



الجمهورية الجزائرية الديمقراطية الشعبية
جامعة الجيلالي ليابس بسيدي بلعباس
وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي

كلية الآداب اللغات و الفنون

إذن بطبع مذكرة ماستر

قسم: اللغة... الحديث... الحديث...

تخصص: ... اللغة... الحديث... الحديث...

أنا الممضي أسفله الأستاذ(ة):
المشرف على مذكرة ماستر بعنوان:

The Use of the mother Tongue as a pedagogical
Tool in EFL classrooms and its impact on learners
Engagement
للطالب(ة):
مدرس:

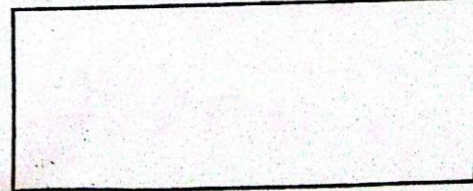
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الضرورية لذلك.

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كلية الآداب اللغات و الفنون

إذن بطبع مذكرة ماستر

قسم: اللغة العربية

تخصص: تعليم اللغة العربية

أنا الممضي أسفله الأستاذ(ة): كسرا ب حيرة

المشرف على مذكرة ماستر بعنوان:

Effect of The Mother Tongue as a pedagogical
Tool in EFL Classrooms and its Impact on learners
Engagement

للتأليف (ة): بوحسن يميني

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PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF DJILALI LIABES, SIDI BEL ABBES
FACULTY OF LETTERS, LANGUAGES AND ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



The Use of the Mother Tongue as a Pedagogical Tool in EFL
Classrooms and Its Impact on Learners' Engagement: A Case Study of
First-Year Middle School Learners at El-Kabir Abdelkader Middle
School

*Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Master in Didactics*

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Academic Year: 2025-2026

Dedications 1

First and foremost, all praise and gratitude be to Almighty Allah, for the strength, perseverance, and blessings bestowed upon me throughout this journey.

To my beloved mother, whose sacrifices and unwavering emotional support have been my foundation. Thank you for believing in me since the very beginning I love you so much.

To my dearest friend Kheira, thank you for your companionship, understanding, and for being constant sources of motivation. Thank you for standing by me through every challenge of this pursuit.

To my beloved friend Aya, thank you for being there in a moment of need and for your support motivation and care.

And last, to everyone who believed in me and encouraged me and never lost faith in my potential.

Thank you so much

Nadia Boukheddimi

Dedications 2

Before all, I thank Allah for giving me the strength, patience, and guidance to accomplish this work.

To my sweet and loving parents, whose endless love, support, sacrifices, and sincere prayers have always been the source of my success and motivation.

To my family, for their encouragement and belief in me throughout this journey.

To my best friend, Nadia, for her constant support, kindness, motivation, and for always being by my side during the difficult and memorable moments of this journey.

And to everyone who supported me and stood by my side during the completion of this work.

Kheira Mazouz

Acknowledgements

We wish to express our profound gratitude to our supervisor, Dr Arab Kheira for her scholarly guidance and constant encouragement. Her insightful feedback and patience were instrumental in shaping this research.

We would also like to express our deepest and most sincere gratitude to our respected jury members, Professor Nadia Menezla, and Dr Ammari Samia, for kindly accepting to examine and evaluate this work.

As we extend our heartfelt appreciation to the administrative working staff and all the teachers and students at EL Kabir Abdelkader Middle school for their warm welcome and invaluable cooperation throughout this study.

We are also deeply indebted to the faculty members of the English Department at Djillali Liabes University. Their dedication to pedagogical excellence and their commitment to our academic development provided us with the intellectual tools and foundation necessary to complete this Master's degree.

Our profound thanks go to all our dear teachers whose dedicated teaching and mentorship shaped our academic path during our university studies.

We would like to acknowledge our classmates and colleagues for their support and for the collaborative spirit that enriched our time in the program.

Finally, we thank Djillali Liabes University for providing the academic environment and resources that facilitated our studies and supported our growth throughout these years.

Abstract

The present study explores the use of the mother tongue as a pedagogical tool in the EFL learning process and examines its impact on learners' engagement. Following a descriptive research design with an exploratory nature, the study focuses on First-Year EFL Middle school learners taking El-Kabir Abdelkader Middle School as a case study. It uses classroom observation, interview, and a questionnaire to gather data on how teachers and students perceive this subject. The sample of the study was determined using a non-probability sampling technique, specifically convenience sampling, which resulted in the selection of 50 students and two teachers. The findings revealed that the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom as a pedagogical tool is guided with purposeful intentions and limited within a contextual framework that promotes students' learning process. The results showed a strong relationship between the use of the mother tongue and increased students' engagement in the learning process. It is found that when the mother tongue is used appropriately in the classroom, students become more attentive to the lecture and more engaged in the language learning process. They pay more attention to the lecture, understand its content more clearly, and feel more confident in engaging in classroom activities and tasks. However, students' over reliance on the mother tongue could reduce their exposure to English language input and limit their opportunities in practicing the language in class.

Keywords: Mother tongue use; EFL learning; learners' engagement; pedagogical tool; classroom interaction; Algeria.

List of Abbreviations

AA: Algerian Arabic

EFL: English Language Learning

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

TL: Target Language

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General Introduction

General Introduction

Nowadays English is used in almost every aspect of life, including social media, science and research, education and health, travel, etc. In many of these domains, it serves as a major international means of communication alongside local languages. Therefore, the learning of this language has turned into a necessity nowadays and a major requirement for both academic success and professional advancement. It is also essential to learn this language at an early stage to build a strong foundation from the beginning. This increasing need to learn English worldwide has also increased interest in the classroom factors that may influence students' learning process and academic outcomes. One of these factors; which constitutes the topic of the present dissertation, is the use of the mother tongue in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom.

The mother tongue generally refers to the language one learns as an infant and uses naturally within the family and surrounding community. In EFL classrooms, the use of the mother tongue has long generated opposing views. On the one hand, some scholars view it as a positive feature of EFL learning that could promote knowledge transfer and improve language proficiency. On the other hand, others regard it as a detrimental factor that could impede EFL students' language development. This debate is often explained through the distinction between positive and negative language transfer, where the mother tongue may either support or interfere with English learning.

In the Algerian context, the mother tongue mainly includes Algerian Arabic (AA) commonly known as Daridja and Tamazight with its different varieties. For clarity, the present study also uses the term first language (L1) to refer to the mother tongue. Several studies have examined the role of the mother tongue in Algerian EFL settings and have reported mixed findings. Some studies suggest that learners benefit from the mother tongue use because it helps

them understand difficult instructions, vocabulary, and classroom tasks more easily. At the same time, teachers often hesitate to allow the use of the mother tongue in their classrooms, fearing that it will reduce learners' exposure to the Target Language (TL) and hinder the development of their English language skills.

This dual perception of mother tongue use in EFL classrooms has been addressed in research for several decades; however, it has not been thoroughly examined to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding when these native language varieties are beneficial and when they may become a hindering factor in the learning process. While a number of these studies have concentrated on language skills such as speaking or writing, or have examined teachers' perspectives, little research has investigated how the use of the mother tongue relates to students' engagement in middle school context, where learners are still at the beginning stages of English proficiency and tend to rely more on their first language (L1).

Therefore, this study aims to provide a balanced understanding of the pedagogical implications of mother tongue use, offering grounded arguments for how it can be used effectively in EFL instruction without compromising students' exposure to the target language (TL) or affecting their language development. Accordingly, the study aims at answering the following research questions:

1. How do teachers use the mother tongue as a pedagogical tool in their EFL language instruction?
2. In what ways does the use of the mother tongue relate to students' engagement in EFL classrooms?
3. How can teachers identify and minimize excessive mother tongue use in EFL classrooms?

Based on the following previous questions , the following hypotheses have been put forward;

1. Teachers use the mother tongue in their classrooms to clarify concepts, build rapport, and provide instructions in order to save time and avoid misunderstandings.
2. The use of the mother tongue facilitates students' comprehension of lessons and tasks, which enhances their engagement in the learning process by paying more attention to the lesson, asking questions or responding to the teacher.
3. Teachers can monitor the impact of mother tongue use by observing students' classroom behaviour; increased reliance on the mother tongue and reduced engagement in English indicate the need to regulate its use and encourage greater use of the English language.

The study aims at exploring the ways teachers use the mother tongue in classroom instruction and the relationship between this use and students' engagement. Moreover, the study seeks to investigate how teachers may identify when using the mother tongue becomes harmful to students' language development and what techniques might be employed to lessen its negative effects.

To achieve these objectives, the study adopts a descriptive research design with an exploratory nature and follows a mixed-methods approach. The selection of this design is considered appropriate because it helps collect both quantitative and qualitative data. This in turn allows the examination of the phenomenon in depth and generates insights enabling the researchers to obtain a profound understanding of the research topic. The study is conducted at El-Kabir Abdelkader middle school and involves first-year middle school learners as well as their teachers. This level is selected because learners at this stage are still beginners and are more

likely to rely on their first language while learning English. Using a non-probability sampling, namely convenience sampling, 50 students with two teachers have been selected to participate in the data collection process. Data is collected through students' questionnaire, teachers' interview, and classroom observation. The quantitative data are analyzed through descriptive statistics, whereas the qualitative data are interpreted thematically.

The significance of this study lies in its potential contribution to the existing literature concerning the use of the mother tongue in the EFL instruction environment. The results may help teachers develop a more balanced and informed use of the mother tongue in their classrooms. It may also raise awareness about the conditions under which this pedagogical strategy can support learning and the situations in which it may hinder students' language development.

The dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter presents the theoretical framework related to the use of the mother tongue in EFL classrooms and its possible connection to learners' engagement. The second chapter is devoted to the research methodology and explains the design, participants, instruments, and procedures followed in the study. The third chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the collected data, followed by a discussion of the main findings, pedagogical implications, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter One: Literature Review

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1.1.Introduction

This chapter is devoted to reviewing the key concepts relevant to this research topic. It is divided into two main sections, the first one sheds light on the use of the mother tongue in the EFL learning process in general, while the second one discusses the concept of engagement and the impact of the mother tongue use on this aspect. The first section examines the definition of the mother tongue and the theoretical framework that supports its use, incorporating Language Transfer Theory as the primary foundation, along with the types of language transfer that may occur as a result. Furthermore, it incorporates Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory to explain the impact of the mother tongue on student's engagement, while also exploring Chomsky's Universal Grammar as a complementary theoretical background. Additionally, this section explores the effects of the use of the mother tongue in the EFL learning process including both the advantages and the challenges or drawbacks that may limit the use of this approach in the EFL classrooms. The second section sheds light on learner's engagement and its importance in the EFL learning process. It examines the definitions of learning engagement, its types, and its influencing factors. More importantly, it highlights the relationship between mother tongue use and learner's engagement, with a specific focus on the EFL context.

Section one: Use of the Mother Tongue in Foreign Language Learning

1.2.Mother Tongue Definition

Before discussing the use of the mother tongue in EFL learning, it is important to define the term "mother language" first. According to the Cambridge dictionary (2024), the mother tongue refers to the language one learns as an infant, as opposed to a language studied at school or as an adult. Therefore, the term mother tongue refers to one's native or first language that

defines his social belonging and identity. It is the language used for interaction in his family circle and surrounding environment.

In this sense, Kroon (2003) notes the term mother tongue: “refers to one’s native language, i.e., the language of one’s mother or the language one speaks with one’s mother - more generally, the language that is provided by a child’s direct attendants in the home, without any participation of educational institutions” (p. 35). This definition reinforces the idea that the mother tongue is primarily acquired through informal exposure within the home environment rather than through formal instruction in educational institutions.

Moreover, Cortez (n.d) presents a more detailed explanation of this language. He claimed that mother tongue is the system of meaningful linguistic symbols that one’s mind uses automatically to convey and understand messages. Sociologically, it is a way for individuals to identify with other people in the community that they are part of, whereas educationally, they can learn it more quickly through it than through a foreign language medium (Cortez, n.d). Put differently, the mother tongue represents a social indicator of one’s identity and an effective academic medium of instruction that can enhance learner’s comprehension when used in educational settings.

1.3.Theoretical Framework Underlying the Use of the Mother Tongue

In the field of EFL learning and teaching, the status of English as a global language places greater emphasis on its pedagogy and instructional approaches. Over time, a variety of dominant learning theories have shaped the area of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and contributed to the development of distinct language teaching approaches. According to Schunk (2012), systematic psychology studies first appeared in the eighteenth century, marking the early stages of research on language learning. These theories function as a set of guidelines that are

recognized by science and are put forth to explain learning phenomena, provide frameworks for examining data, and connect pedagogy and research (Suppes, 1974, as cited in Schunk, 2012). Consequently, systematic psychology studies provide a contextual framework to educators and researchers to combine theoretical knowledge with classroom practice for the purpose of ameliorating students' language learning experiences and enhancing their educational outcomes. While Language Transfer Theory serves as the primary linguistic foundation for this study, Krashen's Affective Filter and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory provide the psychological and pedagogical layers necessary to understand learner engagement.

1.3.1. Transfer Theory

It is widely acknowledged that language transfer has turned into a central area of research in the field of SLA. language transfer theory explains how using the mother tongue in the EFL learning process could lead learners to transfer language features to the second or foreign language, which is referred to as the L2. Daftarifard and Shirkhani (2011) explain that language transfer normally starts from lower levels and moves gradually to higher levels through time and use. Thus, in order to make a desired utterance, learners often transfer a similar sound from their mother tongue repertoire at the phonological level and then move to transferring higher features of language structure and elements. In other words, language learners start to produce the new sounds and pronounce them in a way that is similar to pronouncing their mother tongue. After that, they start applying major language rules that are taken from their mother tongue and apply them to their L2 learning and usage, such as grammatical or lexical features (ibid).

Language transfer mechanisms can be fundamentally understood through the lens of innate cognitive structures, such as the Universal Grammar Theory, developed by Noam Chomsky in the late 1960s, one of numerous revolutionary theories and concepts that were

originally proposed to explain first language acquisition, and later applied to the field of SLA. Chomsky's theory of UG, suggests that there is an innate language learning system that enables the learner to acquire a first, a second or even a foreign language through the grammar rules stored in their brain. As noted by Daftarifard and Shirkhani (2011), this theory raises questions about the dynamics of this innate language learning system. The researchers wondered whether there is a single cognitive system that is responsible for acquiring both the mother tongue and L2, or there is a system for each acquired language in the brain.

After systematic review for the existing literature Daftarifard and Shirkhani (2011), provided three possible explanations for the relationship between the mother tongue, referred to in their study as L1 (First Language), and the acquisition system and dynamics of L2. The first states that there are two language learning systems that form the UG for both L1 and L2, which also means that transfer could not occur from one language to the other since each language is developed through its own language learning system. The second supports that there is only one language learning system through which both L1 and L2 are acquired, which means that there is an interaction between the two languages which inevitably leads to language transfer.

