

Is 50% of Arabic Enough to Teach English? The Problematic Use of Translation in the 21st Century Moroccan English Classroom

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Abstract: One of the perennial controversies in an EFL/ ESL classroom is whether to use or not to use translation in bi/ multilingual contexts. And here, I am referring to the use of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)/ Moroccan dialect (Darija), Amazigh, or French in the Moroccan English classroom. To understand the complexity of this inter-lingual aspect, this paper aims at verifying the impact of using translation on the learning process of bilingual/ multilingual learners of English. It espouses the contention that the use of the existing linguistic repertoire is cognitively and practically unavoidable, especially in a mobile digital era. For assessing the credibility of this claim, a mixed methods approach is chosen to weigh out the adoption or rejection of using translation in foreign language learning and teaching. 52 middle and high school teachers were randomly selected to investigate the amount of translation used to teach English in their classes, and how it affects the students' acquisition of this language. Through classroom observations, unstructured interviews, and a questionnaire, the data were collected to measure the consistence of an inter-language phenomenon that has kept haunting EFL/ESL theoreticians and practitioners alike. The findings show that more than half of the instructors favor the moderate use of translation in their teaching. By taking into consideration the learning experience of the teacher, the age of the learners, and the motivation factors that correspond with the rising of the mobile and communication technologies available, the need to use translation is seen as inescapable. Hence, it is calling for a judicious adoption that would prioritize the fulfillment of communicative, cross-linguistic, and cross-cultural competencies in foreign language learning.

Keywords: Translation, EFL, mother tongues, inter-language, mobile technologies.

1. Introduction

Recently, I had a talk with a novice middle school teacher from Morocco in her first year of teaching English. I asked about the amount of L1, namely standard Arabic/ Moroccan Arabic dialect (Darija)/ Amazigh or French used in her class. I was utterly surprised by the 50% answer of L1 variably used while teaching English to her 9th-grade students. She ascribed the use of translation to the students' inability to understand a brand-new language that cannot be taught otherwise without resorting to either their mother tongue or to standard Arabic/dialect/ Amazigh or French languages. Adopting this inter-language approach to teaching as a pedagogical tool, she argued, "is very facilitative and beneficial to pique their interest in learning another language

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which might be the third for most students, or even the fourth language introduced in their school years.”

However, the 50% answer has also spurred my interest in investigating the credibility and efficacy of an old-fashioned yet still available as a technique in teaching English to 21st century learners. The latter, as digital natives whose second home is the internet, are found totally immersed in the world of ICT and digitalization where translation has re-emerged as an easy-to-use technique to understand foreign languages and social media content. For instance, closed captioning (CC), machine translation, online multilingual dictionaries, free mobile applications such as voice translation and camera translation, etc. have tremendously contributed to the re-appropriation of translation as accessible and feasible for learning foreign languages and understanding intercultural communication in modern, multilingual, multicultural societies. Additionally, hundreds of active Instagram, Tik-Tok and YouTube channels are observed to adopt a bilingual approach to teaching English and other languages to their viewers who can be counted in thousands, if not, in millions. This would necessarily entail a revisiting of the claim that translation is unproductive and unyielding, which is still unproved and lacks empirical evidence (Carvajal, 2013), towards a re-evaluation of its substantive role from a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural perspective to view the language learner “as a natural translator” (Carreres, 2006, p. 18), and to be “widely needed in everyday situations, and not as a specialized activity at all (Cook, 2010, p. 9).

Because translation is found to happen “everywhere, all the time, so why not in the classroom?” (Duff, 1994, p. 6), this paper aims at reviewing the possibility of reinstating the fundamental role of translation in language teaching and learning. Although it is demonized and warned against by modern theoreticians and practitioners from various communicatively-oriented approaches, it is persisting to have its own say in the meta-cognitive processes of learning foreign languages in multilingual contexts, and more importantly, to prove to be a communicative activity that deserves a decent place in EFL/ ESL classrooms.

For doing so, the research questions that guide this study are the following: Do Moroccan teachers use translation as a teaching technique? Does translation to the L1 pose any problematic issues to the learning of English? What is exactly the usefulness of Arabic/ dialect/ Amazigh/ French in the Moroccan English class? Is translation suitable in the initial or advanced stages of language learning? And can translation in a digitalized mobile world where most learners are social-media users enhance learning and intercultural communication?

