأولى تعزز بشكل كبير فهم المفردات والمشاركة والثقة بين المتعلمين. كما ساعد استخدام التعريفات الواضحة والشروحات السياقية باللغة العربية في فهم أعمق لمفردات اللغة الإنجليزية، مما أدى إلى تحسين نتائج التعلم. تساهم هذه الدراسة في تقديم رؤى قيمة لمنهجيات تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية، وتدعو إلى دمج اللغة الأولى في تعليم المفردات لدعم المتعلمين ذوي الكفاءة المنخفضة بشكل أفضل وتعزيز أدائهم الأكاديمي، تشير آثار هذه النتائج إلى الحاجة إلى إعادة النظر في الأساليب التربوية الحالية في تعليم المفردات في السياق السعودي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: متعلمو الإنجليزية منخفضو الكفاءة، اكتساب المفردات، لتعليم ثنائي اللغة، استراتيجيات تعلم اللغة، العربية في تدريس الإنجليزية، الآثار التربوية.

1.   Introduction

The debate over using L1 to teach L2 vocabulary using L2 in teaching all vocabularies complicates the process of teaching English to low-proficiency learners in a country like Saudi Arabia. Low-English-proficiency learners are students who have a limited command of the English language. Such students need to be appropriately guided in the learning process to ensure they improve their vocabulary, which in this case is the English language. Several researchers have conducted a wide range of studies with regard to the suitability of using this techniquein teaching L2 vocabularies to low-proficiency learners, though many have also refuted the efficiency of such approach.

My professional interest in this subject comes from my own position as an English teacher from Saudi Arabia. This study will, in the first instance, provide supporting evidence and assistance to both myself and my colleagues by offering further insight into the problem of students' lack of vocabulary (as identified in the literature) and to find some solutions for the problem. It is an important aspect of language which may affect the learners' progress with other skills. This study will also provide an opportunity to examine the teaching system in Saudi Arabia, and possibly shed light on ways to improve the system.

The paucity of studies on vocabulary in Saudi Arabia was another factor which led to this study, as the field is considered fairly new. This study is intended to add to the sum total of knowledge in this area, as well as provide benefit to both learners and teachers.

I intend to challenge the notion that "teaching vocabulary must only be accomplished through the English language, and there is no Arabic translation to be given to students." I strongly agree that L1 should be used in teaching vocabulary, especially to students with a low level of proficiency. Many English language teaching professionals and researchers dispute the use of L1 in the classroom, especially in communicative lessons (Mattioli, 2004; Ellis, 1984, etc.) Auerbach (1993) observed that a significant proportion of ESL teachers believe using L1 will impede progress in attaining English skills. Other researchers disagree, and maintain that L1 is effective in the classroom. Banos (2009) and Kavaliauskiene (2009), for example, discovered that native language has a facilitatory role, and its use is necessary to motivate children and beginners. As a result, use of the mother tongue is justified when it is useful for students.

Vocabulary is considered a key component of foreign language learning because having command of an extensive range of words is necessary to communicate in any language (Milton & Hopwood,2022). Camó(2014) argued that providing the L1 translation of items being taught is often regarded as a controversial practice when used to deal with vocabulary in foreign language contexts. However, he discovered clear advantages to linking L2 words with their L1 equivalents, especially during the early stages of learning, when the initial form-meaning connection has to be established (Jiang, 2002;Schmitt, 2008).

I was inspired to conduct a similar study to that of Latsanyphone &Bouangeune (2009)as in Al-Khafji College, vocabulary is taught purely in English, and students often have difficulty learning the target language without assistance fromthe Arab EFL teachers. In this research, I will conduct an action research using an open-ended qualitative questionnaire with students who have a low level of proficiency in vocabulary. This will show that L1 can be used effectively as a tool in ELT, particularly in vocabulary instruction.

2.   Contextual background and current practice

The Status of the English Language in Al-Khafji College

English is not the main language of Al-Khafji College. In the preparatory year program (PYP), students take English classes along with other subjects (taught in Arabic) such as Islamic Studies and Arabic. Only the English department uses English to communicate with students and teach PYP courses. Most of the teachers are native speakers of English, and students learn the various courses only in English. I would like to challenge the idea of teaching vocabulary using L1 by conducting a two-week intervention period by an EFL Arabic teacher, working under the hypothesis that translation, explanations in Arabic, clarifications, and so on will improve students' vocabulary knowledge.