Moreover, Daftarifard and Shirkhani (2011) provided a third explanation through their review of transfer theories, stating that these two systems overlap over each other and result in language transfer. Thus, there is a separate language learning device that stores the L1 and L2 vocabulary separately, but the partial integration of these two systems makes the learner transfer some language aspects from the L1 to the L2 while maintaining other aspects separate. It could be stated that the last explanation provides a more comprehensible account of the relationship between L1 acquisition and L2 learning, as it refrains from considering the two systems as entirely separate or totally integrated. Rather, it depicts their dynamic interaction and provides a

feasible and theoretically supported explanation for language transfer. There are two types of transfer that could occur; a positive transfer and a negative transfer.

1.3.1.1. Positive Transfer

Positive transfer, as defined by Richards and Schmidt (2002, as cited in Ling-nan, 2018), is the transfer that facilitates learning, it can happen when the native and target languages (TL) share the same form. In other words, positive language transfer takes place through the use of the similarities between students' L1 and TL, which helps them connect their new knowledge of the TL with what they already know from their L1. Thus, this transfer facilitates students' language learning process through the similar features shared between the two languages, such as grammar rules, vocabulary, and even pronunciation patterns.

In the same vein, Gao (2023) further explained that it is simpler and easier to acquire a second language if there are more similarities between the mother tongue and the TL; learners would unintentionally assist themselves in learning the second language by drawing on their experience with studying the mother tongue and its grammatical rules once they have grown accustomed to the rules of grammar used in that language. Put differently, students relate their newly acquired knowledge of the grammatical structure of the TL with their pre-existing knowledge of their own L1 grammar rules to facilitate their comprehension and reinforce their retention. This facilitates the brain's cognitive processing of the L2 input and makes it easier to understand.

1.3.1.2. Negative Transfer

Negative transfer, as the name implies, refers to the negative impact that using the mother tongue may have on EFL learning. It is also referred to as language interference, it occurs when learners rely on their first language knowledge in a way that leads to misunderstandings when

learning a second language (Ling-nan, 2018). That is to say, negative transfer happens when the knowledge of the L1 becomes an impeding factor for the comprehension and use of the TL. Hence, instead of relying on the pre-existing L1 input and relating it with L2 input to facilitate comprehension, this knowledge becomes a hindrance to the new input that is presented through the L2 instruction.

Gao (2023) explained this phenomenon by referring to the difference that exists between the two languages. In the case of the positive transfer, it is the similarities between the L1 and L2 structure that makes learning easier and simpler. However, negative transfer occurs when the L1 and L2 are substantially different from each other in terms of language structure, use, and pronunciation. In such cases, these differences may become an obstacle for EFL learners when they compare the TL instruction with the rules of their native tongue.

Furthermore, it is argued through Chomsky's Transformational Generative Grammar theory that this negative transfer makes committing errors in language learning an inevitable consequence. It is explained that the brain forms and validates assumptions about other languages, but the assumptions it stores for them will be influenced by the mother tongue and result in inaccurate predictions leading to mistakes in language learning (Gao, 2023). Put differently, when learning a second or a foreign language, the brain relates the newly acquired input with what is already stored in the human memory concerning language patterns and forms, thus, it makes assumptions that the patterns of the TL are similar to the L1, and leads to making production errors given that the L1 is not the same as the L2.

1.3.2. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis

The affective filter hypothesis states that the emotional state of the student could play a significant role in the success or failure of his/her language learning process (Lin, 2008).

Krashen (1982) listed motivation, self-confidence and anxiety as the three main emotional and psychological factors that could influence the language acquisition process, either in a negative or positive way. Krashen (1982) further explained that individuals with attitudes that are not favorable to learning a language will also have a high or strong Affective Filter, which means that even if they understand the language input, this input will not reach the language acquisition device or the part of the brain that deals with language acquisition.

Stated differently, students with high affective filter (high anxiety, low motivation and low self-confidence) develop negative attitudes towards language learning process. Therefore, this high filter prevents their brain from receiving the comprehensible input and processing it to produce output. Thus, this emotional state hinders the natural language learning process and prevents the brain from performing its natural function in processing input and using it to produce output. More importantly, this filter reduces both students' comprehension and their engagement in the learning process as well. Consequently, using the mother tongue lowers this filter by reducing the stress and frustration of total immersion, creating a safer environment for the learner and facilitating language acquisition.

Wang (2020) confirmed that affective factors lead to producing effective EFL learners, particularly in terms of their vocabulary development and their learning engagement. The focus on students' affective state, including their interest and motivation towards the learning activities in class, their confidence and anxiety, provides teachers with a compass to guide their teaching practices in the classroom and enhance students' academic performance. However, overweighing studies examining the effect of students' emotional state on their vocabulary acquisition reveals that there is not a demonstrative description of how this effect is cognitively manifested. Researchers do not explicitly show how they can measure the high and low emotional factors,

and how this variable factor contributes cognitively to maximizing comprehensible input processing or the opposite. For this reason, research on the contribution of affective filter in vocabulary acquisition remains somehow obscure. However, by utilizing the mother tongue to lower this affective filter, teachers can ensure that students remain emotionally engaged and receptive to new linguistic input without the barrier of high anxiety.

1.3.3. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory highlights the role of social interaction in the cognitive development of young language learners. Vygotsky (1978) argued that community is essential to the process of creating meaning for children and building their beliefs system, values and critical thinking (McLeod, 2024). In other words, social context plays a major role in children's learning process, it forms the way they see things in their environment, how they think and how they build their knowledge. Therefore, social surroundings and environment form the first source of knowledge through which children derive input and construct their knowledge accordingly.

Moreover, Vygotsky's (1978) theory extends to the process through which children learn from their social environment by interacting with more experienced and knowledgeable people from their social circles. This is known as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) theory that were further developed by Vygotsky (1978). These theories dictate that through their interaction with adults, children learn how to attach meaning to their surroundings and construct knowledge (McLeod, 2024). Thus, this interaction that takes place in a proximal zone enables children to gain knowledge from another person who is more knowledgeable than them and has more experience in life than they do. This person can be their teacher, parent, brother, neighbor, and other social members who exist in their social environment. Wood et al, (1976) later coined the term "scaffolding" to describe the practical

application of his ideas. This theory suggests that learning occurs best in the ZPD which is the gap between what a learner can do alone and what they can do with help. The mother tongue acts as a scaffold (temporary support), allowing students to grasp complex instructions or abstract concepts in a familiar language before they have the L2 vocabulary to do so independently.

1.4. Effects of Mother Tongue Use on English Language Learning

The use of the mother tongue in the EFL learning process may lead to two predictable outcomes, either positive language transfer or negative language transfer. This impact may be determined by the level of similarity or difference between the L1 and the TL. This influence is described in the literature as the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, developed by Robert Lado (1950). According to Tajareh (2015), comparing two or more languages to ascertain their differences or similarities, either for theoretical reasons or for reasons unrelated to the analysis itself, is the focus of the comparative linguistics field known as Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis. In other words, the use of the mother tongue in the EFL learning process could yield both positive and negative results. Thus, it could be beneficial and helps students develop their language proficiency, as it could be harmful and impede their language skills development.

1.4.1. Advantages of Using the Mother Tongue in English Language Learning

There is a common belief among language teachers that use of the mother tongue encourages learners to rely on this language and neglect the use of the TL, which is essential to develop their language skills through practice. However, research shows that the use of the mother tongue in the EFL learning process is also effective in promoting learners' cognitive development and enhancing their comprehension of the TL (Isselane, 2009; Kasap & Emamvirdi, 2023; Mouili, 2021). This suggests that the use of the mother tongue, despite its perceived drawbacks, still has the potential to improve EFL students' learning process and

contribute to the development of their language proficiency. Consequently, Wen-Jian (1984) recommended a moderate or a controlled use of the mother tongue to support students' understanding without reducing their exposure to the TL or their practicing of their language skills.

More importantly, Nishanthi (2020) argued that the mother tongue serves as a foundation upon which learners can develop their ability to acquire other languages. He explained that having a solid foundation and understanding in their mother tongue enables them to apply the various linguistic structures and transfer them to other languages. This discussion relates to the concept of positive language transfer, which suggests that learners can use the grammatical competence of their mother tongue in acquiring the grammatical structure of the TL by recognizing and drawing on the similarities between the two languages. Hence, it is not appropriate to perceive the use of the mother language as something that can be completely removed from the EFL classroom. Instead, it can be a useful teaching tool that, when applied carefully, can help students learn English and improve their language proficiency.

In a study conducted by Barkaoui (2019), the use of the mother tongue (Arabic) was examined among both first-year middle school students and their teachers in Naama, Algeria. The findings showed that both students and teachers use Arabic in the EFL classroom. For teachers, the mother tongue is used as a facilitator to enable students' comprehension and understanding of the content delivered in English. Moreover, the mother tongue is used to reduce students' feelings of anxiety, shyness, and lack of confidence. Thus, this language is used to encourage students to engage in classroom discussions, using their mother tongue to help them lower their inhibitions and overcome their language learning anxiety. These results suggest that the mother tongue can play a supportive role in the EFL learning process by facilitating

comprehension, enhancing learning engagement and promoting English language skills development. Moreover, it may support learners' emotional well-being by creating a comfortable learning environment where students feel more relaxed and at ease to practice their English without the fear of making mistakes.

1.4.2. Challenges and Limitations

Despite the benefits it provides, the use of the mother tongue in English language learning may hinder the development of EFL learners' language skills. The impact of mother tongue on EFL/ESL learning process has been often associated with negative language transfer in research. In one of his studies, Cummins (1979) tried to examine the linguistic situation in the United States by comparing the academic achievement of the minority and the majority students. His research was based on the notion that minority children, who have different mother tongue than English, often manifest low academic achievements compared with their native American counterparts at school. One of the suggested theories that have been proposed in this research involved the learners' mother tongue and the negative impact of its use on their academic performance. Cummins (1979) argued that learners' academic difficulties are largely influenced by educational and social factors, as well as limited support for the development of the first language. His work suggests that the first language can support second language learning when it is properly developed. That is to say, Cummins (1979) established a link between students' development of L1 and their academic performance in L2, emphasizing that the development of students' L1 skills and the growth of their cognitive skills leads to positive transfer that promotes the development of their L2 skills as well, facilitating their comprehension and academic achievements in L2. Moreover, learners could commit the same errors that Chomsky elaborated earlier, in terms of making assumptions based on their mother tongue and applying its linguistic

rules and patterns on the TL, which leads to making learning errors since the L1 and L2 are two different languages in both form and usage. Thus, it could be stated that using the mother tongue in EFL learning could cause negative language transfer that impedes EFL students' academic performance and reduce their educational outcomes.

In a study conducted by Isselnane (2009) examining the role of language EFL learning among middle school students in Algeria, it was demonstrated that the mother tongue was the main cause behind students' different learning errors, including spelling, use of different auxiliaries and modal verbs, and wrong verb form. Put differently, students' pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary were negatively influenced by the use of their mother tongue. The findings of this study also revealed the negative language transfer that could occur between the mother tongue and L2 when there are no similarities or common features between the two language. This negative transfer leads to reduced academic achievements and poor language skills development in L2.

Additionally, Kasap and Emamvirdi (2023) declared that the most significant effect of language transfer in the EFL learning context is related to students' speaking skill and grammatical competence. They argued that students tend to rely on their mother tongue to translate texts and utterances to the TL for their lack of vocabulary. Thus, students apply the phonological rules of their mother tongue when producing English, which results in mispronouncing English words and distorting or changing meaning. Moreover, this translation from the L1 to the L2 conveys incorrect linguistic structure to the target language., including inaccurate use of tenses, verbs and adverbs, omission of articles and other grammar errors that hinder students' academic performance and their comprehension of the TL. This study shows that reliance on the mother tongue in the EFL learning process leads students to neglect efforts to

improve their limited vocabulary in English. Kasap and Emamvirdi (2023) elaborated this impact demonstrating that students often employ word-for-word translation strategies to learn and use English vocabulary. Thus, they assume that every word in their native language has an equivalent in the TL. This prospect could put major limitations to their vocabulary comprehension and acquisition. It also makes them commit language errors thorough using words that do not exist in the TL or have a different meaning in the TL than in their mother tongue.

In a similar study conducted by Iren, et al (2023), it was revealed that EFL learners cannot achieve speaking fluency when they rely on their mother tongue use. They argued that reliance on the mother tongue makes students frequently utilize direct translation or alternate codes within sentences in the TL. This frequent use of the mother tongue forms a major obstacle that hinders their communication and limits their ability to express their thoughts and ideas in English in a clear and accurate manner. This in turn prevents learners from developing new vocabulary, because instead of looking for new English words and expressions, they rely on their mother tongue to convey meaning. As a result, their vocabulary, particularly in speaking, remains limited. They also tend to give English words a limited meaning based on their mother tongue, ignoring other meanings and the different ways words can be used in English.

Section Two: Learning Engagement

1.5.Definition of Learning Engagement

Learning engagement is defined by Gallup (2013) as someone's interest and excitement for learning, which affects their behavior and academic achievement (as cited in Olson & Peterson, 2015). The term also means students' participation in classroom activities and interaction whether with peers or with instructors. This definition highlights students' interest as

the main factor for fostering their engagement. Thus, in addition to the physical and emotional efforts, students put into learning, they also need to be interested in the process in order to make those efforts in the first place. This interest drives them to pay attention and focus on the teacher's speech and take part in the lesson as active participants rather than passive learners who are not attentive to what is being taught in the classroom. This idea is also linked to academic success, as it is asserted that students would gain better learning results if they were more involved in the process.

Reeve, et al (2025) further added that learning engagement involves the quality of students' participation in both in-class and out of class learning activities, such as after-school clubs, groups and others. This definition indicates that learning engagement does not only include students' involvement, interest and participation inside the classroom, but it extends beyond the classroom environment to reflect the continuous and ongoing nature of the learning process.

1.6. Types of Academic Engagement

There are three types of engagement that have been listed by Bouvier, et al (2014). They include behavioral, emotional and cognitive engagement. Each of these types is explained as followed:

1.6.1. Behavioral Engagement

According to Archambault, et al, (2009), students that are e behaviorally engaged follow the rules, participate in class, and show interest in extracurricular activities. It is a commitment that one displays for his society or group in particular in that he would adhere to the norms of the group by exhibiting the same behaviors and taking part in their customary activities. It means that the individual follows the norms and common behaviors of the group to which he belongs.

1.6.2. Emotional engagement

This type is also referred to as affective engagement. According to Archambault, et al. (2009), this second category of student engagement entails their interactions, attitudes, views, and perceptions towards their school, particularly their motivation and interest in the educational process there. This type of engagement refers to student's sentiments and emotions more than their behaviors and physical actions. Moreover, this type of engagement relates to Krashen's affective filter hypothesis (1982), stating that the lower the affective filter, the more likely language input will be successfully acquired and comprehended. Krashen (1982) emphasized that emotional variables, such as stress, anxiety, self-confidence and motivation, play a significant role in controlling students' outcomes and academic performance.

1.6.3. Cognitive engagement

Cognitive engagement, the third type of engagement, is the name for the mental procedures a learner employs to learn. It entails a variety of challenging processes that the learner must complete in order to take part in the learning process. In order for a student to consider participating, he must be motivated and interested in the learning content, which generates a desire that prompts him to carry out a specific behavior in the classroom (Olson & Peterson, 2015). This type of engagement also necessitates the simultaneous involvement of both emotional and behavioral engagement (participation).