To answer these questions, a mixed methods approach is adopted to assess the extent to which the use of translation in middle and high schools in Morocco can have any pedagogical merits to contribute while teaching and learning the English language. To reach this end, classroom observations, a questionnaire, and unstructured interviews with Middle and High school teachers were all conducted to assess, from a qualitative and quantitative perspective, the consistency of their views on translation into the existing languages, and whether this pedagogical tool can be given credit to have a practical role in foreign language learning and teaching in a mobile digital world.

2. Literature Review: Translation and Foreign Language Learning

Unlike learning or teaching languages in monolingual communities, it is almost inescapable to raise the problematic issues of using translation in bilingual, multilingual and intercultural contexts like the case of the Arab world, especially in the 21st century. This

controversial position of L1 (standard Arabic/ Dialect/ French/ Amazigh) in foreign language teaching/ learning has spawned a large body of studies in the Moroccan context as in other Arab countries. The enquiries of whether to use/ not to use translation, or how much L1 is needed, and if translation is beneficial or not, have dominated the academic scene for decades (AbidThyab, 2016; Akki & Larouz, 2021; El Boubekri, 2020; Alhajeri, 2020; Azaz & Abourehab, 2021; Diab, 1997; Gwendolyn, 1998; Hamdallah, 1999; Laghmam, 2016) amongst others. Most of these researchers' findings highlighted the overarching role of L1 in changing the taken for granted perceptions that translation is useless and has to be banned from the EFL/ ESL classrooms.

In this respect, Cooks (2010) postulates that "translation has an important role to play in language learning – that it develops both language awareness and use, that it is pedagogically effective and educationally desirable and that it answers student needs in the contemporary globalized and multicultural world" (15). Indeed, in an age of mobility and digitalization, we are all constantly in contact with other languages and cultures in which translation plays a central role both professionally and non-professionally, and of course, the world of teaching and learning is no exception. Whether translation is adopted implicitly or explicitly as a pedagogical tool (Alhajeri, 2020), it poses certain challenges to teachers and learners alike, mainly in the Maghreb and Middle East countries whose L1 includes different varieties of Arabic and Amazigh.

Comparing the Maghribi learners of English to their counterparts in the Middle East, and trying to measure the impact of L1 on their learning, a number of differences have been observed. As for pronunciation, the former category is observed to produce more accurate approximations of native Standard English than the latter. This is due, according to Ennaji and Sadiqi (1999) to the fact that the Maghribi learners start learning English after they have spent more than 7 years learning French. Thus, the shared similarities of the linguistic systems of English and French may be said "to mitigate the usual difficulties in acquiring an acceptable pronunciation" (p. 155). This can only confirm that the resulting effects of an already existing language are obvious on the learning of English.

Middle East learners, on the other hand, learn English as their second language with a strong influence of the Arabic phonological system, which is apparent in their production of English. For instance, the pronunciation of [p] and [b] can illustrate such differences. Another difficulty is encountered with vowel production in English because the number of vowels in Arabic is limited to 4 or 5, whereas in English, there are more articulated vowels system, supplemented by a rich set of diphthongs and triphthongs (Ennaji & Sadiqi, 1999, p. 129). This phonological confusion is more apparent in bilingual students' textbooks in which both English and Arabic are used (see figure 1).



Figure 1. Sample pages from Connect 5 Student's Book adopted in Egypt primary education.

Middle East and Maghribi learners of English are also reported to have problems with definite/ indefinite articles due to the interference of Arabic (AbidThyab, 2016; Alghamdi, 2019; Diab, 1996). Such difficulties are encountered while trying to learn the correct use of the articles *a/ an/ the/ Ø*. The English language uses the definite article "the", the indefinite articles "a"/ "an", and the zero article "Ø". For example, (أنا أعيش في المغرب) can be translated as (I live in the Morocco). The addition of the Arabic definite article (ال) in the English translation clarifies the interference of Arabic. Another example is found in (أختي تدرس العربية) my sister studies the Arabic.

(المال هو الحياة) is often translated by adding the definite article (the): the Ø money is the Ø happiness. Other interference problems are found at the grammatical, syntactic, semantic and lexical levels (Abisamra, 2003) in which learners of English actively transfer from Arabic.

