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# Libyan Students' Attitudes toward Arabic-English Code-Switching in English Major Classrooms: A Study at the Faculty of Education–Tripoli, University of Tripoli

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## ABSTRACT

Arabic-English code-switching is very common in many English classrooms. This paper investigates the attitudes of Libyan English major students towards Arabic-English code-switching and classroom contexts in which they find it advantageous. It also explores how teachers apply code-switching in the context of college lectures through observation. The study employs a descriptive quantitative research design. A questionnaire was designed with Likert scale statements and 36 fourth-semester students at the Department of English, Faculty of Education, University of Tripoli, participated. Furthermore, four English language courses taught by different teachers were observed using a structured observation checklist to investigate the actual implementation of Arabic-English code-switching during teaching. Frequency and percentage analyses were used for questionnaire responses, while descriptive analysis was employed on the observation data to identify frequency of occurrence, reasons and types of code-switching. The study showed that students tend to have negative opinions regarding Arabic-English code-switching and would prefer English to be the main language in which they are taught. Nevertheless, they appear more willing to tolerate limited utilization of Arabic in certain contexts especially for purposes of explaining unknown terms and helping those students who experience difficulty learning the material. Classroom observations showed that English continued to be the primary language used for instruction. Arabic was occasionally and briefly incorporated as a tool used by teachers when they believed it could assist students in comprehending concepts presented within class. In summary, results show a strong inclination toward English dominant instruction and the allowance of limited Arabic use when deemed necessary.

**Keywords**: English language teaching, student attitudes, Arabic-English code-switching, classroom language choice

# مواقف الطلاب الليبيين تجاه التناوب اللغوي بين العربية والإنجليزية في قاعات دراسة تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية: دراسة بكلية التربية طرابلس، جامعة طرابلس

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## ملخـــــص البحـــــث

يُعدّ التناوب اللغوي بين العربية والإنجليزية شائعًا جدًا في العديد من فصول اللغة الإنجليزية. تبحث هذه الورقة البحثية في مواقف طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية الليبيين تجاه هذا التناوب، وسياقات الفصول الدراسية التي يجدونه فيها مفيدًا. كما تستكشف كيفية تطبيق المعلمين لهذا التناوب في سياق المحاضرات الجامعية من خلال الملاحظة. تستخدم الدراسة منهجًا بحثيًا وصفيًا كميًا. صُمم استبيان يتضمن عبارات بمقياس ليكرت، وشارك فيه 36 طالبًا من طلاب الفصل الدراسي الرابع في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية بجامعة طرابلس. علاوة على ذلك، تمت ملاحظة أربعة مقررات في اللغة الإنجليزية يُدرّسها معلمون مختلفون باستخدام قائمة مراجعة منظمة للملاحظة، وذلك للتحقق من التطبيق الفعلي للتناوب اللغوي بين العربية والإنجليزية أثناء التدريس. استُخدم تحليل التكرار والنسبة المئوية لإجابات الاستبيان، بينما استُخدم التحليل الوصفي لبيانات الملاحظة لتحديد تكرار حدوث التناوب اللغوي وأسبابه وأنواعه. أظهرت الدراسة أن الطلاب يميلون إلى تكوين آراء سلبية تجاه التناوب اللغوي بين العربية والإنجليزية، ويفضلون أن تكون الإنجليزية هي اللغة الرئيسية التي تُدرّس بها. ومع ذلك، يبدو أنهم أكثر استعدادًا لتقبّل استخدام محدود للغة العربية في سياقات معينة، لا سيما لشرح المصطلحات غير المألوفة ومساعدة الطلاب الذين يواجهون صعوبة في فهم المادة. أشارت الملاحظات الصفية إلى أن اللغة الإنجليزية لا تزال اللغة الأساسية المستخدمة في التدريس، بينما تُستخدم اللغة العربية أحيانًا ولفترة وجيزة كأداة من قِبل المعلمين عندما يرون أنها قد تساعد الطلاب على فهم المفاهيم المطروحة في الصف. وخلاصة القول، تُظهر النتائج ميلًا قويًا نحو هيمنة اللغة الإنجليزية في التدريس، والسماح باستخدام محدود للغة العربية عند الضرورة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية، مواقف الطلاب، التبديل اللغوي بين العربية والإنجليزية، اختيار لغة التدريس

## Introduction

We live in a world where more people speak multiple languages due to increased international travel, education opportunities and advances in technology. International migration which created increased contact between speakers of different languages, international education that supported the increase in bilingualism and technological advancements that assisted in bringing together people from various linguistic backgrounds, all contributed to making code-switching a common occurrence. Code-switching, which is the alternation between two or more languages during a single conversation, has become a common practice by many individuals and communities. “Code-switching is the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence, or constituent”. Poplack (1980)

In both situations; formal and informal contexts, code-switching emerges organically throughout language interactions. It is safe to conclude that such contacts are systematic rather than incidental. Fluent speakers of two languages in multilingual communities are being known

to switch languages during conversations. The public domain, businesses, schools and households are locations where code-switching takes place. This is a manifestation of the linguistic reality in multilingual environments, not restricted to any certain age or occupation. According to Myers-Scotton (1993), "Code-switching is one of the most common outcomes of language contact."