Similarly, Hennessy and Murphy (2023) summarized cognitive engagement as “the intrinsic motivation and interest students have in their studies, as well as the extent to which they use self-regulation strategies such as planning, goal setting and self-monitoring” (p.184). Stated differently, this type of engagement involves students' motivation to learn and the amount of

cognitive effort they are willing to make in order to organize their learning process and its outcomes.

1.7. Factors Influencing Students Engagement

As it has been discussed in the previous sections, engagement is an essential component for successful learning that is usually reflected in students' active participation in their learning process. An ideal language classroom would be one in which all students could be engaged in the learning process. However, there are some factors or difficulties that some students face in the EFL classroom that prevent them from achieving that goal.

1.7.1. Personality Traits

Personality traits, such as introversion and extroversion, form one of the main factors that could determine students' engagement in the EFL learning process. According to Paradilla, et al (2021), introvert learners tend to be reflective, less driven to public participation, they are shy, and they prefer to stay alone and think deeply instead of having group discussions or interaction. This type of learners is more likely to avoid engaging in classroom activities and prefer to learn and think on their own. Extrovert learners on the other hand; are outgoing, sociable individuals, they value or appreciate interaction and communication, and prefer to learn in groups rather than individually (Paradilla, et al, 2021). Hence, extrovert learners are more likely to engage in classroom interaction and to feel more comfortable in this engagement than introvert learners. Thus, it is not often for introvert learners to participate and engage in the learning process in a behavioral way because they feel the act is against their nature. They require greater encouragement and instructional support in addition to psychologically or emotionally safe learning environment that makes them feel comfortable enough to participate.

1.7.2. Psychological Factors

Psychological factors play a crucial role in shaping students' engagement in the learning process. For instance, students' negative emotions and low perceptions of their own abilities can reduce their participation in learning activities. In this context, Nakhla (2019) reports that: "Failure is an overwhelming experience that is associated with hostile, negative feelings and devastating consequences for many students" (p. 3). In other words, the fear of making mistakes has a negative impact on learners' engagement, they feel that they would be embarrassed in front of their peers if they share their thoughts out loud, thus, they refrain from participating.

Stress and anxiety form another significant factor that could influence students' learning engagement. In fact, stress is regarded as a negative emotional, cognitive, behavioral and physiological process that takes place when one tries to adjust and act with stress-inducing stimuli (Manikandan, 2018). Learning a foreign language is a stressful process that causes stress and anxiety, as learners are exposed to a language that is not familiar to them. This phenomenon is identified as foreign language anxiety (Kralova, 2016). According to Manikandan (2018), there is a strong relationship between classroom engagement and students' academic stress. When the teacher poses a question to one of the students, that student becomes the center of classmates' attention, which leads to feelings of anxiety that prevents the learner from producing an adequate academic performance. Therefore, these factors pose a challenge to students' learning engagement and their participation in the classroom discussions and activities.

The previous educational experiences of the students are another element that influences their unwillingness to participate. In addition to being laughed at by classmates, students who have been humiliated by their teachers for their errors are more likely to have a negative attitude toward participation (Sari, et al, 2021). Such educational experiences could leave students

feeling reluctant to speak up in class and lacking confidence in their ability to do so. It is crucial to emphasize that these students are not shy because, in contrast to their natural shyness, their fear of making mistakes stems from prior educational experiences. It is rather a natural reaction to prevent a situation that could cause them discomfort in the classroom.

Djoub (2019) observed that students could form low opinions and misperceptions towards the role and importance of classroom engagement in their learning process. If a student believes that his involvement in the classroom is irrelevant to his/her learning goals, he will refrain from participating. For the vast majority of students, grades are significant. As a result, they may choose not to share or demonstrate their knowledge to others because they want to keep it to themselves. The belief that participating would be a waste of time and energy that should be reserved for exams and tests reinforces this kind of self-centered behavior and reduces learners' engagement in the learning process (Djoub, 2019). Even if they knew the answers to the questions posed or had useful suggestions and innovative ideas, they would choose to remain silent and observe rather than take part.

1.7.3. Institutional Factors

Other problems that students could encounter in the EFL classroom and prevent them from engaging in the learning process may include large class sizes. This situation makes students uncomfortable to participate and share their opinions, and could also cause teachers to overlook quieter and unnoticed learners (Bahanshal, 2013). In fact, large-size classrooms is a prominent problem that has been frequently addressed through research in the Algerian language learning classrooms. Mokhtar (2019) asserted that it is a serious problem that affects both teachers' tasks in class and students' learning process as well. Therefore, this problem forms a major obstacle for enhancing students' engagement in the EFL learning process.

Urias (2022) addressed another important factor that hinders students' engagement in the classroom, which is the lack of insufficiently trained teachers and their limited or ineffective teaching strategies. Teachers play a significant role in promoting their students' learning engagement through their teaching strategies. Urias (2022) further warned that if teachers lacked the necessary skills to carry out this task in promoting learners' engagement, this could lead to losing their interest in the learning process as a whole and even lose interest in continuing their education in the long term. Therefore, the consequences of having inadequate teachers in the EFL classroom extend beyond low participation rates to include low motivation, poor academic achievements and negative attitudes towards the importance of EFL learning and language acquisition.

1.8. Empirical Research about the Mother Tongue Use in the Algerian Context

Engagement plays a significant role in the EFL learning process. Evidently, Ebrailidze (2023) explained that: "The ultimate goal of education is to promote learning, and it is widely accepted that learners who are engaged in the learning process are more likely to achieve this goal" (p. 1). Thus, engagement has been strongly associated with academic success, which highlights the first benefit of the mother tongue use in the EFL learning process since this linguistic approach is also associated with facilitating students' comprehension and increasing their engagement as demonstrated earlier in the chapter. As a result, the use of the mother tongue is found to facilitate EFL students' learning process in several aspects, including facilitating listening, reading, vocabulary, and grammar comprehension.

1.8.1. Facilitating Reading and Listening Comprehension through the Use of the Mother Tongue

Reading is another linguistic aspect that the use of the mother tongue is claimed to facilitate in the EFL learning process. In a study conducted by Bhootha, et al (2013) in Yemen schools, the mother tongue was examined in terms of the impact of its use on EFL students' learning process in general, and their reading comprehension in particular. The findings revealed that the mother tongue is mainly used in EFL classrooms as a scaffolding tool to facilitate students' comprehension of written texts and promote their reading skills. Teachers use this medium to translate new words, to define concepts, to give some explanations and to increase engagement in the learning process. While for students, they mostly use their mother tongue to support one another during group discussions by providing explanations and examples in their native tongue. Therefore, this method showed to be effective in promoting students' reading comprehension and increasing their engagement in the EFL learning process through enhancing their classroom participation and cognitive processing.

In terms of listening, Burdujan (2020) explained that the mother tongue is used in EFL classrooms to facilitate learners' comprehension of new words in an efficient manner. In other words, the use of the mother tongue saves both time and effort in the classroom, as providing an immediate translation is faster than providing a detailed explanation in English. Therefore, this medium serves as a tool to enhance students' listening comprehension in the EFL learning process. Moreover, Burdujan (2020) added that the use of the mother tongue is also effective in increasing students' comprehension of proverbs, idiomatic expressions, songs, and even jokes of English. Thus, it is an effective tool in promoting students' intercultural awareness.

1.8.2. Facilitating Vocabulary Comprehension and Acquisition through the Use of the Mother Tongue

The use of the mother tongue in EFL teaching has been also examined by Azzoug (2019) in his study about the role of this linguistic method in promoting Algerian students' vocabulary comprehension and acquisition. This study focused on both students and teachers' use of the mother tongue in their EFL classrooms and the impact of this use on both their learning and teaching experiences. The findings revealed that students mainly use it as a natural reaction to fill in the lexical gap caused by their lack of knowledge of English vocabulary. When using this method, also referred to in this study as code-switching, students take notice of their ignorance of particular words in English. As a result, they increase their efforts in learning these particular words and expressions in English, using the help of their mother tongue to facilitate this acquisition. Hence, the use of the mother tongue in this case showed to be effective in increasing students' vocabulary comprehension and acquisition and promoting their communicative skills with their peers and teachers as well.

More importantly, the findings of this study also highlighted the situational or contextual use of the mother tongue by Algerian learners. As known, Algeria is a multi-linguistic country. Thus, there are several languages and dialects that form the mother tongue for different Algerian students. This study showed that learners use a mixture of languages in their code-switching, including their mother tongue, French and English as well. In social interaction with friends and family, students showed to use AA, also known as Darija, while English and French are mostly used in educational discourse with teachers and peers in the classroom, in addition to Darija. As for teachers, the results of this study indicated that instructors mainly use the mother tongue in the EFL classroom to facilitate their students' comprehension of the lesson. Thus, this use is

limited to encouraging learners' engagement through enabling their comprehension and understanding of the lecture and the information delivered through its content.

1.8.3. Facilitating Grammar Comprehension Using L1 Structures

As demonstrated, the use of the mother tongue in the EFL learning is strongly associated with facilitating students' comprehension of English language structure and lexicons. Alvarez (2014) demonstrated that students acquire a natural comprehension of English grammar through their use of L1. This link has been described earlier through the positive language transfer theory, indicating that learners can make a connection between their existing knowledge of the L1 structure to build their grammatical knowledge of the L2 or the TL (English) based on the similarities between the two languages. Furthermore, Zhou (2024) explained that: "By breaking down these concepts in L1, teachers can help to clarify challenging grammar rules, vocabulary, and linguistic structures. This scaffolding helps students build a strong basis in their L2, therefore enhancing long-term memory and more deep cognitive processes." (p. 126). Teachers can use the mother tongue to explain complicated grammar rules and their use in the TL, so that students can better understand them and use their existing knowledge of the L1 to create meaning of the L2 language structure and rules.

1.8.4. Teachers' Attitudes towards the Use of the Mother Tongue in their EFL Classrooms

Attitudes play a significant role in the success or failure of any teaching method or tool. Todor and Degi (2016) confirmed that attitudes and motivation are strongly correlated in the EFL learning process. If students showed positive attitudes towards the learning process and its method, their motivation increases, and consequently, their academic achievements and performance enhance as well. Therefore, both students and teachers' attitudes towards the use of the mother tongue in the EFL learning process are important in determining its effectiveness as a

teaching tool and reducing its negative impact, such as over reliance on the mother tongue and limited exposure to the TL.

Chikh and Negadi (2023) examined the use of the mother tongue among middle school students and teachers in Tlemcen, in terms of its practices in the EFL classrooms and general attitudes towards it. The findings of this research revealed that both students and teachers in middle schools frequently use the mother tongue in their EFL classroom, with students using it more frequently than teachers due to their lack of English language proficiency. Both regard this medium as a facilitator for communication between learners and instructors, a facilitator for students' understanding of instructions and grammar rules, and a tool to help students understand new vocabulary in English as well. Therefore, both expressed positive attitudes towards the use of the mother tongue in English language learning, as the use of this language was found to create a positive students-teacher rapport, it reduces students' anxiety, increases their motivation and participation and drawing their attention as well. Moreover, the results of this study also showed that the use of the mother tongue helps teachers manage their classroom and teaching activities, and gain time to complete their lesson plans. The study concluded with the recommendation that teachers should be more up-front about their use of the mother tongue in their EFL teaching process, giving that most of them feel guilty about this use, and they should be supported by clear guideline provided by policy-makers that govern and monitor the systematic and controlled use of the mother tongue in the EFL learning and teaching process.

Similarly, Khelalfa and Kellil (2023) explored the use of the L1 (Arabic) in the Algerian EFL classroom. The findings showed that the use of the mother tongue is essential in the EFL learning process for both students and teachers. Furthermore, the results of this study suggest a slight modification to the Algerian pedagogical framework for English language instruction by

allowing more flexibility in the use of the mother tongue and officially incorporating it as a supplementary tool to enhance students' comprehension and increase their engagement in the learning process.

Additionally, Said (2025) also explored First-year secondary school pupils' attitudes towards the use of AA (Darija) in their EFL learning classrooms. The study showed that both students and teachers use Darija in their EFL classroom to facilitate comprehension, increase communication and reduce anxiety among learners. However, attitudes towards the use of this medium are divided, some view it as a negative factor that hinders their full immersion into the English language use in the classroom, while others consider it to be a helpful tool in facilitating their comprehension of complex concepts, especially grammar lessons and vocabulary. In conclusion, the study emphasized that the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom is a valuable asset for increasing students' comprehension and engagement in the learning process as well, as more understanding of English content enables learners to participate more frequently in the EFL learning process.

1.9.Conclusion

This chapter revealed the pedagogical use of the mother tongue in the EFL learning process and the general views towards this pedagogical approach. The common belief is that the use of the mother tongue impedes successful language acquisition of the L2 by limiting learners' exposure to the TL and their opportunities to practice it. However, studies show that it is neither possible nor advisable to completely avoid the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom. Both teachers and students rely on this language to facilitate comprehension of complex concepts of English, enhance engagement and facilitate communication, to develop grammatical and lexical competence, support classroom management and promote a stress-free learning

environment. Moreover, the use of the mother tongue can support students' scaffolding by helping them build their knowledge of the TL based on the similarities between their L1 and the TL structure. Regarding attitudes and perceptions, reviewed studies showed that both students and teachers generally hold positive attitudes towards the use of the mother tongue in the EFL learning process, as it enhances students' engagement and participation through facilitating their comprehension of the TL. However, it is also concluded that this use should be controlled and selective to maximize the benefits of this method and reduce its negative impact in terms of limiting learners' exposure to the TL.

Chapter Two:

Methodology of Research

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2.1. Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the description of the research methodology, which constitutes the core of the present study. It is divided into two main sections. The first section describes the research context with the aim of providing background information about the learning situation in Algeria, with a particular focus on middle schools. It also offers an overview of the Algerian linguistic landscape, discussing the different varieties of the mother tongue used in the country, as well as the status of French and English, in order to help readers gain a deeper understanding of the research topic. The second section is concerned with the research methodology, which represents the practical component of this chapter. It presents the research design and approach, along with the population and sample under investigation. In addition, it describes the data collection tools and the procedures used for data analysis. Finally, it addresses the limitations of the study and the ethical considerations observed throughout the research process.

2.2. The Linguistic Reality in Algeria

The linguistic situation in Algeria is characterized by a complex state of multilingualism (Negadi, 2015). The primary languages utilized within the Algerian society are Algerian Arabic (AA), Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), and Tamazight with its various regional varieties, alongside French and English as foreign languages. The mother tongue in Algeria is predominantly Darija, also referred to as AA. This linguistic variety is found to be the most frequently used language in the Algerian social context (Bouziane & Mebtouche, 2024). AA serves as the primary vehicle for daily communication and social interaction among the Algerian population, representing a fundamental element of the country's informal linguistic identity and a bridge for spontaneous communication across all social strata.

In terms of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), this variation is classified as the first official language of the nation. The use of this language is strictly associated with formality, legal documentation, and academic content that require adherence to standardized linguistic norms. This draws a clear distinction between the functional use of MSA and AA; while the former is reserved for formal and official contexts, the latter remains the language of spontaneous social interaction.