Additionally, the French language for the Maghribi learners in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, for instance, has not been regarded as a hindrance, but rather as a facilitator, particularly in English vocabulary learning due to the lexical similarities between the two languages. In this sense, it has been recommended to teachers to point out French words with English cognate forms, as this could help learners understand written texts if they realize that there is a close relationship between the two languages (Gwendolyn, 1998, p. 17). However, the facilitating aspect of true/false friends has often created a confusion" like in the French words: assister – to attend; actuellement - now, at present; attendre - to wait; un car - coach, bus; la chair - flesh; conducteur - driver; une sentence - sentence (trial), etc. their equivalents in English are to assist-to help; actually- in fact; attend- to be present; a car- une voiture; chair- la chaise; conductor- un chef d'orchestre; sentence- a phrase, respectively.

Therefore, the impact of the existing tongues on the learning of foreign languages in bilingual or multilingual contexts, such as the Maghribi or Middle East countries, cannot be denied

or underestimated. This can only highlight the wider scope translation enjoys as a communicative activity in its own right and as a mediator to establish inter-lingual and intercultural communicative relations. This essential role is “one of a tool of linguistic and conceptual explication and learner awareness-raising as to the fact that there are differences between L1 and L2, and, accordingly, it becomes a provider of knowledge and skills as to how best to bridge the gap between them” (Korošec, 2013). In this respect, translation can be regarded as an “indispensable component due to its positive impact on target language learning by sustaining students’ writing ability, facilitates comprehension, helps them develop and express ideas in another language, and assists them in making more gains in learning vocabulary and grammar (Akki&Larouz, 2021). Yet, such a privilege can provoke the opponents of L1 in FLT who assert that translation is an ill-suited aid; a judgment that has been long established since the time of the Grammar Translation Method.

2.1. Re-assessing the Grammar Translation-method (GMT)

That the GTM is ineffective is well-documented in the literature of language teaching and learning. Teachers are often warned against using it as a pedagogical tool due to its outdated, ineffective, purposeless, and fruitless outcome when applied. It is often described as the ‘bogyman’ or the ‘scapegoat’ of language teaching methodologies...the wrong paradigm from which all methods and teachers should run away (Carvajal, 2013, p. 246). The complete rejection is often attributed to how the GTM is traditionally involved in working on samples of literary texts to develop students’ reading and writing skills without giving any importance to their oral skills. Lists of words were selected by the teacher and presented to the students in each lesson together with their equivalents in L2. The translation of individual, isolated and made-up sentences occurring “in the void” (Vienne,1994, p. 52) is said to wrongly endorse a 1:1 equivalence between lexical items. In other words, the belief that for every L1 item there is an L2 match or equivalent at the word level is claimed to be practically impossible.

For these reasons, recent communicative theories of language teaching and learning have totally ignored the role of translation and at best vilified it” (Carvajal, 2013). From the didactic aspect, it is argued that translation is dull and de-motivating, because it creates interferences and causes negative transfer (Cooks, 2010, p. xv). Vermes (2010) even goes a step further to refute this idea by stating that interference may occur irrespective of translation (p. 89), and it shows how the learner is actively involved in a cross-linguistic approach, which can only enhance his/her learning.

However, this vilification is attributed not only to the pedagogical shortcomings already mentioned but also to some economic and politically motivated reasons. The spread of international language schools and uniform course materials have also played a role in denigrating translation in a foreign language classroom. Language schools, such as Berlitz (Cooks, 2010, p. 7), as well as the worldwide marketing of course materials and textbooks by major international publishers, namely Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press, have made translation undesirable because it does not necessarily contribute to their bottom line (Carvajal, 2013). Additionally, English as a lingua franca has long gained substantial ground around the world. ‘Global’ English as a key dimension of the USA Empire has endeavored to make learners understand and internalize its hegemonic aspect. Its promotion as a foreign or second language in almost everywhere in the world does consolidate this notion of hegemony.

2.2. L1, Translation and L2

Since the rejection of the GMT by the audio-lingual, situational or communicative language teaching approaches, it has been frowned upon and entirely excluded because it “forces the learners to view the language through the prism of their L1, thus preventing them from thinking in the foreign language or using L2 automatically in communicative situations (Korošec, 2013). Nevertheless, a pressing question should be raised here: How can learners think in the target language and easily detach themselves from the already existing languages?