Most researchers, such as Miyasako (2002)and Chen (2002), have not found any difference in the effectiveness of L1 and L2 glosses for enhancing incidental vocabulary learning. Results of the comparisons between L1 and L2 are few and inconclusive, thus, further investigation on the effectiveness of L1 and L2 glosses and which gloss type is more effective in certain conditions, and for which learners, needs to take place (Yoshii, 2006)

3. Literature Review

Vocabulary is fundamental to learning any language. When they understand words, people are able to convey enormous amounts of information, even if they lack specific grammar. Meara (1996: 53) states, "lexical competence is at the heart of communicative competence." He maintains that knowing a large number of words is strongly related to linguistic competence. A single word can express strong feelings, emotions, responses, and replies. Experts, teachers, and learners generally consider vocabulary knowledge to be the most basic element of learning a second language (Schmitt, 2008). Eyckmans(2004) writes that learning vocabulary is ofa vital importance for second language learners, helping them develop their skills.

As the demand for English schooling and the EFL industry has increased, research studies into second language acquisition and finding new methods of learning languages has also increased. In Saudi Arabia (SA), studies have been conducted regarding vocabulary uptake. Some of the research on this point was carried out by Al-Okloby (2001), who discovered that Saudi learners are not able to acquire at least half of the vocabulary in their textbooks. There are several reasons for this including teachers, the books themselves, classroom situations, and curricula. However, Saudi Arabia, as a modern nation developing extremely quickly, uses the English language everywhere, and demand for theEnglish language is increasing, particularly considering the fact that most jobs now require proficiency in the English language as a major employment condition.

Al-Hazemi (1993)and Alsaleh (2022) stated that in Saudi Arabia, outcomes of learning English are lower than predicted. According to the Ministry of Education (MoEd), learners are expected to complete high school with a vocabulary approximately 3,000 English words. Studies such as Al-Hazemi's (1993) and Al-Bogami's (1995), however, have found that Saudi students finish high school with a vocabulary size far lower than 3,000 words, even after spending six years learning English in school. In Al-Hazemi's (1993) study, subjects scored between 800 to 2,000 words in the vocabulary level test; the mean score was about 1000.

Al-Akloby (2001) explored these results to determine a reason for Saudi public school students' inability to learn sufficient English vocabulary. He found several factors, including the age at which Saudi students begin English lessons. Until 2012, students started learning English at age 13, at level seven (intermediate); this has now been lowered to age 10. Other factors mentioned by Al-Akloby (2001) are the fact that the writers of teaching materials fail to give sufficient emphasis to vocabulary inside texts, which clearly affects uptake. He also discovered that there were no dictionaries available to the learners or teachers, and dictionary use was not encouraged. Additionally, Al-Akloby found that teachers did not link new vocabulary with the real world, or provide collocation of the vocabulary in use.

Furthermore, in a study on vocabulary for students with a lower proficiency level, Bouangeune (2009) found using L1 is effective in teaching vocabulary through translation exercises and dictation. His findings indicate that "the experimental group achieved significantly better performance in vocabulary in direct translation and vocabulary in context. These results could provide empirical support for the application of L1 in the foreign language classroom" (2009: 190).

Nation (2001) suggested some principles in teaching vocabulary which could be applicable to those students with a low proficiency level, which are: Keep the teaching simple and clear, don't give complicated explanations, relate the present teaching to past knowledge by showing a pattern or analogies, use both oral and written presentation, write it on the board as well as explain it, give most attention to words that are already partly known, and tell the learners if it is a high frequency word that is worth noting for future attention and don't bring in other unknown or poorly known related words like near synonyms, opposites, or member of the same lexical set.

In a recent article, Kennedy (2016) noted that some teachers fear approving the use of L1 because it may result in its heavy use in the classroom, specifically, that students will rely on it if they are allowed to occasionally insert a word or phrase in their mother tongue. She also stated that, "they should not resort to their native language immediately, but should strive to ask questions, provide explanations, or give information in English" (2016: 2).

Opposition to the use of L1 in teachinga foreign language (FL) is further grounded on the historical use of Eng language in teaching throughout several decades. Through this theory, it is argued that the use of L1 in the FL teaching process was regarded ineffective from its historical use, with no need to embrace it now. Thus, theuse of L1 was regarded as inefficient and undesirable as observed by Mahmoud (2006).

One of the main theories that can reinforce my position for using L1 as an aid for teaching and learning L2 vocabulary, is Kumaravadivelu'spostmethod theory. According to Kumaravadivelu (2006:170): "The postmethod condition is a sustainable state of affairs that compels us to fundamentally restructure our view of language teaching and teacher education." .

Kumaravadivelu tried to simplify and reform the relationship between teacher education and practice. Before moving on to explain his postmethod theory and how it is relatedto my own study, I want to mention that Kumaravadivelu established three parameters for his method, which he calls pedagogic parameters. The three pedagogic parameters are particularity, practicality, and possibility. The most important of the pedagogic parameters, he says, is the "The Parameter of Particularity." According to Kumaravadivelu, (2001: 538): any postmethod pedagogy "must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu."