Tamazight is another significant component of the Algerian linguistic identity, primarily used as a mother tongue in Kabylia regions such as Tizi Ouzou and Bejaia. Historically, this language was subject to marginalization due to the specific national language policies of the country following independence (Ghouane & Rabahi, 2024). However, this status was elevated when Tamazight was recognized as a national language in 2002 and subsequently an official language in 2016. Despite this constitutional recognition, the use of the language remains most prevalent within the social interactions of the Kabyle people and specific regional institutions.

Regarding the position of French, this language is classified as the primary competitor of Arabic and its variations. A significant portion of the Algerian population either utilizes French entirely in social communication or integrates it heavily into their Arabic speech (Lounnas, 2024). Consequently, French forms an integral part of the Algerian identity and sociolinguistic landscape. Benrabah (2007) attributed this status to the legacy of colonialism and the historical policies practiced in Algeria to integrate the French language into the national identity. Following independence, French became so deeply intertwined with the administrative and social systems that its removal became significantly challenging and impractical. Thus, it is frequently used in daily interactions as if it were a mother tongue, particularly in the northern

and Kabyle regions (Brinis, 2019). However, this situation has gradually evolved in recent decades, as the status of French has become more contested due to the growing institutional promotion of Arabic and, more recently, the increasing presence of English in education, media, and professional domains, building on the changing status of French in the Algerian linguistic context.

In terms of the English language, it is currently positioned as a foreign language. Despite its global status as a lingua franca, English is traditionally viewed as a second foreign language following French. Bouasba et al. (2021) suggested that the dominant position of French is a result of long-standing linguistic policies designed to maintain its use even after the colonial period. However, the younger generation represents an exception to this pattern; research indicates an increasing interest in English over French due to its dominance on social media and digital platforms (Zahaf, 2024).

Furthermore, contemporary Algerian youth are increasingly aware of the significance of English for their future professional careers (Benadla, 2024), leading to a gradual shift where English is gaining more social recognition while French begins to lose its traditional influence. This multifaceted linguistic reality, defined by the interplay between indigenous mother tongues and colonial or global languages, establishes a vital context for understanding pedagogical choices. This national multilingualism provides the framework for the strategic use of the mother tongue to facilitate learning within the formal educational environment.

2.3. The Educational System in Algeria

The educational system in Algeria includes elementary, middle, secondary schools, and universities. The first three levels are part of basic education, while the latter represents higher education in the country. Each stage is characterized by its own pedagogical objectives,

curricula, and assessment techniques to meet the specific needs of the learners and their development according to each age group. The educational system has witnessed different reforms, whether in terms of the duration of the educational level, the teaching methods and approaches, or the teaching material and content. Currently, the elementary, or primary, school education consists of five levels (5 years of schooling), middle school comprises four levels, while secondary school is designated to include three levels, where learners begin to specialize in different streams, mainly literary and scientific streams. In terms of higher education, the classical system has been replaced by the LMD system, which is structured into three years of education for the License degree, two years for the Master's degree, and three years for the Doctorate degree.

2.4. Teaching English in Algeria

In the former Algerian educational system, French was the only foreign language taught in primary schools. It was also the medium of instruction used in higher education to deliver lectures and conduct examinations (Djabri, 1981). Prior to 2022, English was introduced at the middle school level. However, the new educational reform in 2022 initiated the integration of English language instruction in primary school and the gradual implementation of this language as a medium of instruction in higher education (Aliouane et al., 2023). This policy also redefines the position of French as a first foreign language and challenges its traditional dominance in the Algerian society.

As Nemmoussat and Bouyakoub (2019) proclaimed, this policy has manifested the numerous demands and requests of Algerian professionals and policy-makers for a global and comprehensive reform of education as well as the establishment of a quality-based education. The application of the colonial French educational system and policy in post-colonial Algeria

was a major concern for several parties who questioned the reason behind prioritizing French when the global community increasingly relies on English. It is well established that English is now an international language, globally acknowledged as a leading force in communication and globalization. Gohil (2013) agreed that English is the language of the modern world, being the most widely taught foreign language across the globe.

Furthermore, Rao (2019) demonstrated that English now represents the official language of science and technology, serving as a de facto universal language that connects scientists and researchers from different linguistic backgrounds. Most research articles, journals, and books are published in English; thus, the language plays a crucial role in keeping researchers updated with the latest trends. The several reforms undertaken by the Algerian educational authorities can therefore be seen as a logical response to this global linguistic reality, aiming to strengthen the status of English within the education system and align national education with international academic and professional standards.

2.5.Statement of the Problem

Despite the significance of this language, EFL students across the four levels of middle school in Algeria still face several challenges that hinder the development of their language proficiency. Tayeb and Roux (2014) attributed these challenges to inappropriate teaching strategies, inadequate language proficiency, and students limited self-efficacy. Therefore, to help address these barriers, the present study suggests the use of the mother tongue in the middle school EFL classroom to promote students' comprehension and engagement in the learning process.

2.6.Research Questions and Hypotheses

To ensure a rigorous alignment between the theoretical foundations of this inquiry and its empirical investigation, the following research questions are formulated:

1. How do teachers use the mother tongue as a pedagogical tool in their EFL language instruction?
2. In what ways does the use of the mother tongue relate to students' engagement in EFL classrooms?
3. How can teachers identify and minimize excessive mother tongue use in EFL classrooms?

Linked directly to the questions above, the following hypotheses are put forward:

1. Teachers' use the mother tongue in their classrooms to clarify concepts, build rapport, and provide instructions in order to save time and avoid misunderstandings.
2. The use of the mother tongue facilitates students' comprehension of lessons and tasks, which enhances their engagement in the learning process by paying more attention to the lesson, asking questions or responding to the teacher.
3. Teachers can monitor the impact of mother tongue use by observing students' classroom behaviour; increased reliance on the mother tongue and reduced engagement in English indicate the need to regulate its use and encourage greater use of the English language.

2.7. Research Design

Research design is defined by Mishra and Alok (2011) as the systematic and logical arrangement of all research components that must be included in a study. It encompasses a comprehensive description of the instruments and protocols used in the process of gathering, measuring, and analyzing data.(ibid).

In fact, it should be noted that there are different types of research design, they include descriptive, case study, experimental, and exploratory research. Each of these types is used differently based on the aim of each study and the desired outcomes that the researchers seek to achieve. The two most frequently used designs are the experimental and exploratory research. The first one is one of the most basic research designs in the history of research, it is based on the concept of testing a phenomenon in effect of environmental changes, also called treatments, in order to draw conclusive results that could be generalized as facts (Roos & Morrison, 2003). Exploratory research on the other hand, is defined as the process of looking into and learning about an unfamiliar area in order to create broad knowledge and provide background information about a specific subject or object (Stebbins, 2001). Therefore, the purpose of exploratory research is to study a research subject that has not been thoroughly studied before and has a limited body of literature to provide foundational knowledge upon which future researchers might base their studies.

In terms of descriptive research, this design is defined by Manjunatha (2019) as an effort to ascertain, characterize, or identify the nature of a phenomenon to answer the question of “how?”, thus, it seeks to shed light on contemporary concerns or challenges by using a data collection methodology that allows them to provide a more thorough description of the situation than would have been feasible without using this technique. Stated differently, this design is based on the thorough analysis of a phenomenon’s nature or a population’s behaviors to provide detailed information about existing conditions without any manipulations of variables or environmental adjustments.

The present study employs both descriptive and exploratory design because they both enable the researcher to obtain in-depth comprehension of the use of the mother tongue in the

EFL classroom and its impact on learners' engagement, one by examining the phenomenon itself, while the other by exploring attitudes and perceptions based on real life experiences. Hence, the present study employs a descriptive research design with an exploratory nature to meet its research objectives.

2.8. Research Approach

Research approach, is the second element of methodology that determines the methods and specific tools used to address a research question. These methods may include participant observation, questionnaires, surveys, and historical record analysis, among other things (Pediaa, 2015). In general, research methods are classified into three types: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Akhtar, 2016) .

According to Akhtar (2016), the quantitative approach is recognized for being exact and accurate and it is supported by statistical data and figures. It is often used when the study aims at emphasizing quantity rather than quality. The qualitative on the other hand, is concerned with the quality of the data collected rather than the quantity, it involves the description of a phenomenon taking into consideration participants' insights and perceptions as the main source of data.

Moreover, the third type is called the mixed-methods approach that is used when a study is targeting both accuracy and comprehension at the same time. This approach involves the process of combining or integrating data collection procedures from both qualitative and quantitative methods into a single study for the aim of having the benefits of both research methods and maximizing their outcomes (El-Hafsa, 2019). As a result, the present study uses the mixed-methods approach for the aim of collecting accurate and elaborated data from the participants concerning their perceptions towards the use of the mother tongue in the EFL

classroom and its impact on learners' engagement. This approach is seen appropriate for achieving the study's aims and gaining a deep comprehension of the research topic in a systematic and accurate way.

2.9. Population of the Study

The population of the study is another integral element of the research methodology. According to Hossan et al, (2023), This phrase describes the group of people or things that the study is focusing on; they could be people, organizations, groups, or other entities. Moreover, the final findings of the study are generally generalized to this group after concluding the study.

The population targeted by the present study is first-year students and teachers at El-Kabir Abdelkader middle school, which is used as a case study. This population is selected because students are at an academic level where they need to use Arabic due to the lack of language proficiency in English since it is their first year in middle school education. Thus, the selection of this level is prompted by the desire to examine students' use of this linguistic technique to navigate the challenges of studying English and teachers' reaction to the use of the mother tongue in their classrooms.

2.10. Sample and Sampling Technique

The term sample of the study is closely related to the population of research. Tarsi and Tuff (2012) define the study sample as a subset of the population that shares the same features and characteristics. The population is often too large to include every individual in a research and gather all of their data, so, researchers turn to selecting a smaller group of people to comprise the study's sample. After the study is concluded, the findings are generalized on the entire population as mentioned before, since they share the same characteristics.

(Showkat & Parveen, 2017). identify two main types of sampling techniques that are probability and non probability sampling. The first type is based on randomization where each member of the population has an equal chance to be part of the sample selected. The second type on the other hand is based mostly on convenience and the selection of participants is based on pre-determined criteria. In the case of the present study, non-probability sampling, particularly, convenience sampling is selected since it provides access to cooperative and available participants. Consequently, fifty students and two teachers formed the sample of the study based on their accessibility and willingness to take part in this research. The current study targeted students and teachers who are available to answer the questionnaire and participate in the interview and classroom observation within the selected institution based on their learning and teaching schedules.

2.11. Data Collection

The data collection process is the phase in which the researchers gather information from the selected sample using different research tools and instruments. According to Pandey and Pandey (2015), these tools are defined as the instruments that the researchers use to collect, the information provided by the participants of the study. In fact, there are different tools that are used in research to fulfill this purpose, each one is used based on the type of data that are to be collected and the aim of each data collection phase.

In the present study, a questionnaire, an interview and classroom observation are used to collect data on participants' perceptions of the use of the mother tongue in the EFL learning process and its impact on students' engagement. The use of these tools allows data triangulation by combining quantitative and qualitative methods, which provides a deeper understanding of the research problem and enhances the credibility of the findings.

2.11.1. Students' Questionnaire

According to Hussain (2022), a questionnaire is a collection of standard questions arranged logically to collect information from respondents. This tool is selected for its statistical advantages, efficiency and ability to collect a large data base in a short period of time.

2.11.1.1. Description of Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire is the quantitative research instrument used in this study to collect data from the students. It is adapted from the study of Jeyaraja et al. (2023), which examines the effects of mother tongue interference among ESL learners' speaking skills. Some questions (4-5-8-11) were taken from this model, while the majority were self-developed in order to meet the objectives of the current study. The questionnaire is divided into three main sections, with twenty questions (See Appendix A).

The first section aims at collecting background information from the participants, including their gender, their mother tongue, and their level of English. The second section aims at examining students' perceptions of the use of mother tongue in language learning classrooms and it contains eight questions. The third section on the other hand, examines the impact of mother tongue use on students' engagement. The section includes eight questions.

2.11.1.2. Administration of Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered to the four classrooms of first-year at El-Kabir Abdelkader middle school. This process took place over four consecutive school days, starting from Monday, November 3rd, 2025 until Thursday, November 6th, 2025. The number of the participants in each class was relatively small, between 12 and 19, which made it feasible for the researchers to assist pupils understand the questions and formulate their responses.

2.11.2. Teachers' Interview

The interview is defined by McLeod (2024) as a data collection method that is based on researchers speaking with participants face-to-face to learn about their ideas, experiences, and practices. The researcher poses open-ended or structured questions to elicit answers that may shed light on a variety of psychological issues by enabling in-depth discussion between the interviewer and the interviewee. Therefore, this tool enables researchers to have deep conversations with the participants that help them gain a profound comprehension of their perspectives, attitudes and ideas based on real life experiences.

2.11.2.1. Description of Teachers' Interview

The semi structured interview is the qualitative research instrument used in this study to collect data from the teachers. It is adapted from the study of Saad (2019), who investigated the effect of mother language use on EFL students' speaking abilities at Biskra university. Some questions were taken from this model (4-6-8-10), while the majority were self-developed in order to meet the objectives of the current study. The interview contains eleven questions, all of which are open-ended questions to gain an in-depth comprehension of teachers' responses (See Appendix B).

- **Questions 1:** it aims at exploring participants' academic qualification.
- **Questions 2:** it aims at exploring participants' experience in teaching English.
- **Questions 3:** it aims at examining participants' attitudes towards allowing their students to use their mother tongue in their EFL classroom.
- **Questions 4:** it aims at identifying participants' perceptions towards the situations that need the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom.

- **Questions 5:** it aims at exploring participants' perceptions towards the factors that influence students' engagement in their classroom?
- **Questions 6:** it aims at examining participants' perceptions towards the influence of the use of the mother tongue on students' comprehension.
- **Questions 7:** it aims at exploring participants' perceptions towards the influence of the use of the mother tongue on students' participation in class.
- **Questions 8:** it aims at identifying the benefits of the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom.
- **Questions 9:** it aims at identifying the drawbacks of the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom.
- **Questions 10:** it aims at identifying participants' perceptions of whether the benefits of the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom could outweigh the drawbacks.
- **Questions 11:** it aims at exploring further suggestions and recommendations from the participants.

2.11.2.2. Conducting Teachers' Interview

The interview was conducted with the two teachers at El-Kabir Abdelkader middle school on Thursday, November 6th, 2025. The first interview was conducted from 16:00 pm till 16:30 pm, and the second interview was conducted from 16:30 pm till 17:00 pm. Both interviews followed the standard procedures; with one of the researchers asking the questions, and the second recording the answers, after taking the participants' consent.

2.11.3. Classroom Observation

The classroom observation, according to Hora and Ferrare (2013), is defined as a direct data collection tool that enables the researcher to closely examine classroom teaching practices

in real life contexts for the aim of analyzing instructors' teaching methods and students' interaction and engagement in the learning process. This tool enables the collection of feasible and reliable data, as it allows the researcher to record actual behaviours inside the classroom by taking notes, pictures, videos and other forms of documentation.