As a case in point, the Moroccan students do possess a multilingual repertoire that consists of more than two languages. Arabic, Amazigh, French or Spanish are widely spoken in different parts. When this rich linguistic richness is brought to the modern English Classroom, it would only be critiqued and described as counter-productive for it leads to interference (Carreres, 2006), causes negative transfer (Cook, 2010; Mitchell & Myles, 2004), and worst of all, can waste the valuable time of L2 students (Owen, 2003). All those antagonistic views seem to reduce translation to a mere unrealistic exercise and therefore thoroughly useless (Carreres, 2006), simply because it employs the existing bilingual or multilingual range of languages at the disposal of the learners. These opinions are derived, according to Carvajal (2013), “from unproved claims, mainly made by misinformed authors for they offer no compelling empirical evidence to validate their restrictive descriptions where translation is shown as an invalid metacognitive strategy.” In this respect, Leonardi (2010) states that there is an inevitable connection between L1 and L2 which has to be established during foreign language teaching and learning.

A more favorable approach to using translation has been put forward by different theorists, (Carvajal, 2013; Cook 2010; Harris & Sherwood, 1978; Leonardi, 2010; Malmkjaer, 1998; Stibbard, 1994; Titford, 1985) among others. This inclination towards using translation in foreign language classrooms is widely referred to as cognitive or silent in nature by which “learners of a second language refer to their mother tongue to aid the process of L2 acquisition; or, in other words, they translate silently” (Titford, 1985, p. 8).

To be seen as an aid is proof that it can be used in any language course in order “to strengthen students’ analytical skills in reading and examining texts, as well as in developing creativity and problem-solving strategies” (Leonardi, 2010, p. 29). In this respect, Harris and Sherwood (1978) maintain that bilingual children translate between their two languages spontaneously and with no difficulty (p. 165). L1/L2 differences do not necessarily mean barriers in second/ third language learning. In fact, the main problem often comes from the similarities between L1 and L2 (Larson, 1991, p. 106). Therefore, the possibility of bridging the gap between L1/L2 provides an aperçu of how bi-literacy and bilingualism are developed despite the arguments that are in favor of a more L1 free atmosphere in L2 learning.

The development of bi-literacy, which is commonly defined as the ability to write and read proficiently in two languages, occurs, according to Hornberger (2007), along intersecting first language-second language, receptive-productive, and oral written language skills continua (p. 454). So, through the medium of two (or more) language varieties whose linguistic structures vary from similar to dissimilar that bi-literacy takes form. L1 knowledge is applied to L2 learning and that communicative competence entails not only linguistic but also interactional native values and cultural beliefs which have a direct impact on SL linguistic performance (p. 254).

In the same vein, Slinker’s interlanguage hypothesis (1972), which is a kind of intermediate systematic language constructed by the learner in the process of learning, involves five cognitive processes that explain L2 learning within a psycholinguistic framework: (i) language

transfer, (ii) overgeneralization of the rules underlying the target language, (iii) transfer of training, (iv) strategies of L2, and (v) strategies of L2 communication. (Quoted in Sadiqi & Ennaji, 1997, p. 150).

Translanguaging is another word that expresses the same process. According to Azaz and Abourehab (2021), in the context of language learning and teaching, trans-languaging practices are “transformative” in the sense that they remove the hierarchy of languaging practices for learners and teachers. They disrupt the notions of “first”, “target”, “second/ foreign”, and “heritage” languages. In this view, learners are not understood as possessing a “native” or “first” language, and acquiring a “second” language, but rather as developing an integrated linguistic repertoire from which they strategically draw in particular social contexts (Azaz & Abourehab, 2021). But, at the heart of this scaffolding practice, translation is actively involved to link different languages and cultural contexts together.

As a “cross-linguistic comparison, translation is believed to be the best way of using the L1. If the main role of cross-linguistic comparisons is raising awareness of the similarities and differences between L1 and L2, students will improve not only their grammatical competence, but also their communicative one (Aguado & Solís-Becerra, 2013; Akki & Larouz, 2021; El Boubekri, 2022). In this vein, Selinker (1996) further argues that translation skills need to be connected with language competence: “since translation equivalents contribute to the formation of inter-language competence in language learners; that their ability to translate may be related to their L2 competence in this case, the use of translation in L2 education may foster the acquisition of the foreign language” (p. 103).

Rather than concealing the linguistic differences that exist between the systems of two languages, the role of translation as a linguistic tool helps to reach some awareness-raising stages where the differences between L1 and L2 can actively contribute to providing knowledge of how best to bridge the gap between the two (Vermes 2010, p. 86). By highlighting the differences and “interferences” from L1, many mistakes and errors can only enrich the learning process in which learners negotiate between L1/L2 linguistic meanings and structures. In a monolingual class, students have almost the same learning approach, but for those who employ translation in their learning, their acquisition process can be more productive than those who do not (Tan, 2015). This is well documented in Trentman’s study (2021) examining the experiences of the Arabic foreign learners in Egypt and Jordan. The author concluded that monolingual ideologies limit student learning, and she called for adopting pedagogies informed by plurilingual language ideologies.