This means that teachers can find alternative methods and follow their objectives. Students determine how they best learn, which implies that the parameter of particularity rejects the fixed picture of method-based pedagogies. This would also indicate that teachers can work as individuals or groups to recognise their teaching practice, assess outcomes, find out problems and try to find solutions, and decide what works and what does not work.

In my case, I want to challenge the notion that teaching English should be in English only without using L1. By applying the post method, especially the parameter of particularity, teachers can decide which works better with their students, according to their needs, and refute the method applied by the MoEd, which prohibited the use of L1 in English classes.

Kumaravadivelu (1994) stated:

"Recent explorations in L2 pedagogy signal a shift away from theconventional concept of method toward a "postmethod condition"that can potentially refigure the relationship between theorizers andteachers by empowering teachers with knowledge, skill, and autonomy. So empowered, teachers could devise for themselves a systematic, coherent, and relevant alternative to method, one informed by principled pragmatism. The postmethod condition can also reshape the character and content of L2 teaching, teacher education, and classroom research."

Kumaravadivelu (1994, p.49) defined his postmethod condition as, "a state of affairs that compels us to refigure the relationship between the theorizers and the practitioners of method."

We must engage with students in a richer, more deliberate way at the course level that acknowledges their right... to participate in the development and design of their own curriculum"

Furthermore, mental translation theory suggests that learners often translate words from their first language (L1) when acquiring vocabulary in a second language (L2). This process aids comprehension and retention by linking new words to familiar concepts (Bialystok, 2001). Effective vocabulary instruction can benefit from incorporating L1 translations and contextual learning, enabling learners to form meaningful connections (Kroll & Stewart, 1994). However, educators should also be aware of potential negative transfer, where differences between L1 and L2 lead to misunderstandings, a phenomenon noted in studies examining language transfer effects (Odlin, 1989). Overall, understanding this cognitive process can enhance vocabulary teaching strategies and support more effective language acquisition.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

This analysishas been designed as a critical study of the Critical Applied linguistics (CALx) approach. Reading the principles of CALx, we realise that using L1 only (English language in this case study) is a theoretical framework which can be challenged.

As mentioned by Pennycook (2001), CALx considered aspects like language teaching, testing, language policy and language rights, and because CALx aims to raise awareness regarding social, culture, and political issues that might be problematic in relating to applied linguistics from a social perspective.

This study, for the reasons mentioned above, challenged the belief that Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) should be only in English. The researcher believes that using the L1 in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes can be beneficial especially as teaching aids, for example, translation, or explanation for some complicated information. The English-only policy was established many years ago by the MoED in Saudi Arabia. In addition, this study took place in the preparatory year in the College of Arts and Sciences in Saudi Arabia.

Phillipson (1992) believes that using English only in the classroom is an outcome of the huge spread of English around the world as the dominant language over other languages. Phillipson (1988, p. 339) said, "The rapid spread and dominance of English ... has been labeled Linguistic Imperialism," which he defined as, anessentialconstituentofimperialismas a"

"globalphenomenoninvolvingstructuralrelationsbetweenrichandpoorcountriesin a worldcharacterizedbyinequalityandinjustice." Phillipson (1992) believed the tendency to use English only in class can be considered as an outcomes of linguistics imperialism theory.

4. Methodology

This study uses qualitative open-ended questions in the form of a questionnaire to find if some students prefer using L1 to learn L2 vocabulary. It uses the Action Research Demonstration model with an intervention to learn vocabulary by developing an intervention plan with experimental and interventionist elements. Troudi (2015), described how researchers can select a group of students at an equivalent language level and teach them content through English for a given period of time and in the students' mother tongue later. This model is my basis and guide for a small-scale study about the use of L1 in teaching vocabulary with students at a low level of proficiency, as it gives direct information rather than depending on reports.

The data were collected from an Arabic-speaking teacher by a face-to-face interview with her. Also interviews were conducted with the teacher after each class. The teacher has experience in teaching EFL for at least five years. Questionnaires of the students were collected from her after participants completed it.

4.1 DataAnalysis

The data of this study was analyzed based on gathered data using qualitative research method. Questions were analysed using thematicanalysis, whichhasbeendefinedbyBraun&Clarke (2006, p.79) as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data, where a theme is "something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning from the data set"

4.2 Research Questionand Research Objective:

This study answers the question: What are PYP students' challenges in learning vocabulary using L1 and the target language?Withthe aim of elucidating the challenges of using the target language to learn vocabulary.