2.11.3.1. Description of the Classroom Observation

The classroom observation is based on a checklist that is designed to examine the impact of mother tongue use on students' engagement in real life situations. This tool is adapted from the study of Cassar and Jang (2010), which investigates the effects of a game-based approach in teaching word recognition spelling to students with reading disabilities and attention deficits. Only few statements are taken from this model (three first questions from the section of students' engagement in class, and question 3 in the section of students' comprehension in class) because they described students' engagement and comprehension of the material when games are used. The adapted statements aims to highlight students' engagement and comprehension of the material when the mother tongue is used by the teacher in the EFL classroom, since it is the topic of the present study. The rest of the statements are self-developed to meet the objectives of the present study.

The checklist is divided into two main sections, the first section contains the main information about each observation (See Appendix C). The information includes the number of the observation session, the teacher observed, students' number, date and time of the observation, class and subject, and title of the lesson. All these details document the background of the classroom observation conducted and ensure an accurate organization of the collected data. Moreover, they enhance the reliability and credibility of the collected data.

The second section of the checklist consists of four main categories, each containing items to observe during the teaching sessions. These categories include students' and teachers' use of the mother tongue, students' engagement, students' comprehension of the material, and teachers' monitoring of the use of the mother tongue in the classroom.

2.11.3.2. Conducting the Classroom Observation

Eight (08) classroom observations sessions were conducted in El-Kabir Abdelkader Middle School. Four classes were observed, two sessions were devoted to each class to ensure the consistency of the collected data and obtain in-depth understanding of teachers' practices and learners' engagement.

- **First session** : it was conducted with First year pupils at 1M4 classroom on Monday 10th, November, 2025 from 13:00 pm until 14:30 pm. The lesson covered in this session is entitled “My school like, School activities”, and the number of pupils in attendance was 12 learners.
- **Second session**: it was conducted with First year pupils at 1M1 classroom on Monday 10th, November, 2025 from 14:30 pm until 16:00 pm. The lesson covered in this session is entitled “Clothes and Appearance”, and the number of pupils in attendance was 12 learners.
- **Third session** : it was conducted with First year pupils at 1M2 classroom on Wednesday 12th, November, 2025 from 13:00 pm until 14:30 pm. The lesson covered in this session is entitled “Possessive Adjectives”, and the number of pupils in attendance was 12 learners.
- **Fourth session** : it was conducted with First year pupils at 1M3 classroom on Thursday 13th, November, 2025 from 08:30 am until 10:00 am. The lesson covered in this session is entitled “Hobbies”, and the number of pupils in attendance was 14 learners.

- **Fifth session** : it was conducted with First year pupils at 1M4 classroom on Monday 17th, November, 2025 from 13:00 pm until 14:30 pm. The lesson covered in this session was the “The Verb to be, am/is/are”, and the number of pupils in attendance was 12 learners.
- **Sixth session**: it was conducted with First year pupils at 1M1 classroom on Monday 17th, November, 2025 from 14:30 pm until 16:00 pm. The lesson covered in this session was the “People/Countries and Nationalities”, and the number of pupils in attendance was 12 learners.
- **Seventh session** : it was conducted with First year pupils at 1M2 classroom on Wednesday 19th, November, 2025 from 13:00 pm until 14:30 pm. The lesson covered in this session was entitled “My Home and Family”, and the number of pupils in attendance was 12 learners.
- **Eighth session** : it was conducted with First year pupils at 1M3 classroom on Wednesday 20th, November, 2025 from 08:30 am until 10:00 am. The lesson covered in this session was the “Simple Present Tense”, and the number of pupils in attendance was 19 learners.

2.12. Data Analysis

The final stage of the research procedure encompasses the process of analyzing and interpreting the data collected from the participants to reach the final conclusion. According to Ibrahim (2015), data analysis is the process of carrying out specific calculations and assessments to draw relevant information from the data gathered. In order to perform this task, different tools and instruments could be used. The present study employed both SPSS and thematic analysis to complete this process. The SPSS, specifically descriptive frequencies, is used to analyze the data collected through the questionnaire in a systematic way, whereas the thematic analysis, with its six-steps framework, is used to interpret the data collected through the interview, as for the

classroom observation data were analyzed using a qualitative approach with descriptive frequencies.

2.13. Ethical Considerations

In order to preserve the ethical standards of the present study, a number of procedures were followed. First, the selected middle school was approached with an official authorization from the administration of the University of Djillali Liabes to conduct the research in a professional manner. The permission was obtained from the department of the researchers' university, detailing the aim of the study and its procedures. Moreover, participants, whether teachers or students, were informed that their participation was voluntary. Thus, they could withdraw at any time without any kind of repercussions. Their consent was also obtained before starting the data collection process, after ensuring them that any information they offered would be used for the sake of research only. Therefore, confidentiality is highly emphasized in this research, with no personal data being revealed or exposed.

2.14. Limitations of the Study

One of the main limitations of the present study is limited number of teachers who could offer valuable and diverse perspectives into the use of the mother tongue in their EFL classrooms and its impact on students' engagement. Only two teachers participated in the study, which may be considered as a factor that could reduce the generalizability of the findings.

Another limitation is students' limited English proficiency, which was considered as a challenge during the data collection process, since the questionnaire was originally designed in English. Consequently, the questionnaire was translated into Arabic (See Appendix D), in order to facilitate students' comprehension of the questions and enable them to provide answers.

There is also one factor that hindered the data collection process at the beginning of the study, which involves the headmaster's lack of cooperation. When first approached with the aim of the study, the headmaster showed a clear reluctance towards the aspect of examining the use of the mother tongue by the EFL teachers in his school, reflecting a rigid attitude towards this linguistic approach since he did not want it to be known that EFL teachers in his school use Arabic in their English teaching classrooms. This reaction may suggest a preference for the English-only approach in certain institutional contexts. This limitation caused a slight delay in having access to the participants of the study and starting the data collection process.

2.15. Conclusion

The present chapter provided a detailed description of the practical aspects of the study. It first summarized the linguistic situation in Algeria, both within the social and educational context. Then, it demonstrated the practical procedures in choosing the research design, method and population. In summary, the study followed a descriptive research design with an exploratory nature, using a mixed-methods approach for in-depth comprehension of the research topic. The data collection tools, which included a questionnaire, interview and classroom observation, were selected with careful consideration of the role of each one in gathering specific type of data that contributes to a more comprehensive framework of analysis of the research problem. The Interpretation of the data collected is presented through the following chapter, entitled data analysis and interpretation. This methodological framework was adopted to ensure the reliability and validity of the research findings, as well as to provide a comprehensive and systematic investigation of the research problem.

Chapter Three:

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Chapter Three: Data Analysis and Interpretation

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3.1. Introduction

The present chapter provides a systematic analysis and interpretation of the data collected through the research instruments, namely the questionnaire, interview, and classroom observation. It summarizes the main findings aiming to address the questions guiding this research. It focuses on examining patterns, relationships, and emerging themes related to the use of the mother tongue in EFL classrooms and its impact on students' engagement. The chapter also integrates quantitative and qualitative findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. This chapter also highlights the limitations faced in the present study and accordingly provides suggestions for future research.

3.2. Analysis and Interpretation of the Questionnaire

The first tool to be analyzed is the questionnaire. The data collected from this tool are analyzed using SPSS IBM 20 version. The results are presented in the form of frequencies and percentages.

3.2.1. Background Information

This section gathers general information about the sample in order to provide a clearer profile of the participants. It includes questions related to gender, mother tongue, and self-assessed level of English proficiency

Q1: Gender

In terms of gender, the data indicate a relatively balanced sample as illustrated in the table below.

Table 3.1. *Participants' Gender*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Female	27	54.0

	Male	23	46.0
	Total	50	100.0

The table shows a slight predominance of female participants with a percentage of 54% compared to 46% for male participants. This balance reduces the probability of gender bias that may influence the findings.

Q2: What is your mother tongue?

Regarding the second question, all participants; with a percentage of (100%), reported Daridja as their mother tongue. See table 3.2.

Table 3.2. *Participants' Mother Tongue*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Daridja	50	100.0
	Tamazight	0	0.0
	Others	0	0.0
	Total	50	100.0

None of the participants selected the option “others”. This implies that the sample selected for the study is homogeneous sharing a common linguistic background. This could serve the research objectives since all participants have the same mother tongue to provide consistent information and insights.

Q3: How do you consider your level of English?

In terms of English proficiency, the data collected revealed that a large number of participants have an “Average” or a “Good” level of English, with a percentage of (28%) and (24%) respectively. A smaller number of participants expressed having an “Above average” level with a percentage of 20%, followed by nine (18%) participants who indicated that their

level in English is “Poor”. Only five (10%) participants declared that they have an “Excellent” English level. The results are summarized in table 3.3

Table 3.3. *Participants’ Level of English*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Poor	9	18.0
	Average	14	28.0
	Above average	10	20.0
	Good	12	24.0
	Excellent	5	10.0
	Total	50	100.0

The findings of this question show that the participants’ overall level of English proficiency is not high enough to answer the questions effectively. Many of them have a poor or average level, which may hinder the data collection process or lead to inaccurate information. Therefore, these results justify translating the questionnaire into Arabic to overcome this limitation and improve the reliability and credibility of the research.

3.2.2. Use of Mother Tongue in Language Learning Classrooms

This section is devoted to investigating the role of the mother tongue in language learning classrooms, based on the participants’ responses to the questionnaire. It includes 16 questions that are analyzed as follows.

Q4. Do you use any language other than English in English class?

This question aims at exploring whether languages other than English, are used in the EFL classroom. The data summarized in table 3.4, revealed that all participants, with no exception reported using another language alongside English.

Table 3.4. *Participants' Use of Other Languages in their English Class*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	50	100.0
	No	0	0.0
Total		50	100.0

This result confirms the widespread use of code switching in the language learning process and suggests a significant reliance and use of the mother tongue among this sample. As a follow up question, the participants were asked to identify the languages they use in class alongside English, in case they answered positively to the previous question.

The collected data revealed that the majority of participants use Daridja in their EFL classroom. Some other participants added that they use both Daridja and MSA interchangeably in their language learning classroom, indicating the use of both variations of Arabic language. Few other participants added that they use Daridja, French and MSA as well, reflecting their code-switching between both variations of Arabic language and French as well. These results show that students mostly rely on the use of the mother tongue to facilitate their English learning process more than any other language, such as French. Moreover, it also appears that Daridja is not the only variation of Arabic used in the EFL classroom, MSA is also used by students.

Q4.1. If yes, which one?

The data collected through this open-ended question indicates that thirty participants use Daridja in their EFL classroom, with a percentage of (60%) accounting for their response. Fifteen other participants, with a percentage of (30%), added that they use both Daridja and MSA interchangeably in their language learning classroom, indicating the use of both variations of Arabic language. The remaining five participants (10%) added that they use Daridja, French

and MSA as well, reflecting their code-switching between both variations of Arabic language and French as well. These results show that students mostly rely on the use of the mother tongue to facilitate their English learning process. Moreover, it also appears that Darija is not the only variation of Arabic used in the EFL classroom, MSA is also used by students.

Q5. How often do you use your mother tongue in your English learning classroom?

This question explores the frequency with which participants use their mother tongue in the EFL classroom. The statistics show that most participants selected “Sometimes”, “Often” or “Always” as their response. The percentages presented for their answers range from (66%) to (14%) respectively, with the last percentage representing the latter two options equally. In contrast, only a few participants, (three students), expressed that they “Rarely” use their mother tongue in their language classroom, with a percentage of (6%). The results are summarized through table 3.7.

Table 3.5. *Participants’ Frequency in Using Their Mother Tongue in the EFL Classroom*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Always	7	14.0
	Often	7	14.0
	Sometimes	33	66.0
	Rarely	3	6.0
	Total	50	100.0

These findings further support the widespread use of mother tongue in the EFL classroom by Algerian students, suggesting that it plays an important role in their English learning process.

Q6. How do you feel when you use your mother tongue in English learning process?

This question examines participants' feelings when using their mother tongue in the EFL classroom. (72%) of the participants chose "Comfortable", (22%) chose "Very comfortable", (6%) of participants chose "Neutral" as their answer. The responses are illustrated in table 3.6.

Table 3.6. *Participants' Feelings when Using Their Mother Tongue in their English Learning Process*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very comfortable:	11	22.0
	Comfortable	36	72.0
	Neutral	3	6.0
	Total	50	100.0

This result suggests that most participants have positive attitudes towards the use of their mother tongue in their EFL classrooms, since this learning strategy makes them feel comfortable in their learning process.

Q7. Why?

The data collected through this question provides justifications for participants' answers on the previous question. These justifications explain participants' motives behind either using or avoiding the mother tongue in the EFL classroom.

- **The Use of the Mother Tongue in Facilitating Comprehension:** As demonstrated through the previous question, (90%) of participants use their mother tongue in their EFL classroom, both Daridja and MSA. (70%) justified that this use helps them understand the lesson better, and clarify the meaning of difficult vocabulary items as well. This shows that using the mother

tongue in the EFL learning process makes students understand English content more clearly and grasp the information delivered through English lesson more effectively.

- **The Use of the Mother Tongue for Increasing Participation:** (20%) of participants also expressed that using the mother tongue in their EFL classroom helps them provide more examples in activities and tasks. Thus, it helps them participate more in their classroom interactions. This suggests that the use of the mother tongue can enhance learners' engagement in the EFL classroom.

- **The Use of the Mother Tongue for Enhancing Self-Confidence and Reducing Stress:** There (10%) expressed that using the mother tongue makes them feel more comfortable in class, since they are more familiar with it than with English. It also creates a sense of belonging with their teacher and classmates. These findings suggest that using the mother tongue also contributes to reducing students' affective filter, through enhancing their self-confidence and motivation in class, as well as reducing their stress levels.

The overall findings suggest that only students who felt comfortable using the mother tongue in their EFL classroom provided justifications for their choice. However, students who have reservations that make them avoid the use of this pedagogical strategy in their EFL classroom did not provide any justifications.

Q8. What is your teachers' attitude towards your use of the mother tongue in English class?

This question examines teachers' attitudes towards the use of the mother tongue in EFL classrooms. (34%) of participants declared that their teachers "prohibit the use of the mother tongue in class and insists on students' using only English". (28%) revealed that their teachers "only allow the use of the mother tongue in specific situations", while (20%) reported that their teachers "encourage the use of the mother tongue in the classroom to facilitate students'

comprehension”. In addition, (18%) stated that they “do not have a clear policy about using the mother tongue in class”. The results are summarized in table 3.7.

Table 3.7. Teachers’ Attitudes towards Using Their Mother Tongue in English Class

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	They encourage the use of the mother tongue in the classroom to facilitate our comprehension	10	20.0
	They prohibit the use of the mother tongue in class and insists on students’ using only English	17	34.0
	They do not have a clear policy about using the mother tongue in class	9	18.0
	They only allow the use of the mother tongue in specific situations	14	28.0
	Total	50	100.0

The findings show that the largest percentage of teachers encourage the use of the mother tongue in their EFL classrooms. However, this use is limited to situational contexts and specific purposes that require the integration of learners’ mother tongue. These results align with their actual classroom practices that are reflected through their students’ responses, which show that they frequently use their mother tongue in class.

Q9. Do you believe that using your mother tongue in your English classroom has a negative or a positive impact on your English learning process?