Whether translation can be used in the initial or advanced stages of language learning is another facet that has caused some controversy. For Marsh (1987, p. 30), it is not a suitable exercise in the initial stages of language learning. Heltai (1996, p. 80) further states that at an early stage translation seems to be a simple decoding-encoding process, and argues that learners’ attention needs to be drawn to the fact that the proposed translations are just some of the many available possibilities capable of achieving the particular communicative purpose. At an early stage, students focus solely on individual words, but at the same time lack proper research skills and training in the use of dictionaries. Cook (2010) further advocates the use of translation at university-level language teaching where it “remains the norm”, most notably among languages other than English (p. xv). The use of translation thus seems to benefit language teaching and

learning particularly at an advanced stage, while at earlier stages, Korošec (2012) argues, it is connected with many uncertainties and insufficiencies.

So far, the problematic issue of translation is still unresolved given the many arguments and counterarguments that have been put forward by either the opponents or proponents. Hence, more practical handling of the issue is significant in order to verify the credibility of all the claims that vary between giving some room to translation in an EFL classroom or rejecting it altogether.

3. The Present Study

A mixed methods approach is adopted to assess the extent to which the use of translation in middle and high schools in Morocco can have any pedagogical merits to contribute while teaching and learning the English language, particularly in a globalized digital era. To reach this end, classroom observations, a questionnaire, and unstructured interviews with middle and high school teachers were all conducted to assess the consistency of their views on translation into the existing languages, and whether this pedagogical tool can be given credit to have a practical role in foreign language learning and teaching.

52 participants were randomly selected, all of whom are middle school teachers (22) and high school teachers (30) from Morocco. They teach English as a foreign language both in the state and private sectors and have been in the service for 3 to 24 years of professional career. The data were collected during the school year 2021-2022, after easing up the lockdown restrictions of Covid-19.

The questionnaire, as a suitable quantitative research tool, is chosen because it guarantees an unbiased approach to data collection (Saunders et al., 2015). It was conducted mainly in English with closed and open-ended questions and destined for male and female middle and high school teachers whose ages range from 25 to 42. Though the variable of gender was not at all targeted, there were 12 female and 40 male teachers of English. In fact, particular attention was given to the number of years spent in the job of teaching to assess the correlation between the teaching experience and the preference to use or not to use translation to standard Arabic/ Moroccan dialect/ Amazigh/ French in EFL classes.

As for the classroom observations I conducted with 4 teachers, 1 with the 9th grade for two sessions, and 3 with the 2nd Baccalaureate (1 Literary and 2 science streams). With observation, I aimed primarily to measure the frequency of using the mother tongue or L1 in the teacher/ student and student/ student interactions in different classroom tasks and situations. The ultimate goal, however, was to cross-check the data resulting from the questionnaire and observations. On the other hand, the unstructured interviews with the four teachers were also conducted to have some more in-depth visions about the utility of Arabic, French and Amazigh in an English course, and to answer the persisting questions of when, how and for what purpose? And above all, do 21st century learners in a mobile digital era use translation for an intercultural communication?

4. Results of the Study

4.1. Teacher's teaching experience and the use of translation

As the table below indicates, 13 participants have between 6 to 10 years of teaching experience; 17 participants have between 10 to 16 years of their teaching experience, and 22 have between 17 to 24 years of teaching experience. All of them hold a BA degree in English studies. Such age differences may bring forth different insights from different teacher generations.

Participants	Years of Teaching Experience
13	3-10
17	10-16
22	17-24

Figure 3. Participants and their teaching experience.

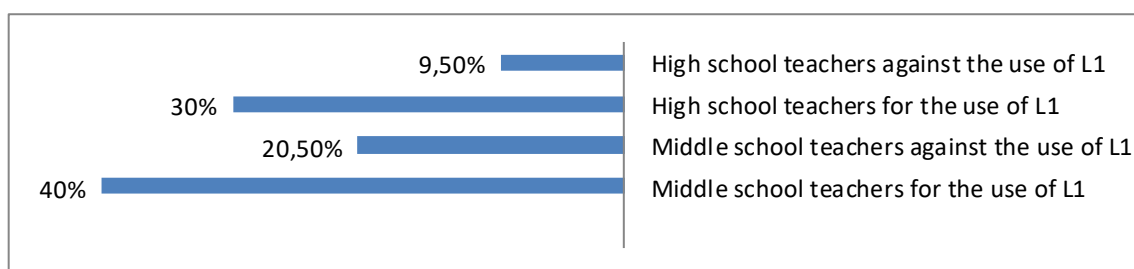


Figure 4. Teachers who are for vs. teachers who are against the use of L1 in language teaching.