This research seeks to explore the difficulties students face in learning vocabulary by using both their native language and the target language. It aims to question the common assumption that vocabulary should solely be taught in English without any translation.Additionally, express the belief that teaching vocabulary with Arabic (L1), would have a benefit for learners of the English especially with low English language proficiency.

4.3 Research Participants

The study involved ten female students from Al Khafji College in Saudi Arabia. The students were 18 or 19 years old and spoke Arabic as a mother language. They were enrolled in the preparatory year program at the university, where they were studying English language skills as a main part of the program.

The students with a low level of proficiency of English language learned vocabulary using English only. The students were purposely selected students with a low proficiency level to help shed light on the critical view of this researchthat using the Arabic language is the most effective way toa teach foreign language vocabulary to Arabic EFL students.

After obtaining faculty approval, the teacher provided data about low-proficiency students in her class. The class consisted of 45 students, and 20 students were chosen based on their proficiency level in English and based on their teacher recommendation. For confidentiality, pseudonyms were used.

4.4 The Intervention

Ten selected students from the Reading and Writing 1 class with a low level of proficiency gathered in a class for the following intervention: (1) an Arabic EFL teacher taught the class for two hours per day for two weeks; (2) the teacher and students brought bilingual dictionaries to use during the lesson.

After the intervention, students were asked about how they learn vocabulary in English using their first languageand the challenges they experience learning vocabulary using English. Finally, they were asked whether or not they thought using Arabic to learn English vocabulary was useful to them.

The method of this study was a qualitative open-ended questionnaire based on students' honest and personal perceptions about the challenges they experience learning vocabulary using their mother tongue and using the foreign language.

The Arabic EFL teacher taught English vocabulary, using Arabic to help explain meanings and avoid misunderstandings. The Arabic EFL teacher did the translation, explanations, and clarifications of the vocabulary used in students' textbooks. The teacher who taught English using L1 was given the chance to state all her opinions about what actually happened during the intervention stage. The teacher's voice was heard and was also part of this study.

4.5Ethics

The ethical form used in this study was designed and was used to obtain ethical approval from Al Khafji College, and the student participants. In addition, before the intervention, each student received a written consent form in English. It explained the study and the part they would play.

Students were asked to join the study only if they were interested in taking part, and both teachers and students were given an information sheet stating their role in the study.

Data from the study is stored securely in a password-protected document in a password-protected computer

4.6 Limitations

An limitations of this study was the small sample size of just twenty subjects. To clear this, I used purposeful sampling to ensure that each of the subjects was familiar with the topic of this study.

Another limitation was that all participants were female, as I lacked access to male participants. The possibility that the results could have differed with male participants highlights the importance of conducting similar research involving male Saudi Arabian students.

4.7 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the validity and reliability of interpretive exploratory research and is essential for evaluating the study's results. This concept includes establishing credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Seale (1999) states that the trustworthiness of a research report is central to discussions of validity and reliability (p. 266). Bryman (2014) further describes trustworthiness as a set of criteria proposed by some authors to assess the quality of qualitative research . Lincoln and Guba (1985) believed that these criteria can provide a framework for quality assurance relevant to the interpretivist paradigm of the study. To ensure the credibility of data collection methods, all procedures were comprehensively detailed for readers. Information regarding the research aims and processes was also shared with participants to enhance data value.

Additionally, throughout this study, various techniques were employed to enhance the credibility and validity of findings, with detailed information provided on the topic, participants, and methods used. The member-checking technique, as recommended by Harper and Cole (2012), was utilized as a quality control measure to improve the accuracy and credibility of interview data. This member-checking process involves two steps: first, sending participants a copy of the interview questionnaire for their review, allowing them to amend their responses; and second, verifying the interpretation of the questionnaire with participants. Since the study focuses on participants' perceptions of learning English vocabulary with first language experiences, engaging them in member-checking was deemed essential to ensure that the researcher's interpretations aligned with their intentions. As Cohen (2000) notes, member-checking aims not for participant approval but for their agreement with the data and findings.

4.8 Findings:

As part of this research, the intervention process was conducted by having an Arab EFL teacher in the classroom and the use of bilingual dictionaries. This teacher was given the chance to teach students at a low level of proficiency in the Reading and Writing 1 class. For a two-week period, for two hours a day, students were taught vocabulary using L1 (Arabic) as amedium of instruction in teaching the vocabulary of the class. Direct translation was also used to easily identify the meanings of words and clarify explanations of terms using L1.

Through the open-ended questions, seven main themes emerged. A discussion of these themes will be presented to facilitate the explanation of findings, supported by quotes from the participants.