This question explores the impact of using the mother tongue on students' language learning process. (96%) of the participants reported that "Using the mother tongue in English classroom has a positive impact on their language learning process". They are followed by a small percentage of (2%) that believe that "Using the mother tongue in English classroom has a negative impact on their language learning process", while (2%) showed hesitation towards this statement, choosing "I am not sure" as an answer.

Table 3.8. *The Impact of Using the Mother Tongue on Students' Language Learning Process*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Using the mother tongue in English classroom has a negative impact on my language learning process	1	2.0
	Using the mother tongue in English classroom has a positive impact on my language learning process	48	96.0
	I am not sure	1	2.0
	Total	50	100.0

These findings suggest that most students' recognize the benefits of using the mother tongue in their language learning based on their learning experiences, which may imply the importance of adopting a more flexible approach rather than strictly prohibiting its use in the EFL classroom

Q10. Explain your answer, please.

The data collected from this open-ended question reveals participants' justifications for how the use of their mother tongue affects their language learning process. The results suggest

that the use of the mother tongue influences the following aspects of the EFL learning process within this sample:

- **Reducing Stress and Increasing Engagement:** (25%) of participants expressed that using their mother tongue in the EFL classroom makes them feel less shy and less hesitant towards participating in classroom activities. One of the most common answers was “*it helps me relax and participate more*”. Another common answer reported by the participants was that they use their mother tongue in asking or answering questions when they do not know how to express themselves clearly or cannot pronounce English words properly. Thus, the use of the mother tongue is implied to cover for students’ limited vocabulary in the English learning process.

- **Facilitating Language Learning and Comprehension:** (65%) of the participants expressed that using the mother tongue facilitates their comprehension of English lessons and content. One of the dominant answers was “*I understand the lesson better*”. Therefore, it could be stated that one of the significant benefits of using the mother tongue in the EFL classroom is facilitating students’ comprehension of English content, and consequently, their engagement.

- **Developing Vocabulary Comprehension and Acquisition:** (8%) of the participants indicated that vocabulary comprehension and acquisition is closely associated with the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom. One of their answers was “*When the teacher uses the MT it helps me understand and memorize vocabulary better and faster*”. Thus, using the mother tongue within this sample is effective in facilitating students’ comprehension of vocabulary items, which in turn, enhances their comprehension of English lessons and content.

- **Relating L1 and L2 Language Rules:** Another justification that was provided by (2%) participants was that using the mother tongue contributes to facilitating students’ comprehension of English rules and language structure. Their answer was “*When the teacher uses our MT, I can*

compare it to English and that helps me remember the rules". This answer supports the concept of positive language transfer, which illustrates how students can understand the structure of the TL by relating the newly acquired information to their already existing knowledge of the mother tongue and its structure.

Regarding the (2%) participants who expressed that using the mother tongue has a negative impact on EFL students' learning process, their justification was based on the limited exposure and practice of their English language skills. One of their answers was "*it stops me from improving my English because I get used to easy explanations*". From this perspective, the use of the mother tongue is regarded as a hindrance and an obstacle for students' development of their English language skills. Another participant, who opposed the use of the mother tongue, expressed a preference for restricting its use to situations of extreme need. This includes cases when the lesson is too challenging for students' intellectual capacity, which requires the use of a familiar language (the mother tongue) to facilitate comprehension. These results show that the English language-only approach is not only adopted by teachers, but it is also preferred by a small number of students.

Q11. Do you ever use your mother tongue's grammatical structure or vocabulary in your English learning process?

This question examines the use of their mother tongue's grammatical structure or vocabulary in their English language learning. The statistics provided indicate that (60%) of participants do not use this form of language transfer. However, (40%) declared that they use this form of language transfer in their language learning process.

Table 3.9. *Participants' Use of their Mother Tongue's Grammatical Structure or Vocabulary in English Learning*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	20	40.0
	No	30	60.0
	Total	50	100.0

This aspect was both confirmed in literature and in the present study through the previous question (Q10), where a number of students stated that one of the positive aspects of the use of the mother tongue in their EFL classroom is relating the language structure and vocabulary items of the L2 to their L1 to facilitate their comprehension and retention.

3.2.3. Impact of Mother Tongue Use on Students' Engagement

This section is dedicated to examining the impact of mother tongue use on learners' engagement, based on participants' responses. It includes nine questions that are analyzed as follows:

Q12. Do you enjoy learning English?

This question investigates participants' attitudes towards learning English. (92%) of participants expressed that they enjoy learning English. Only one participant (2%) stated that he does not enjoy learning English. Furthermore, three participants (6%), chose "Not sure", which may reflect some challenges that these participants face in the EFL class that prevent them from fully enjoying the learning experience compared to their classmates.

Table 3.10. *Participants' Attitudes towards Learning English*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	46	92.0
	No	1	2.0

	Not sure	3	6.0
	Total	50	100.0

These findings suggest that the majority of participants like learning English, which may reflect positive perspectives towards students' engagement, since the latter is closely related to students' motivation and their positive attitudes towards the language learning process. The results also suggest that participant's limited engagement in the language learning process may be attributed to their negative attitudes towards the language learning process, as learners are less likely to engage in activities that they do not enjoy. Furthermore, this lack of enjoyment may be attributed to several factors, such as personal issues, stress and anxiety, difficulties in learning or the classroom-related challenges among others.

Q13. How would you describe your engagement in your English learning classes?

This question explores participants' engagement in the English learning classes. (64%) of participants showed to be “moderately engaged in the learning process”, followed by (24%) who indicated that they “are highly engaged in the learning process”. Only (8%) expressed that they “rarely engaged in the learning process”, while (4%) stated that they are “never engaged in classroom learning activities”.

Table 3.11. *Participants' Engagement in their English Learning Classes*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	I am highly engaged in the learning process	12	24.0
	I am moderately engaged in the learning process	32	64.0
	I am rarely engaged in the learning process	4	8.0
	I never engage in classroom learning	2	4.0

	activities		
	Total	50	100.0

These findings align with the previous results, which represents students' high engagement in the EFL classroom, indicating that motivation or enjoyment, are closely related to students' engagement. Thus, the more enjoyment they feel in the learning process, the more they are engaged in it.

Q14. Do you feel more engaged in the lesson when the teacher uses your mother tongue in class?

The obtained results so far from the students' questionnaire indicate their high engagement in the EFL learning process. The present question explores their engagement in relation to their teacher's use of the mother tongue in their EFL classroom. The statistics provided show that most participants are either "Very engaged" or "Moderately engaged" in the lesson when the teacher uses the mother tongue in class, with a percentage of (66%) and (20%) respectively. Only a few participants reported being "Slightly engaged" (14%). The results are summarized in table 3.12.

Table 3.12. *Participants' Engagement in the Learning Process When Teachers Use their Mother Tongue*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Slightly engaged	7	14.0
	Moderately engaged	10	20.0
	Very engaged	33	66.0
	Total	50	100.0

These findings suggest a positive impact of the use of the mother tongue on students' engagement in the EFL classroom. They also challenge the English language-only use approach,

which is adopted by some teachers and few students, as the data showed. These results therefore, indicate that there should be more flexibility towards the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom given the benefits it may offer for both students and teachers.

Q15. Does the use of the mother tongue by your teacher and classmates facilitate your comprehension of English lessons?

This question examines participants' perceptions towards the use of the mother tongue by their teacher and its impact on their comprehension of English lessons. (88%) of participants believe that using the mother tongue by their teacher and classmates "Very much facilitates" their comprehension of English lessons. Additionally, an equal percentage of participants (6%) chose "Moderately facilitates" and "Slightly facilitates", showing that only few participants do not fully acknowledge the benefit of the mother tongue in facilitating their comprehension.

Table 3.13. *Impact of Mother Tongue Use on Students' Comprehension of English Lessons*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Slightly facilitates	3	6.0
	Moderately facilitates	3	6.0
	Very much facilitates	44	88.0
	Total	50	100.0

The results of this question align with the previous findings from questions 7 and 10, further supporting the positive role of the mother tongue in enhancing students' comprehension.

Q16. Do you pay more attention to the lecture in class when the teacher is using your mother tongue?

This question aims to investigate participants' level of attention in class when the mother tongue is used in their classroom. The statistics reveal that (90%) of participants pay

“Extremely” more attention to the lecture in class when the teacher is using their mother tongue. There are only few participants who chose “Moderately” or “Slightly” as their level of attention in class when the mother tongue is used, with a percentage of (6%) and (4%) respectively. The results are presented in table 3.14.

Table 3.14. *Participants’ Attention in Class When the Mother Tongue Is Used*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Slightly	2	4.0
	Moderately	3	6.0
	Extremely	45	90.0
	Total	50	100.0

These results reflect the positive role of using the mother tongue in enhancing students’ attention in class. Consequently, with the enhancement of their attention, their comprehension is also increased in addition to their engagement and academic performance as well.

Q17. Do you ask question in your mother tongue when you face difficulties in understanding the content of the lesson?

This question explores participants’ use of the mother tongue to ask questions in their EFL classroom. (84%) of participants stated that they “Sometimes” use their mother tongue to ask questions when they face difficulties in understanding the content of the lesson. Only (8%) and (6%) of participants chose “Often” or “Always” respectively, reflecting their excessive use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom. In addition, one participant, (2%), expressed that he “Rarely” use the mother tongue when facing comprehension difficulties.

Table 3.15. *Participants’ Uses of the Mother Tongue in their Class to Ask Questions*

	Frequency	Percent
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Valid	Always	3	6.0
	Often	4	8.0
	Sometimes	42	84.0
	Rarely	1	2.0
	Total	50	100.0

These results show most participants students use their mother tongue moderately, without overusing it in a way that could negatively affect their English learning.

Q18. When your teachers use the mother tongue, does that make you think more deeply about your English learning process?

This question demonstrates how teachers' use of the mother tongue impact students' thinking about their English learning process based on students' perspectives. (92%) of participants indicated that they think "Extremely" more deeply, (4%) answered "Moderately", (2%) responded "Slightly", while another (2%) of participants chose "Not At All

Table 3.16. *Impact of Teachers' Use of Mother Tongue on Students' Thinking about their English Learning*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Not at all	1	2.0
	Slightly	1	2.0
	Moderately	2	4.0
	Extremely	46	92.0
	Total	50	100.0

These results reflect the positive impact of the use of the mother tongue by teachers in enhancing students' cognitive engagement, suggesting that its use promotes not only students' emotional and behavioral engagement but also their thinking about learning.

Q19. Do you connect what you learn in English to what you know in your mother tongue?

This question aims to explore the extent to which learners rely on their mother tongue to facilitate comprehension and establish connections between prior linguistic knowledge and newly acquired English language concepts. (50%) and (22%) selected “Sometimes” or “Often” respectively, while (12%) chose “Rarely”, (10%) selected “Never”, and (6%) chose “Always”.

Table 3.17. Connection between Stored Knowledge of the Mother Tongue and Newly English Acquired information

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Always	3	6.0
	Often	11	22.0
	Sometimes	25	50.0
	Rarely	6	12.0
	Never	5	10.0
	Total	50	100.0

These results support the previous findings, highlighting the role of the mother tongue in enhancing positive language transfer and supporting English language learning. They also further illustrate the role of the mother tongue in reinforcing English language learning for EFL students.

Q20. Do you support the use of the mother tongue in the English language classroom?

This question aims to uncover participants' attitudes towards the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom. (88%) of participants support the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom, while (12%) expressed their uncertainty towards this learning strategy, choosing "Not sure" as their answer.

Table 3.18. *Participants' Support of the Use of the Mother Tongue in the EFL Classroom*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	44	88.0
	Not sure	6	12.0
	Total	50	100.0

These results indicate that most students have positive attitudes towards the use of the mother tongue and acknowledge its positive impact on developing their English learning process by facilitating their comprehension and increasing their engagement.

3.3. Analysis and Interpretation of the Interview

The data collected through the interview is interpreted using thematic analysis. The main themes that emerged from the analysis are discussed in the following sections.

3.3.1. Background Information

The data collected through the two interviews conducted reveals that both participants have a Master's degree in their studies. This indicates that they have an adequate academic qualification that ensures their exposure to language teaching theories and different teaching practices in the EFL classroom. In addition, both participants expressed having two years of teaching experience, suggesting that they are quite familiar with classroom management, teaching practices and students' reaction to different teaching methods in the EFL classroom. This background provides a reliable basis for understanding their perceptions of the impact of

using the mother tongue in the EFL classroom on students' engagement, as their views are grounded in their teaching experience and classroom observations.

3.3.2. The Use of the Mother Tongue in the EFL Classroom

The data collected through the third and fourth questions, which aim at exploring teachers' policy towards the use of the mother tongue in their classrooms, revealed that both participants occasionally allow their students to use the mother tongue. The first participant expressed: *"Yes, I allow it but only when it really helps. Students use it occasionally, not all the time"*, while the second participant added: *"Yes, but rarely. I prefer English most of the time, but I allow the mother tongue when students struggle"*. These results show that despite their reluctance towards this approach, teachers still allow the use of the mother tongue in their classrooms to help students when they are facing challenges or difficulties in their language learning process.

In terms of the situations that require their use of the mother tongue, the first participant explained: *"I use it for explaining difficult instructions, correcting misunderstandings, and giving quick clarifications when students look confused"*. The second participant added that he uses it: *"Mainly for grammar explanations, difficult vocabulary, and when giving instructions for group work"*. These results show that both teachers use the mother tongue to clarify difficult concepts in English, to provide clear instructions, to correct students' errors and misunderstanding, and to explain difficult grammar rules or vocabulary items. These situations are highlighted as the main factors that require the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom. Therefore, the results of this question suggest that the use of the mother tongue is neither excessive nor random; instead, it is strategic and serves specific purposes.

3.3.3. Students' Engagement in the EFL Classroom

The third theme examined in the interview through the fifth question is students' engagement in the EFL classroom. The data collected shows that both participants agreed that there are certain factors that influence students' engagement in the EFL classroom. The first participant listed *"Interest in the activity, level of difficulty, classroom atmosphere, and whether the students understand the lesson clearly"* as the main factors that could have an impact on learners' level of engagement in the EFL classroom. The second participant added the following factors *"Clear instructions, simple explanations, fun activities, and when they feel confident participating. If they don't understand the task, they lose focus"*. These answers indicate that there are two different types of factors that influence students' engagement in the language learning process pedagogical factors, which includes classroom environment, teachers' activities and clear instructions, and their methods in delivering the lesson.

Additionally, there are psychological factors, such as students' interest in the lesson and its activity, their motivation and their level of comprehension. This means that when students understand the lesson, they become more easily engaged in the language learning process. Moreover, this category also includes students' self-confidence, and their focus and attention in class. These factors suggest that students who are more self-confident about their language proficiency are more likely to be engaged in the learning process than others. Attention and focus also contribute to enhancing students' engagement as they enable learners to process the lesson and understand the content delivered, which makes them more actively engaged in classroom discussions and activities.

3.3.4. Impact of the Mother Tongue on Students' Participation

The sixth and seventh questions in the interview explore the use of the mother tongue and its impact on students' comprehension and participation in the EFL classroom. The data reveals that both participants acknowledged the role of the mother tongue in facilitating their students' comprehension of English content and lessons. The first participant admitted *"It helps a lot with comprehension, especially for beginners. When they don't understand something in English, a quick explanation in their mother tongue saves time"*. This answer shows how the use of the mother tongue could be used by teachers as an effective pedagogical tool to ensure students' comprehension of lessons within the time frame allocated for each session. Therefore, they could avoid wasting time on explaining difficult concepts using English, by using students' mother tongue to facilitate their comprehension.