The relationship between the teaching experience of teachers and the use of L1 in an English class is a determining factor. As the data have indicated, older teachers with more than 10 years of experience tend to be tolerant in using translation, be it in Moroccan Arabic dialect or in French. Teachers with less than 5 years of teaching are noticed to use it less than the former group. This would probably explain how younger teachers tend to be less tolerant in using translation in their classes than the older ones. They seem to implement the pedagogical directives they received from the training centers and from the inspectors to the letter.

According to the collected data, middle and high school teachers of English do use (Arabic/ Moroccan dialect/ French) in their classes for different reasons, which I will cover later. 70% of the participants confirm that their classes are not 100% English because there is always room for the existing languages when learning is hampered. The remaining 30% of the participants confirm that they do not use any language in their teaching other than the target language. Most of them are younger teachers whose teaching years range from 3 to 10. This short period shows that they are still fresh in the field of teaching and they are somehow in control of how much L1/L2 can be used in their English classes. However, based on the class observations, their claims may be refuted given the many instances in which both teachers and learners were engaged in some French and some Moroccan Arabic talk. This finding goes hand in hand with Hillman (2019) who remarks that when teacher views are surveyed, they report minimal mixing of languages in the classrooms. However, when they are observed while teaching, they are found to engage in trans-languaging practices for various pedagogical purposes. This point can be applicable to most observed teachers who denied any use of translation in their class while the reality proved the opposite.

4.2. Which language is used the most in a Moroccan EFL class?

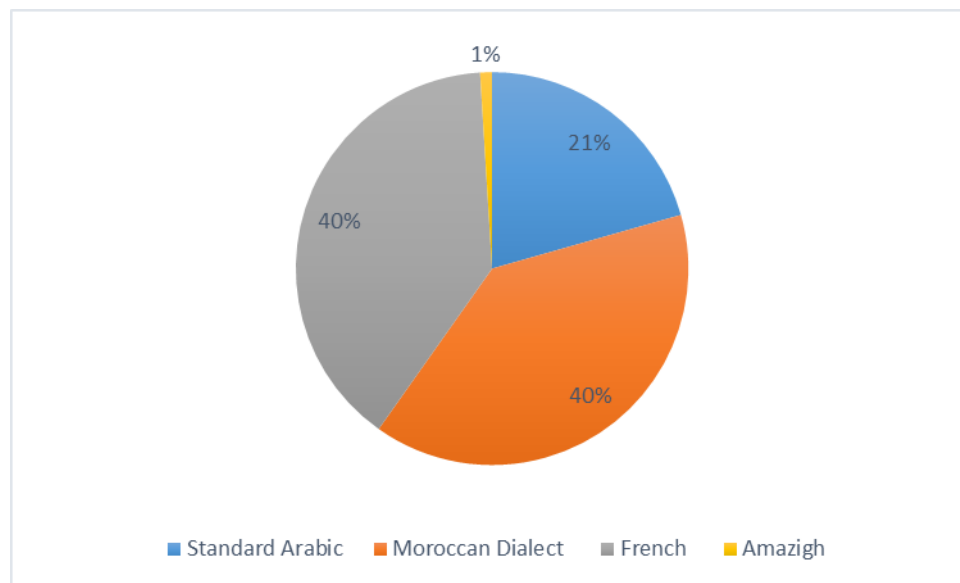


Figure 5. Types of tongues used in an EFL Moroccan class.

More than Standard Arabic or Moroccan dialect, the use of French as a "proximal language" to English is noticed to have a bigger space in teaching both in the questionnaire and the classroom observations. The frequency of using French is found to be higher among middle school teachers (60%) than that of high school teachers (40%). This partially goes in line with what has already been pointed out concerning the use of true and false cognates between English and French, and also to the background knowledge of the French language that both teachers and learners share.

Some examples of using French in the observed classrooms:

“**To be** is like the French verb **être**”, “**have** is like the French verb **avoir**.”