Theme One: Higher level of Engagement

The study showed that the use of L1 is more effective than L2, as students demonstrated a higher level of engagement in learning during the intervention process. Students were more motivated to learn and participate.

"I am more motivated to participate with the teacher because I am able to

express myself easily." - Shatha

Theme Two: Higher level of Confidence

Students had the confidence to ask questions about the terms they used in the lesson. They felt they had the support they needed, as they were using their L1 to learn vocabulary. This made them feel more confident, less shy, and eager to learn.

"I feel comfortable when I translate the term first in my native tongue. The bilingual dictionary can make things easy." - Heba

"Using the mother tongue makes it comfortable to use the word." - Noof

Theme Three: Higher level of Comprehension

Students started to show better learning outcomes, as they used their mother tongue to learn English vocabulary. They expressed that using L1 was more convenient as it helped them understand different words without being misunderstood.

"I believe that I can easily learn English through Arabic."

"I want to learn vocabulary in Arabic. It will give me the correct translation of the term I want to clarify." - Fatima

The emerging themes clearly showed that students favor of using L1 to learn English. According to the Arab EFL teacher's report, these low-level students were strongly engaged and confident, supporting Pan and Pan's (2008) assertion that "the use of L1 may assist students in reducing affective barriers and increasing their confidence in their ability to successfully comprehend the TL" (2008: 89).

Students at the PYP level are given a summary of all words in the Academic Word List (AWL), but without a translation (as there currently is not one). The list contains the words with descriptions and definitions in English, with examples or sample sentences for ease of comprehension. Lack of Arabic translation, however, makes this difficult for Arabic students. Schmitt (2008) believes that learning vocabulary is a vital part of mastering a second language, so if students are allowed to learn vocabulary in the most convenient way (with the help of an Arabic EFL teacher, or the use of a bilingual dictionary, for example), increasing the number of words from the AWL textbook in Reading and Writing 1 learned by students with a low level of proficiency is a distinct possibility.

In the second week of the intervention process, students were provided with the AWL from their textbook, units 6-10. This time, students were grouped into fours and tasked with translating the words themselves using the bilingual dictionary. Students were given the chance to work independently and understand the words, with guidance of their Arabic EFL teacher. Bonk (2000) found no absolute lexical percentage threshold, but learners who knew less than 80% of the words tested in the target passages almost always demonstrated poor comprehension.

Theme four: Learning Vocabulary in English

Table 1 *Students' response to the question are you willing to learn vocabulary using your first language (Arabic)*

Respondents	Responses
Hanan	Yes, to understand the vocabulary easily.
Reema	No. I can understand vocabulary through context clues in English.
Areej	No. I can manage to learn English vocabulary by using the bilingual dictionary with examples.
Bayan	No. I am not challenged to learn English vocabulary by using Arabic. I want to major in English in the future.
Aisha	Yes. I want to get used to learning English through Arabic.
Noof	Yes, to pass my subject.
Alah	Yes. I agree to learn English in Arabic especially on vocabulary and grammar. I believe that I can easily learn English through Arabic.
Fatma	Yes. I want to learn vocabulary in Arabic. It will give me the correct translation of the term I want to clarify.
Heba	Yes, because I feel comfortable when I translate the term first in my native tongue. The bilingual dictionary can make things easy.
Shatha	Yes, because it is hard to understand the concepts in English. I want to be promoted to the next level and to be major in English in the future.

As shown in Table 1, only three students were willing to learn vocabulary using English, while seven of them were interested in learning English using Arabic. Most of the answers imply that most of them cannot easily understand English using English only, so they require help from an Arab EFL teacher and the use of a bilingual dictionary. Students who believe that a bilingual dictionary is helpful and assists comprehension of new terms. Their ultimate aim is to be promoted to the next level of their studies, so they are likely to do their best to pass the level in the college, no matter how difficult the course is.

Theme five: Challenges Experienced by Students in Learning the Vocabulary in English

Table 2 *Students' response to the question what are the challengesfacedyou in Learning the Vocabulary in English*

Reasons	Respondents
It is hard to communicate in English. I don't understand most of the words.	4
It is not comfortable to use. I need my friend to help me translate the words I don't understand.	2
It is challenging but exciting.	2
I could hardly express myself.	2

Ten students responded negatively to this theme. They stated that they lack the confidence to deal with people because they can hardly express themselves, or are not comfortable using English as they lack sufficient vocabulary to communicate. Therefore, it is not easy for them to carry out activities that require English, such as travelling abroad, socializing, or communicating with English speakers. On the other hand, two students reported that learning English using the target language is challenging but exciting. Although it is difficult to learn English, these students felt they can manage it using English only, as the teacher provides techniques for them to understand the language, such as demonstrating the word, miming, and using hand gestures. For some students, English is only needed

because it is part of the curriculum, and they need to pass the course to be promoted to the next level. Learning vocabulary is not easy for these students due to a lack of background in using the English language.