Furthermore, the second participant confirmed this notion, stating that the use of the mother tongue *"helps learners understand faster and prevents confusion, especially for weaker students"*. This answer confirms that using the mother tongue in the EFL classroom not only serves as a means to save time in explaining challenging concepts, but it also develops weak students' comprehension, contributing to creating a more supportive learning environment for all levels of learners in the classroom.

Regarding the impact of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom to enhance students' engagement, both participants expressed positive attitudes towards this aspect. The first participant reported that *"When students understand the lesson through some mother-tongue support, they participate more confidently. Without it, some stay silent"*. This answer implies that the use of the mother tongue enhances students' confidence in their language performance and

leads them to participate more frequently in classroom activities. Thus, the use of the mother tongue is positively connected with students' self-confidence, and engagement.

The second participant added that *"It increases participation because students feel less afraid of making mistakes. When they understand the task, they speak more"*. This answer supports the first one and further explains how the use of the mother tongue contributes to promoting students' self-confidence, and consequently increasing participation and engagement. It is suggested that with this familiar language, students are less anxious about making mistakes in front of their classmates and teacher through participation. Thus, they feel more confident to participate. In fact, research shows that stress and anxiety are one of the main factors that negatively affect students' engagement in class (Kralova, 2016), as it was shown in the literature review chapter. As a result, it could be deduced that the use of the mother tongue serves as a pedagogical tool that could be used to reduce students' stress and anxiety, enhance their self-confidence and promote their learning engagement.

3.3.5. The Benefits of the Use of the Mother Tongue in the EFL Classroom

The data collected through participants' answers from question eight reveals or shows that teachers perceive several advantages concerning the use of the mother tongue. The first participant reported that *"It reduces anxiety, makes explanations faster, and helps slow learners keep up with the class"*. Similarly, the second participant added that: *"It saves time, reduces stress, and supports classroom management. It also helps learners build connections between English and what they already know"*. There are other benefits that include increasing students' self-confidence, their participation, and reinforcing positive language transfer. Thus, the use of the mother tongue is acknowledged to create a more inclusive classroom environment that encourages participation, comprehension and effective learning.

3.3.6. The Drawbacks of the Use of the Mother Tongue in the EFL Classroom

The data collected through the ninth question in the interview reveal that both participants agree on one limitation of using the mother tongue in the EFL classroom. The first participant stated that: *“Students sometimes rely on it too much and avoid trying to speak in English”*. Similarly, the second participant answered that: *“Students may depend on it instead of trying to think in English. It can interrupt the English-learning environment if overused”*. This shows that teachers are consciously aware that the main drawback of using the mother tongue in the EFL classroom is its overuse that, which can reduce students’ opportunities to practice English. Therefore, it could be deduced that over reliance on the use of the mother tongue could prevent learners from engaging in meaningful and constructive communication activities in the classroom and hinder the development of their language proficiency.

In terms of balancing between the benefits and drawbacks, the first participant expressed that: *“both sides exist, but with controlled use, the benefits are more helpful for beginners”*. The second participant added: *“In my opinion, yes. If the teacher controls it properly, the benefits are stronger than the drawbacks”*. An interesting addition that the first participant provided is that the use of the mother tongue is beneficial for beginners in the EFL learning process. Thus, this linguistic learning approach is particularly recommended to be used with students at the beginning of their learning process, where they need a supportive medium to build a foundational understanding for English lessons, reduce their stress and anxiety in the foreign English language learning environment and enhance their confidence to be more actively engaged in the EFL classroom.

3.3.7. Participants' Suggestions and Recommendations

The suggestions provided by the two participants emphasize the need for controlled and monitored use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom to ensure its maximum benefits for students' language skills development. Both participants advised teachers to use the mother tongue, or allow its use by students, only when necessary to explain difficult concepts and facilitate comprehension. One of them also recommended that teachers should always lead students back to English use in the EFL classroom and reduce their reliance on their mother tongue.

3.4. Analysis and Interpretation of the Classroom Observation (s)

The analysis of the classroom observation is conducted using qualitative approach combined with descriptive frequencies. The results are presented as follows:

3.4.1. Students and Teachers' Use of the Mother Tongue in the EFL Classroom

The observations, conducted over eight sessions with two teachers, indicate that the frequency of using the mother tongue differed from one teacher to another and from one group of students to another. Based on the checklist data, the first teacher used the mother tongue 25 times in class, and the second teacher used it more than 19 times. This shows that both teachers in the observed classrooms frequently used the mother tongue to explain difficult concepts to students to facilitate their comprehension and enhance their vocabulary acquisition. It was also observed that teachers do not directly resort to using the mother tongue as their first option; they use English instead and in case students showed signs of lack of comprehension, they use the mother tongue as a supplementary teaching tool to explain what is difficult and incomprehensible to learners. In addition, the mother tongue was used for translating words that are not understood by

students to facilitate their comprehension of vocabulary items and reinforce their retention capacity. Teacher 1 used it for this purpose 19 times, while teachers 2 used it around 13 times.

Another observed use of the mother tongue is when teachers are giving instructions or trying to maintain discipline in the classroom. In this particular situation, the MSA is more frequently used than Darija, especially when giving instruction. Both teachers are observed to have a preference for MSA instead of Darija. This shows that teachers have a strategic and purposeful use for the mother tongue based on the situation where its use is required. Teachers may have a preference for MSA in giving instructions and inserting discipline because these two functions require more authority and formality than explaining concepts or difficult words. As a result, it could be deduced that both variations of the mother tongue are used in different situations, MSA in formal contexts and Darija in more flexible and casual student-teacher interaction in class.

3.4.2. Students' Engagement in Class

Regarding students' engagement in class, the most dominant observation recorded is that when the teacher uses English only in the classroom, students showed signs of boredom and frustration, which reduces their engagement in the learning process. Some of these signs included lack of participation, students' embarrassment when caught off guard by the teacher and their inability to follow along or answer the question because they either did not hear it or did not understand it. In contrast, when the teacher uses their mother tongue, students become more attentive to the lecture and more engaged in the language learning process. They show more participation in the lesson and better concentration that is reflected through ability to answer teachers' inquiries when asked. As a result of this pedagogical strategy used by the teachers, students were observed to frequently participate in classroom discussions, using the mother

tongue with their teacher and classmates, they were observed to show more concentration on the lesson. In addition to increased concentration and attention, students were observed to show more interest in the lesson when their mother tongue is used by their teacher. This could be attributed to their familiarity with the language that enhances their interest and motivation to follow the lesson when it is used. This was also witnessed in one of the classrooms, where students showed clear signs of enhanced motivation and self-confidence when they use their mother tongue in their speech in class. Some of these signs included more interest in the lesson through participating in classroom activities and discussion, and asking for clarifications when something is still incomprehensible. Thus, the use of the mother tongue appears to increase students' motivation and reduce their stress and anxiety, emphasizing the role of this linguistic technique in lowering students' affective filter, proposed by Krashen (1982), and contributing to promoting their language learning experiences and outcomes at the same time.

3.4.3. Students' Comprehension in Class

Students' comprehension is associated with their engagement in class. Students in all classrooms under observation were asking questions frequently and responding to teachers' inquiries more quickly when the mother tongue is used. Despite the use of the mother tongue by the teacher to facilitate their comprehension, students try to respond and engage in classroom discussions using English, showing their limited reliance on their mother tongue and their awareness of the need to switch into English in order to practice this language. This observation suggests that students, as well as teachers, use the mother tongue strategically, focusing on the use of this linguistic technique as a scaffolding means that supports their understanding and facilitates their English language learning as well. The classroom observation also shows that the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom enhances student-student and student-teacher

interaction. The use of this language to facilitate students' comprehension makes them more open to classroom discussion and interaction, since they feel more confident in their comprehension of the content and their ability to participate in tasks and discussions examining and reviewing this content.

3.4.4. Teachers' Monitoring of the Use of Mother Tongue in the Classroom

The data collected through the classroom observation revealed that both teachers involved exhibit a monitored and controlled use of the mother tongue in their classrooms. They frequently remind their students to switch back to English when the mother tongue is overly used. Thus, the mother tongue is only used in specific situations that demand the use of this language to facilitate students' comprehension and enhance their engagement. This practice reflects a high level of pedagogical awareness about the appropriate use of the mother tongue as teachers seek to maximize the benefits of this method and minimize its drawbacks. In one of the observed classrooms, students made a noticeable effort in using English only. However, when facing difficulties, they often asked their teachers for permission to use their mother tongue, suggesting that the use of the mother tongue is not arbitrary in EFL classrooms but controlled by instructors to ensure the pedagogical benefits of this method.

3.5. Discussion of the Main Findings

In summary, the majority of participants in the questionnaire declared that they have an "Average" or a "Good" level of English. This could explain their use of the mother tongue in their language classroom to support their deficiencies in English. In terms of attitudes towards this use, the majority of participants expressed their feelings of being comfortable when using their mother tongue in their English learning classroom, emphasizing the role of this method in facilitating their comprehension of English lessons, reinforcing positive language transfer,

developing their vocabulary comprehension and acquisition, increasing their participation in classroom activities, enhancing their self-confidence and reducing their stress and anxiety as well.

Regarding teachers' attitudes, the majority of participants declared that their teachers either prohibit the use of the mother tongue in class and insists on students' using only English, or only allow the use of the mother tongue in specific situations. Despite teachers' reservations towards the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom, most students believe that this method has a positive impact on their language learning process. Similarly, the findings of the interview revealed that teachers are consciously aware that the main drawback of using the mother tongue in the EFL classroom is its overuse that, which can reduce students' opportunities to practice English. These limitations make teachers cautious and only allow the use of the mother tongue in specific situations. The interview data showed that the use of the mother tongue is situational, teachers only use or allow its use based on specific purposes. They include clarifying difficult concepts in English, providing clear instructions, correcting students' errors and misunderstanding, and explaining difficult grammar rules or vocabulary items. These results align with previous research findings, such as Wen-Jian (1984), who recommended a moderate or a controlled use of the mother tongue to support students' understanding without reducing their exposure to the TL or their practicing of their language skills. This suggestion helps teachers maintain the situational use of the mother tongue in their classrooms and avoid its negative impact on students' language skills development in English. Furthermore, these findings also answer the first research question and third one as well, demonstrating how teachers can use the mother tongue as a pedagogical tool in their EFL language instruction, and how they can recognize and minimize harmful mother tongue use in EFL classrooms.

In terms of engagement, the majority of participants expressed their enjoyment in learning English, further demonstrating that they are very engaged” or moderately engaged in the lesson when the teacher uses their mother tongue in class, explaining that this method facilitates their comprehension of English lessons and enhances their levels of attention in class. They further added that the use of the mother tongue helps them think more deeply about their English learning process, by connecting what they learn in English to what they know in their mother tongue. The classroom observation further demonstrates that students show better understanding of the lesson when the mother tongue is integrated in the lecture, showing how explaining difficult concepts in class using the mother tongue by the teacher facilitates students’ comprehension. In addition, the interview data also showed that teachers acknowledge the role of the mother tongue in facilitating their students’ comprehension of English content and lessons, and enhancing their engagement in classroom activities. The use of the mother tongue makes students less afraid of making mistakes. These findings correspond with existing research findings that emphasize the role of using the mother tongue in facilitating students’ comprehension and increasing their engagement in the learning process (Isselnane, 2009; Kasap & Emamvirdi, 2023; Mouili, 2021). These results also answer the second research question, which examines the relation between the use of the mother tongue and students’ engagement.

In conclusion, both students and teachers showed their full support in using the mother tongue in the EFL classroom. Only few participants showed hesitance towards this method, fearing its negative impact on their English language skills development.

3.6. Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

The present study showed that both students and teachers have positive attitudes towards the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom, with some hesitation from the part of

teachers. The findings revealed that this method is effective in facilitating students' comprehension and increasing their engagement in the learning process. As a result, the following recommendations are provided:

Teachers are recommended to adapt a more flexible and balanced approach towards the use of the mother tongue in their EFL classrooms. As this study showed, this language use is inevitable. Therefore, they should be more open towards its use and limit their students' exposure to this language within purposeful and needed situations that require the use of the mother tongue to facilitate and support the EFL learning process.

Teachers are recommended to constantly observe and control their students' use of the mother tongue in their EFL classrooms to ensure that it does not affect their language learning process. In cases of overuse or excessive reliance on this language, teachers should guide their students back to English use and set clear boundaries that regulate when and how students can use this language in class.

Students should be aware that the use of the mother tongue is not a substitute of their lack of proficiency in English. They should always make the use of this language a supportive learning tool that they can use to facilitate their comprehension of English and enable them to engage in the language learning process using their language skills and competences.

Students should control their use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom within the appropriate and minimal proportions that maintain the dominance of English in class. Therefore, they should always go back to using English when relying on their mother tongue to avoid this issue.

Students should always seek to make conscious and continuous efforts to use English for communication in class. This could minimize their reliance on the mother tongue and limit its use within the most necessary and unavoidable situations.

It is recommended that policy-makers should raise awareness among teachers about the need to adopt more flexibility towards their strict English-only use in the EFL classroom. This could reflect their recognition of the significance of the mother tongue as supportive pedagogical tool that could be effectively and feasibly integrated into the EFL teaching process.

Policy-makers should provide guidelines and establish training programs that show teachers how to integrate the mother tongue in their EFL classrooms without risking to hinder students' language skills development.

Future studies should work on expanding the scope of the study by integrating more participants and enlarging the data base for more diverse perspective and inclusive results. More teachers should be added in the data collection process to explore different perspectives and opinions about the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classrooms, its benefits and limitations. This could ensure more generalization of the findings.

Future studies should adopt a more experimental approach to investigate the long-term effects of using the mother tongue on EFL students' language proficiency. Thus, longitudinal studies could offer better insights into the long-term impact of relying on the mother tongue in the EFL classroom. Cross-sectional and exploratory studies may have shown that using the mother tongue in the EFL classroom could facilitate students' comprehension and increase their engagement in the short term, but longitudinal studies could show different results over time.

3.7. Limitations of the Study

While this investigation provides valuable insights, certain specific methodological limitations regarding data collection and analysis must be noted. First, the reliance on a structured observation checklist limited the depth of data collection, as it restricted the recording of spontaneous communicative nuances to predetermined categories. Second, the descriptive frequency analysis of behavioral engagement relied on real time visual interpretations of student focus, introducing a minor layer of research subjectivity into the raw counts. Finally, the student questionnaire depended on self reported data from eleven to twelve year old learners, whose developing capacity for precise emotional and cognitive self assessment may introduce variance into the evaluation of their own classroom anxiety.

3.8. Conclusion

This chapter provided the systematic presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the empirical data collected to evaluate the pedagogical impact of mother tongue integration on first year middle school learners' engagement. To achieve the main objectives of this investigation, the chapter was structured into distinct analytical sections. It began with an analysis of the quantitative data obtained from the students' questionnaire focusing on demographics, general perceptions, and academic engagement. Following this, the qualitative accounts from the semi structured teachers' interview were examined using thematic analysis to provide depth to the findings. Finally, the chapter detailed the qualitative findings derived from a structured non participant classroom observation, presenting the descriptive frequencies and behavioral interpretations across the predetermined checklist, this chapter established a comprehensive multi faceted overview of the research variables under investigation.