True/ false : Vrais/ faux / correct/ incorrect.

Where: ou / when: quand/ which: Lequel- laquelle

“Dialogue is the same in French.”

Communication/ education/ collaboration/ destination /action

“Paper is like the French word: papier.”

When students are unable to explain a vocabulary item, a frequently asked question the teacher may ask is: “Do you know it in French?” for most of them, they believe that French should be firstly checked as it is closer in structure and spelling to English than to Arabic. In the least, while using French, those teachers give the impression that they work within foreign language learning contexts. However, the kind of language that takes the lion’s share depends also on the geographical area from where the learners originate. In other words, if the English class is based in an urban area, more French words are likely to be

used. If it is in a rural Amazigh area like the one where I used to teach, more Amazigh words and expressions are likely to dominate. The fact of using native tongues to explain difficult and abstract English vocabulary words, especially with beginners or low level students for facilitating understanding and saving time, go hand in hand with previous findings (Azaz & Abourehab, 2021; Benhima, et al. 2021; Laghmam, 2016).

4.5. Reasons behind Using L1/ L2 in EFL Classes

According to the data available, it is worth indicating that the reasons to resort to the existing linguistic repertoire vary from one teacher/ level to the other. 56,5 % of middle school teachers and 44,1% of their counterparts in high schools tend to use translation to serve different pedagogical purposes. However, both agree that translations either in the Moroccan dialect, in French or in Amazigh are primarily used as in the following order of priority:

- (1) to clear off misunderstanding and facilitate communication when explaining in the target language fails;
- (2) to talk about issues not directly related to the teaching-learning situation (noise, discipline, absenteeism, etc.);
- (3) to explain abstract words, but priority is given to the French language for its proximity to English structure and lexis;
- (4) to explain grammar rules;
- (5) to motivate low-level, anxious, and slow learners;
- (6) to understand foreign cultural aspects and contrast them with the Moroccan ones;
- (7) last, but not least, to save time.

One interesting point in the use of Arabic (Standard Arabic/ Dialect), French or Amazigh, especially in the context of high schools, is the type of streams students belong to. Students in the literary stream (1st and 2nd Baccalaureate) are reported to be badly in need of more Arabic than are science stream students. This is due, according to the 3 interviewed high school teachers, to students' low level, not only in English but also in other subjects. Hence, the use of translation into standard Arabic/dialect is observed to be higher, which is wholly dependent on the students' weaknesses and immediate needs. In doing so, the teacher selects particular aspects of language structure where the students have difficulty in and do some remedial work using a mixture of English and Arabic. The pressing need for using Moroccan dialect is attributed to a utilitarian purpose; it is mainly related to the national exams the students are to set for at the end of each school year, and which require certain mastery of the grammatical and functional aspects of the English language.

4.6. Translation's Avoidability in a Digital Mobile World

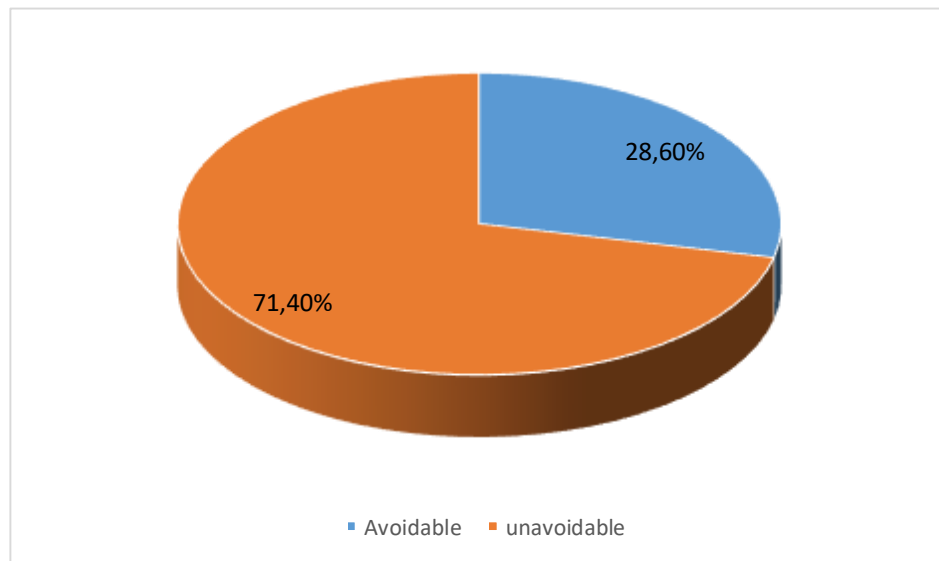


Figure 4. EFL learners' use of translation in a digital mobile world.