Theme sex: Challenges Experienced by Students in Learning the Vocabulary in Arabic

Table 3 *Students' response to the question what are the challengesfacedyou in Learning the Vocabulary in Arabic*

Reasons	Respondents
It is easy to learn the vocabulary but needs time to analyze and understand them. The 2-hour session in the class is not enough.	5
During homework, the Arabic translation might not be the correct meaning of the word. I need someone to assist me explain what it actually means. When the teacher checks my work, it is entirely different from what I know.	2
Using the mother tongue makes it comfortable to use the word. I did not find any difficulty.	3
Total:	**10**

In this theme, amazingly, all students reported positive experiences. They found it interesting, despite experiencing slight problems, such as lack of time to understand all the words.. Indeed, even those who do not agree that learning English vocabulary using L1 would be useful encountered only minor challenges, such as that of direct translation, as a bilingual dictionary might not give the correct meaning of the word they were trying to use. In translating, students need to identify how the word is used and to what extent the Arabic and English meanings are similar.

Theme seven: The importance of L1 use in the classroom, according to students:

Table 4 *participants attitude about learning the English language using first language (Arabic).*

Respondent	Answers on Arabic is useful
Hanan	It is useful only when I need some clarifications on the topic not only on vocabulary but on grammar points.
Reema	Using Arabic is helpful explaining difficult concepts from the textbook.
Areej	Using Arabic helps me arrive at the correct meaning of vocabulary.
Bayan	It is very useful when I need to work with my peers and we speak in Arabic to help each other understand complex instructions.
Aisha	Using Arabic is useful for defining new vocabulary items.
Noof	Using Arabic is useful to express myself most especially if I do not have enough English words.
Alah	Using Arabic makes us comfortable to mingle with each other most especially when we don't really understand a term.
Fatma	Arabic is useful most especially if the teacher has various methods and strategies to use L1.
Heba	Using Arabic is useful in reading because there are so many words I need to translate before I answer the Reading Comprehension part.
Shatha	It is useful when I want to understand the meaning of the word from the textbook. I want to pass my course in English and vocabulary is one of the most important parts in the examination.

The functional use of Arabic is highlighted in the questionnaire, and students are aware that the purpose of L1 is to translate new words, for clarifications and difficult concepts, defining new vocabulary, mingling with friends, translating words from reading passages, and understanding the meaning of the words from the textbook. In their explanations, some students agreed that translating new words was never easy. They are aware that one of the main functions of L1 in EFL classrooms is direct translation, so they believe

that Arabic is sometimes helpful to them. In one expanded explanation, one student said, "I wish that our regular teacher would always translate all vocabulary words in our textbooks. It becomes easy for me in the exam" (Heba), and "I prefer to study vocabulary in Arabic because in the exams, the given choices are confusing, so I would rather study the translated words for my revision purposes. At least, I will be able to answer something in the exam" (Heba).

Interestingly, all participants have a positive attitude about learning the English language using their mother tongue, as shown in Table 4. When asked how many of them were serious about not studying English using Arabic in the future, three of them agreed. Areej, Aisha, and Heba all agree that: "We would like to improve our English most especially our vocabulary when we are bachelor students. For now, we want to practice the use of English using English only, although we admit that the use of Arabic is very helpful as Prep Year students." Another student stated that if Arabic is to be used, it should only be when necessary: "I want my teacher to just explain a little bit in Arabic if I don't understand the word or concepts" (Hanan). These students are aware that English can help them have a brighter future if they study it now. There were contrasting viewpoints, such as the following:

When English is well-explained by a teacher who is well-versed in Arabic, I feel interested to learn and study my lesson. Also, I feel comfortable when I am asked by my teacher to participate or join some class discussions. However, learning English should not be the sole responsibility of my teacher. I should also use other methods like the use of a bilingual dictionary at home (Reema).

Reema seemed to be a responsible student, although she cannot fully understand all concepts in English. She wants the Arab EFL teacher to fully guide her in her English courses and, at the same time, expects that if a well-versed Arab EFL teacher is good at teaching both English and Arabic, she will find it easier to learn difficult concepts.

On the other hand, S-8 believes that Arabic is useful, especially if the teacher has various strategies to teach English using their mother tongue. The bilingual dictionary is just part of this strategy, and she believes there are other strategies to facilitate the teaching and learning process.