General Conclusion

The present study explored the use of the mother tongue as a pedagogical tool in the EFL learning process and examined its impact on learners' engagement. Following a descriptive research design with an exploratory nature, the study focused on First-Year EFL Middle school learners taking El-Kabir Abdelkader Middle School as a case study. It used classroom observation, interview, and a questionnaire to gather data on how teachers and students perceive this subject. The sample of the study was determined using a non-probability sampling technique, specifically convenience sampling, which resulted in the selection of 50 students and two teachers. After analyzing the data collected from the participants, it was concluded that the final findings adequately addressed the research questions proposed at the beginning of the study.

The data collected through the classroom observation and teachers' interview revealed that the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom as a pedagogical tool is guided with purposeful intentions and limited within a contextual framework that promotes students' learning process. It is found that teachers tend to use this pedagogical strategy to explain difficult concepts to students for the aim of facilitating their comprehension and enhancing their vocabulary acquisition. It is also found that teachers do not directly resort to using the mother tongue as their first option; they use English instead and in case students showed signs of lack of comprehension, they use the mother tongue as a supplementary teaching tool to explain what is difficult and incomprehensible to learners. Other uses of the mother tongue include giving instructions, and inserting discipline in the classroom using MSA in particular.

The results obtained from the questionnaire, interview, and classroom observation revealed a strong relationship between the use of the mother tongue and increased students'

engagement in the learning process. It is found that when the mother tongue is used appropriately in the classroom, students become more attentive to the lecture and more engaged in the language learning process. They pay more attention to the lecture, understand its content more clearly, and feel more confident in engaging in classroom activities and tasks. This, in turn, enhances students' comprehension, attention, motivation, self-confidence and consequently, their engagement in the EFL learning process.

The findings from the teachers' interview and classroom observation revealed that teachers are aware of the limitation and drawback of using the mother tongue in the EFL classroom, particularly its overuse and students' over reliance on it that could reduce their exposure to English language input and limit their opportunities in practicing the language in class.

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Appendix A: Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

This questionnaire is part of ongoing research about the use of the mother tongue as a pedagogical tool and its impact on learners' engagement in the learning process. Your contribution is highly essential for the continuation of this study. Therefore, you are kindly requested to answer the following questions carefully. Thank you.

Section One: Background Information

1. Gender: female ☐ male ☐

2. What is your mother tongue?

Daridja ☐ Tamazight ☐

Other

3. How do you consider your level of English?

Poor ☐ Average ☐ Above average ☐ Good ☐ Excellent ☐

Section Two: Use of Mother Tongue in Language Learning Classrooms

4. How often do you use your mother tongue in your English learning classroom?

Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐

5. How do you feel when you use your mother tongue in English learning classroom?

Motivated ☐ Confident ☐ Comfortable ☐ Guilty ☐ Stressed ☐

Others: ☐

6. Why?

7. What is your teachers' attitude towards your use of the mother tongue in English class?

- They encourage the use of the mother tongue in the classroom to facilitate our comprehension

- They prohibit the use of the mother tongue in class and insists on students' using only English
- They do not have a clear policy about using the mother tongue in class
- They only allow the use of the mother tongue in specific situations

8. Do you believe that using your mother tongue in your English learning classroom has a negative or a positive impact on your English learning process?

- Using the mother tongue in English classroom has a negative impact on my language learning process.
- Using the mother tongue in English classroom has a positive impact on my language learning process.
- I am not sure

9. Explain your answer please.

.....

10. Do you ever use your mother tongue grammatical structure or vocabulary in your English learning process?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Section Three: Impact of Mother Tongue Use on Students' Engagement

11. Do you enjoy learning English?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure ☐

12. How would you describe your engagement in your English learning classes?

- I am highly engaged in the learning process. ☐
- I am moderately engaged in the learning process. ☐

- I am rarely engaged in the learning process. ☐

- I never engage or participate in classroom learning activities. ☐

13. Do you feel more engaged in the lesson when the teacher uses your mother tongue in class?

Not at all engaged ☐ Slightly engaged ☐ Moderately engaged ☐ Very engaged ☐

14. Does the use of the mother tongue by your teacher and classmates facilitate your comprehension of English lessons?

Not at all ☐ Slightly facilitates ☐ Moderately facilitates ☐ Very much facilitates ☐

15. Do you pay more attention to the lecture in class when the teacher is using your mother tongue? ☐

Not at all ☐ Slightly ☐ Moderately ☐ Extremely ☐

16. Do you ask question in your mother tongue when you face difficulties in understanding the content of the lesson?

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐

17. When your teachers use the mother tongue, does that make you think more deeply about your English learning process?

Not at all ☐ Slightly ☐ Moderately ☐ Extremely ☐

18. Do you make a cognitive connection between what you learn in your mother tongue and the new information presented to you in English language?

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐

19. Do you support or oppose the use of the mother tongue in the English language classroom?

I support ☐ I oppose ☐ Not sure ☐

Appendix B: Teachers' Interview

Dear teacher,

This interview is part of ongoing research about the use of the mother tongue as a pedagogical tool and its impact on learners' engagement in the learning process. Your contribution is highly essential for the continuation of this study. Therefore, you are kindly requested to answer the following questions carefully. Thank you.

The Questions:

Section One: Background Information

1. Academic Qualification: Licence ☐ Master ☐ Magister ☐ PhD ☐
2. Years of teaching experience:

Section Two: Impact of Mother Tongue Use on Students' Engagement

3. Do you allow your students to use their mother tongue in your English teaching classroom?
how often?
4. In what situations do you believe that using the mother tongue is needed in the EFL classroom (e.g. giving instructions, explaining the lesson, etc)?
5. In terms of their learning engagement, what are the factors that influence your students' engagement in the classroom?
6. According to you, to what extent does the use of the mother tongue influence students' comprehension of the lesson? why?
7. To what extent does the use of the mother tongue influence students' participation in the classroom? why?
8. What are the benefits of using mother tongue, by you or your students, on their language learning process?

9. What are the drawbacks of using mother tongue, by you or your students, on their language learning process?
10. Do you believe that the benefits outweigh the drawbacks, or the opposite? and do you believe that the benefits are worth allowing the mother tongue use in the classroom?
11. What suggestions do you propose to monitor the appropriate rate of mother tongue use to maintain its positive impact and avoid its negative one?

Appendix C: Classroom Observation

Observation Number:

Date and Time:

Observed Teacher:

Class and Subject:

Number of Students:

Title of the Lesson:

Aim: to examine the impact of mother tongue use on students' engagement in the English language learning process.

Code Meaning

- 1 Never observed
- 2 Rarely observed
- 3 Sometimes observed
- 4 Often observed
- 5 Always observed

A.Students & Teachers' Mother Tongue Use	1	2	2	4	5	Notes
➤ The teacher uses the mother tongue in class to explain difficult concepts in English.						
➤ The teacher uses the mother tongue in class to insert discipline and maintain order.						
➤ The teacher uses the mother tongue in class to give clear instructions.						
➤ Subtitles and translation to the mother tongue are used by the teacher as supportive materials to Facilitate students' comprehension and language acquisition.						
B.Students' Engagement in Class	1	2	3	4	5	Notes
➤ Students pay attention in class when the teacher uses their mother tongue.						
➤ Students participate actively in classroom discussions using their mother tongue with their classmates and teachers.						
➤ Students show more concentration on the lesson when their mother tongue is used.						

➤ Students are less active in class when the teacher uses only English						
C. Students' Comprehension in Class	1	2	3	4	5	
➤ Students show better understanding of the lesson when the mother tongue is integrated in the lecture.						
➤ Students ask more questions and respond more Frequently to their teacher's inquiries when using Their mother tongue.						
D. Teachers' Monitoring of the Mother Tongue Use	1	2	3	4	5	
➤ The teacher reminds students to switch back to English when their mother tongue is overly used.						
➤ The use of the mother tongue is apparently measured and controlled by the teacher(only in specific situations)						

استبيان التلاميذ: Appendix D

اعزائي التلاميذ،

هذا الاستبيان هو جزء من بحث حول استخدام اللغة الأم كأداة تعليمية وتأثير ذلك على مشاركة المتعلم في عملية التعلم. مشاركتكم مهمة جداً لنجاح هذا البحث. لذلك، يُرجى الإجابة عن الأسئلة التالية بدقة. شكراً لكم.

القسم الأول: المعلومات العامة

1. الجنس:

☐ أنثى ☐ ذكر

2. ما هي لغتك الأم؟

☐ الدارجة ☐ الأمازيغية

أخرى:

3. كيف تقيم مستواك في اللغة الإنجليزية؟

☐ ضعيف ☐ متوسط ☐ فوق المتوسط ☐ جيد ☐ ممتاز

القسم الثاني: استخدام اللغة الأم في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية

4. هل تستعمل لغة أخرى غير الإنجليزية في قسم الإنجليزية؟

☐ نعم ☐ لا

إذا كانت الإجابة نعم، ما هي؟

☐ العربية الفصحى

☐ الفرنسية

☐ اللغة الأم (الدارجة)

☐ اللغة الأم (الأمازيغية)

أخرى:

5. كم مرة تستعمل لغتك الأم في قسم تعلم الإنجليزية؟

☐ دائماً ☐ غالباً ☐ أحياناً ☐ نادراً ☐ أبداً

6. كيف تشعر عندما تستعمل لغتك الأم في قسم تعلم الإنجليزية؟

☐ مرتاح جداً ☐ مرتاح ☐ محايد ☐ غير مرتاح ☐ غير مرتاح أبداً

7. لماذا؟

8. ما هو موقف أساتذتك من استخدامك للغة الأم في قسم الإنجليزية؟

- يشجعون استخدام اللغة الأم لتسهيل الفهم. ☐
- يمنعون استخدام اللغة الأم ويصرّون على استعمال الإنجليزية فقط. ☐
- ليس لديهم موقف واضح من استخدام اللغة الأم. ☐
- يسمحون باستخدام اللغة الأم في مواقف محددة فقط. ☐

9. هل تعتقد أن استخدام اللغة الأم في قسم الإنجليزية له تأثير إيجابي أم سلبي على تعلّمك؟

- له تأثير سلبي على عملية تعلّم. ☐
- له تأثير إيجابي على عملية تعلّم. ☐
- لست متأكداً. ☐

10. فسر إجابتك:

11. هل تستعمل قواعد أو مفردات من لغتك الأم في عملية تعلّم الإنجليزية؟

نعم ☐ لا ☐

القسم الثالث: تأثير استخدام اللغة الأم على مشاركة التلاميذ

12. هل تستمتع بتعلّم اللغة الإنجليزية؟

نعم ☐ لا ☐ لست متأكداً ☐

13. كيف تصف مشاركتك في قسم تعلّم الإنجليزية؟

- مشارك جداً في عملية التعلّم. ☐
- مشارك بدرجة متوسطة. ☐
- نادراً ما أشارك. ☐
- لا أشارك أبداً. ☐

14. هل تشعر بزيادة مشاركتك عندما يستعمل الأستاذ لغتك الأم في القسم؟

غير مشارك أبداً ☐ مشارك قليلاً ☐ مشارك بدرجة متوسطة ☐ مشارك جداً ☐

15. هل يسهل استخدام الأستاذ وزملائك للغة الأم فهمك لدروس الإنجليزية؟

لا يسهل أبداً ☐ يسهل قليلاً ☐ يسهل بدرجة متوسطة ☐ يسهل كثيراً ☐

16. هل تنتبه أكثر للدرس عندما يستعمل الأستاذ لغتك الأم؟

لا ☐ قليلاً ☐ بشكل متوسط ☐ كثيراً جداً ☐

17. هل تطرح أسئلة بلغتك الأم عندما تواجه صعوبة في فهم الدرس؟

دائماً ☐ غالباً ☐ أحياناً ☐ نادراً ☐ أبداً ☐

18. عندما يستعمل الأستاذ اللغة الأم، هل يجعلك ذلك تفكر بعمق أكبر في عملية تعلّمك للإنجليزية؟

لا ☐ قليلاً ☐ بشكل متوسط ☐ كثيراً جداً ☐

19. هل تربط ما تتعلّمه في الإنجليزية بما تعرفه في لغتك الأم؟

دائماً ☐ غالباً ☐ أحياناً ☐ نادراً ☐ أبداً ☐

20. هل تؤيد استخدام اللغة الأم في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية؟

نعم ☐ لا ☐ متأكداً ☐

Résumé

La présente étude a exploré l'utilisation de la langue maternelle comme outil pédagogique dans le processus d'apprentissage de l'anglais langue étrangère (EFL) et a examiné son impact sur l'engagement des apprenants. En adoptant une approche descriptive à caractère exploratoire, l'étude s'est concentrée sur les apprenants de première année moyenne en EFL du collège El-Kabir Abdelkader comme étude de cas. L'échantillon de l'étude était composé de 50 élèves et de deux enseignants. Les résultats ont révélé que l'utilisation de la langue maternelle dans la classe d'EFL comme outil pédagogique est guidée par des intentions précises et limitée dans un cadre contextuel favorisant le processus d'apprentissage des élèves. Les résultats ont montré une forte relation entre l'utilisation de la langue maternelle et l'augmentation de l'engagement des élèves dans le processus d'apprentissage. Il a été constaté que lorsque la langue maternelle est utilisée de manière appropriée en classe, les élèves deviennent plus attentifs au cours et davantage impliqués dans le processus d'apprentissage de la langue. Cependant, une dépendance excessive des élèves à la langue maternelle pourrait réduire leur exposition à l'anglais et limiter leurs occasions de pratiquer la langue en classe.

Mots-clés : langue maternelle, utilisation, processus d'apprentissage de l'anglais langue étrangère (EFL), engagement des apprenants.

الملخص

استكشفت هذه الدراسة استخدام اللغة الأم كأداة بيداغوجية في عملية تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، كما بحثت في تأثيرها على انخراط المتعلمين. واعتمدت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي ذي الطابع الاستكشافي، حيث ركزت على تلاميذ السنة الأولى متوسط في مادة اللغة الإنجليزية بمتوسطة الكبير عبد القادر كدراسة حالة. وتكوّنت عينة الدراسة من 50 تلميذاً وأستاذين. كشفت النتائج أن استخدام اللغة الأم في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية كأداة بيداغوجية يتم وفق أهداف مقصودة وفي إطار سياقي يدعم عملية تعلم التلاميذ. كما أظهرت النتائج وجود علاقة قوية بين استخدام اللغة الأم وزيادة انخراط التلاميذ في عملية التعلم. وتبين أنه عندما تُستخدم اللغة الأم بشكل مناسب داخل القسم، يصبح التلميذ أكثر انتباهاً للدرس وأكثر مشاركة في عملية تعلم اللغة. ومع ذلك، فإن الاعتماد المفرط على اللغة الأم قد يقلل من تعرض التلاميذ للغة الإنجليزية ويحدّ من فرصهم في ممارسة اللغة داخل القسم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الأم، الاستخدام، عملية تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، انخراط المتعلمين.