Based on the results, and taking into consideration the current growth of digitalization and the wide proliferation of mobile technologies, which are rife in modern societies, learners of English seem unapproachable without incorporating the fact that they are digital natives by birth. Their everyday exposure to social media content, gaming, and to the recent Artificial Intelligent contexts such as (ChatGPT) renders it inevitable to actively make use of instant translation. More importantly, being equipped with mobile phones connected to the internet pushes their learning to be wholly dependable on mobile applications to check for spellings and grammar errors. By using, for example, Google Translate or Google as a search engine to look up English words in their mother tongues, they tend to exploit the digital world to serve their learning needs, communicative and leisure objectives.

71, 4 % of the informants agree that translation is unavoidable in a digital world, whereas 28, 6 % disagree. The ownership of a mobile phone and the inevitability to use the internet either for learning purposes or for socializing with other people is apparent now more than ever before due to the new mobile technologies that have become accessible to everyone, cheaper, portable and easier to handle. Students are reported to spend more time using their mobile phones for different goals. As for learning English, they use free mobile applications like bilingual dictionaries English/ Arabic, which are widely and regularly used to translate individual words or even larger texts. The effects of online or installed mobile applications can enhance students' learning and achievement.

More importantly, most interviewed students in the observed classes pointed to the use of social media platforms such as Instagram, Tik-Tok and YouTube channels, which adopt a bilingual approach to teaching English and other languages to their viewers. Yet, and from a pedagogical perspective, the roles of the observed teachers in a digitally saturated world seem insignificant, for they still stick to the traditional approach of teaching English. Digital natives can have access to all the content of any English lesson at their fingertips

without waiting for the teacher's explanation in classroom settings. Therefore, teachers of English language have to keep abreast with the latest developments in the modern world of ICT and how the latter is rapidly changing the landscape of EFL/ ESL teaching and learning.

5. Conclusion

This study confirms that more than 50% of Arabic (SA, MD), French and some Amazigh exist and will always do so in EFL/ ESL classrooms. Whether teachers like it or not, translation from and to those languages seems inescapable in multilingual contexts, especially among students actively involved in a mobile digital world. For its utilitarian role, it does contribute to assisting in language acquisition, enhancing linguistic competence, and can also be seen as a cross-linguistic trigger to bridge the gap between cultures in their totality. This recent inclination towards translation is ascribed to the availability of the internet and the ease of use mobile applications can provide at the fingertips of most, if not all, the English learners in the Moroccan English classrooms. They translate from English/ French to Arabic and vice versa without the exertion of any control over using or not using their mother tongues. Pedagogically, this facilitating role of using the existing linguistic repertoire to teach English has to be moderate and employed solely when the need strongly arises. Whether used for an initial stage or for an advanced one, it should depend wholly on the teachers and the goals that have to be met in order to help integrate slow learners and ease their understanding of the target language.

Despite the fact that the idea of interference or negative transfer may dissuade teachers and learners from using translation, research has shown that the two types of transfer are good indicators that learners are actively involved in building up their linguistic competence in both languages. This goes hand in hand with what Scott and Pavlenko (2008) highlight as the primary goal of translation in facilitating positive transfer, the internalization of new concepts and to raise awareness of negative transfer through cross-linguistic comparisons... which would ultimately raise students' intercultural competence" (p. 217). Additionally, given how the current digital world of social media is vigorously preoccupying 21st century students, where they are constantly exposed to multilingual/ plurilingual content, translation can be proven to be practical and considerably useful to ease a crisscrossing understanding of both local and foreign languages and cultures. The free access to a wide range of options offered by the world of the internet, social media platforms, and the free artificially intelligent applications have all eased the task of understanding individual words and longer texts together with their cultural aspects.

Therefore, teachers of English have to take into consideration this important fact and give insights into the proper use of digitalization in learning the English language. Preferably, they are recommended to redesign their lessons by encouraging their students and engaging them in mobile-based activities where translation can be a facilitating component.

Future studies have to reverse the approach and tackle how Arabic language is learnt in foreign classes or to non-Arabic speakers in the Arab world. I believe that some English would be indispensable to learn the basics of Arabic and introduce the learners to the Arab culture.

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