These ten participants find Arabic useful in many ways, but have different reasons and opinions on how it should be used. Alah said, "My confidence is being developed if I speak in Arabic with my classmate. If I don't understand the word, I want to speak with my classmate and not with my teacher. I feel shy to ask questions if it is not really necessary" (Alah). Furthermore, even though students have different opinions about the use of Arabic in the L2 classroom, they admit that it is effective. They all acknowledged the benefits of using Arabic as a tool to translate words, explain concepts, use words in sentences, identify meanings and differences of vocabulary, and for clarification.

These students, who have a low level of proficiency, tried their best to be engaged and involved in the classroom despite their weakness in learning English. The intervention was an eye-opener for both teacher and students to find ways to make learning vocabulary effective and easy. Strategies should not be limited to only using the bilingual dictionary. Teachers should be challenged to develop other strategies. In doing so, teaching and learning vocabulary in the PYP will be beneficial and helpful to all students at Al Khafji College. In general 18 of the twenty participants show positive response to the use of L1 in teaching vocabulary (figure 1).
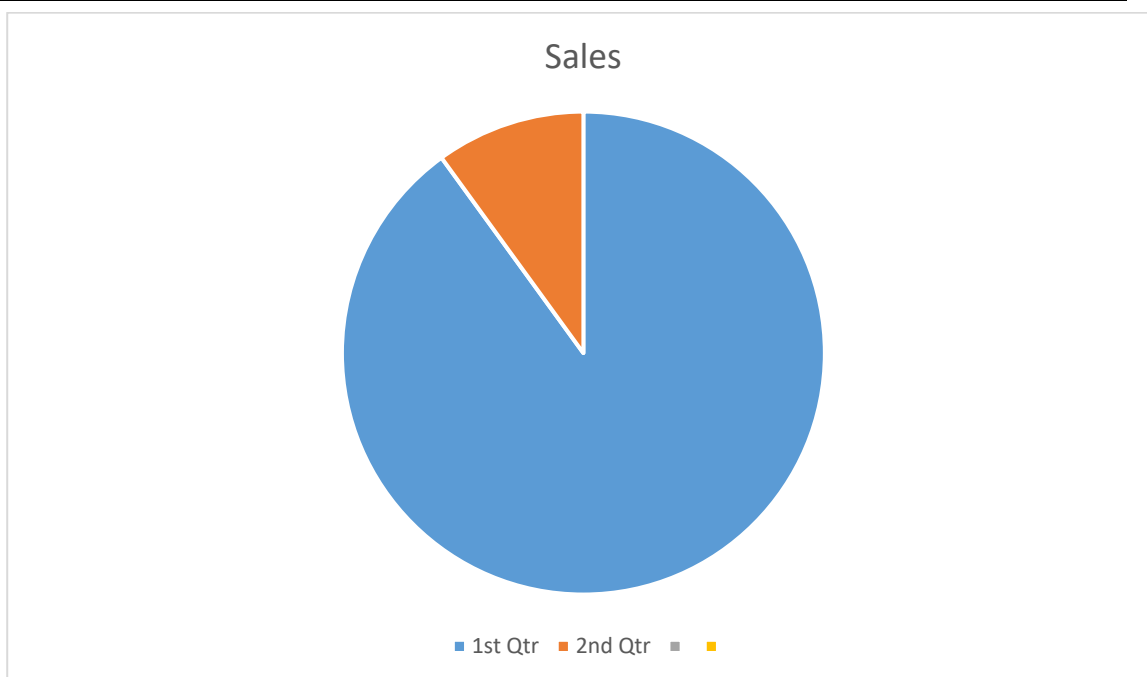
Blue: positive response. ‖ Orange: wrong response.

5. Critical Discussion

This study aims to investigate student challenges in learning vocabulary using their mother tongue and the target language to problematize the unquestioned proposition that vocabulary should only be taught in English without any translation. The intervention process helps the students realise the value of learning vocabulary using L1, because they find it easier to understand vocabulary questions and their choices during examinations. Since the vocabulary exam is one of the most important parts of Reading and Writing 1 in the PYP, students should be able to understand all of the vocabulary in their textbooks. As these words are from the Academic Word List, the question is how these students can understand the words if they have difficulty learning the English language. The use of L1 is a large part of the answer to this question.

Determining the challenges of learning vocabulary using the target language supports the critical view that "The Arabic language is the most effective way to teach vocabulary to EFL students at a low level of proficiency." Moreover, I agree with one of the respondents (Fatma) that if a teacher has various methods and strategies for teaching English, and especially vocabulary, this increases the students' chances of learning easily and comfortably.

Rahman and Alhaisoni (2013:115) point out the challenges of teaching vocabulary in the Saudi Arabian context:

"Improperly trained teachers or inadequate teaching methodology, teacher-centered rather than learner-centered activities, students' aptitude, initial preparedness and motivation; school and university teachers often complain of the low proficiency of their students. They also claim that students are not motivated to learn compartmentalization versus whole language approach, lack of emphasis on developing skills – emphasis is rather on rote learning. "Textbooks and teaching materials, assessment methods, and exposure to English."

However, it may not be accurate to judge whether the above-mentioned challenges are similar to the situation in Al Khafji College. This list allows us to reflect and discover more specific challenges, not only from students at a low level of proficiency, but also from those of higher proficiency. Teachers in the Prep Year Program, native and non-native English speakers alike, should work together to improve the teaching and learning process in Al-Khafji College.

The findings reveal that L1 use, coupled with a bilingual dictionary, is effective in teaching vocabulary. The results indicate that Arabic is commonly used for a variety of purposes, which most respondents were positive about. Equally, students encountered challenges when learning vocabulary in both English and Arabic. The results denote that all students admit that despite these challenges, most want to learn English vocabulary through the use of their native tongue. This points toward the conclusion that L1 should be

standard when teaching vocabulary, and it is emphatically perceived as useful by students, whether they agree or disagree with the use of L1 in this context.

Phillipson (1992) raises concern over what he characterized of the hegemony of the monolingual approach, one which he assumed dominated ELT pedagogy. Which may explain the huge use of monolingual dictionaries more than bilingual dictionaries. Phillipson's work has produced controversy, and writers such as Brutt-Griffler (2002) have offered convincing challenges to some aspects of his theory regarding the spread of English as a world language.

Although almost all students prefer to use L1 in learning vocabulary, they also prefer to use Arabic with other functions: for clarification, use of instruction, explaining new words, and understanding difficult concepts. Hence, the role of L1 is supportive in learning vocabulary at the PYP level. Students are aware that using L1 is most applicable at the PYP level, as this is a foundation course that must be passed before progress to a Bachelor's degree is possible.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

A lot of research and debate has been done on the suitability of the use of either L1 or L2 in teaching language. A study of the language learning process at Al Khafji College indicates that most low-English-efficiency learners prefer the use of L1, a notion that differs from what the school feels is the best method to teach the language.

Based on the above findings, it shows that that L1 could be used by teacher at Al Khafji College not only to teach them vocabulary but also other aspects of language learning, like explaining important grammar points, understanding teacher instruction (verbal or written), defining new terms, understanding difficult concepts, and more. L1 could also be used by an Arabic EFL teacher as a pedagogical strategy to maximize student involvement in the classroom. The challenges mentioned in this study should serve as an inspiration to re-examine our teaching and learning activities, including our teaching methods and strategies, to improve the teaching and learning process.

Students with a low level of proficiency should receive more attention in terms of teaching vocabulary. These students should be provided with an Arab EFL teacher who is adept at teaching both English and Arabic. Using a bilingual dictionary is only one strategy that must be employed in the classroom to help build and increase students' vocabulary. This study is for the purpose of being critical and problematizing the givens, as Pennycook (2001, p.7) states, "critical applied linguistics is not about developing a set of skills that will make the doing of applied linguistics rigorous or more objective, but is about making applied linguistics more politically accountable".Vocabulary acquisition plays a central role in learning a second language (Sokmen, 1997), and is absolutely necessary in the PYP at Al Khafji College.

In conclusion, this study showed that using L1 in teaching vocabulary to students has effective impact at the PYP level, as found in this study. However, there should be a focus on the level of proficiency of students just as I did in the intervention stage, as students' proficiency level may vary from low to intermediate on a decreasing scale. My stance on using L1 in vocabulary teaching to those who need it remains strong. I will always support the use of L1 in Al Khafji College to help students best learn the English language. Finally, I would like EFL teachers to improve their strategies in teaching vocabulary to students at a low level of proficiency. Thus, through these findings, this research proposes that the education programs of Saudi Arabia be reformed to adopt the use of L1 in low proficiency language teaching programs. This can be done through incorporation of both the L1 and L2 into the curriculum and teaching English.. Additionally, the researcher recommends that all teachers master the content and use the most efficient modern teaching techniques to ensure learners grasp the teaching concepts with ease when learning EFL.

7. Further research

I would recommend further qualitative research on analyzing the language level of the students and compare to the learners language level after providing several activities, along with ascertaining the actual affordances activities offer for learners in terms of vocabulary as the data of the current study indicated that vocabulary was the main area of benefit learners associated with learning using first language. Also an educator can design and provide a guidance for learners to help the teachers in teaching vocabulary using L1. Furthermore, I suggest a future study that includes students from different levels (low, medium, high) to find out the effect of using the mother tongue in teaching vocabulary on each level.

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