The ways in which code-switching is used have been a matter of debate among scholars for a long time. It has gained different interpretations; while some researchers viewed code-switching as a useful communicative resource others considered it a barrier to target language learning. What makes code-switching be seen a useful communicative approach is its flexibility in helping bilingual speakers to express meanings more effectively, clarify difficult concepts, create solidarity and strengthen relationships between speakers and more importantly in classrooms, teachers may use it to explain unfamiliar vocabulary, difficult grammar, or abstract concepts. On the other side, code-switching has been seen by some scholars as a barrier to target language learning and they argue that excessive use of the learners' first language may reduce students' exposure to the target language and limit opportunities for language practice. “The issue of the roles of the learners’ first language (L1) in language pedagogy and classroom interaction is far from settled.” (Levine, 2014, p. 332)

The use of code-switching in English language classrooms has been debated for many years. Some researchers have expressed views on the value of its use while others have disagreed with those views. Researchers have investigated the role of code-switching in foreign language instruction using a variety of methods including surveys, interviews and classroom observations.

There is a disagreement among researchers about whether the excessive use of the first language leads to decreased exposure and practice with English, limiting opportunities for learning the target language. Conversely, other researchers argue that careful use of first language may support learning by improving comprehension, explaining difficult concepts, and reducing communication barriers. Based on this, the success of classroom code-switching might be a function of its purpose, frequency and context.

In the Arab world, such as Libya, code-switching from English to Arabic is evident in many English language classrooms because both teachers and students have the same background. Although English is designated as target language of instruction, teachers may sometimes utilize Arabic language in order to explain unclear terms or provide definitions for students who

struggle with understanding lessons taught by teachers using primarily English languages. Nonetheless, the extent to which such behavior is tolerated by students remains a major issue, particularly for English majors who are expected to demonstrate high levels of proficiency in English.

Many different approaches have been used to investigate classroom code-switching including when it happens, why teachers are performing the code-switch and how students experience being within an environment of code-switching in the classroom. However, limited research has focused specifically on English major students' attitudes toward Arabic-English code-switching and the classroom situations in which they consider its use appropriate. This gap is particularly noticeable in the Libyan university context, where more investigation is needed to understand how future English language professionals perceive the role of Arabic in English classrooms.

In light of these findings, this study examines English major students' attitudes toward Arabic-English code-switching in English classrooms at the Faculty of Education, University of Tripoli. The study also seeks to identify the classroom situations in which students perceive code-switching as appropriate and beneficial. In addition, classroom observations are conducted to examine teachers' actual use of Arabic-English code-switching and to compare classroom practices with students' perceptions.

To achieve these aims, the study adopts a descriptive quantitative research design. Data were collected using a researcher-designed questionnaire administered to 36 fourth-semester English majors and four classroom observations conducted with the assistance of an observation checklist. The study aims to provide answers for the following research questions:

1. What attitudes do English major students at a Libyan university hold toward Arabic-English code-switching in the English classroom?
2. In which classroom settings do the English majors at a Libyan University view Arabic-English code-switching as appropriate and beneficial?
3. What do classroom observations reveal about teachers' practices regarding Arabic-English code-switching in English major classrooms?

**Literature Review**

Code-switching has become a subject of interest in applied linguistics and English language teaching in the past few decades. There have been many studies about how learners' L1 can be an effective tool for communication in the classroom and language learning. This section

reviews the literature related to Arabic-English code-switching in English language classrooms. The paper examines the notion of code-switching, its functions in the classroom, reported positive and negative effects as well as results from previous empirical studies.

Code-switching refers generally to the alternation between two or more languages during a discourse. Today it has become increasingly accepted to see this aspect of bilingualism as a part of its natural properties rather than an indication of language deficiency. In language classrooms, code-switching enables teachers and students to switch languages depending on the necessity for clarity or interaction purposes regarding target language “English”.

There have been numerous highly influential definitions of code-switching provided by many well-respected linguists. Included are Gumperz (1982), Poplack (1980), Myers-Scotton (1993), and Auer (1998) whose work has greatly aided the knowledge of how bilingual speaker switches between their two languages during various communication events.

The definition of code-switching as per Gumperz (1982) is "the using of more than one language during a single encounter by an individual who speaks two languages." Moreover, he asserted that there exist critical communicative functions involved in switching between languages and speakers need to adapt their linguistic choices based upon the social environment. Through his studies, he demonstrated that code-switching is a systematic process of changing purposefully.

Poplack (1980) defines code-switching as bilingual speaker uses both languages in a discourse. Poplack argues that a good code-switcher needs to master both languages in a very good way because speakers need to understand the grammar of each language when switching between languages.

Myers-Scotton (1993) suggests that code-switching is due to the bilingual speaker's decision about when and where they are going to use their language during conversation. Speakers should alter languages when expressing social meaning, negotiating relationships or achieving specific communicative objectives according to advice provided by researcher. From the perspective presented in this paper, language selection is influenced by a combination of both linguistic and social factors.

Auer (1998) maintained that code-switching should be interpreted in relation to conversation itself. He recommended that bilingual speakers alternate between languages to facilitate

interaction, signal changes in topic, or meet the needs of communication. His methodology demonstrated how conversational context plays a significant role in explaining code-switching.

While the above academics have expressed the concept of code-switching somewhat differently, they are largely united in that it involves switching between two or more languages during communication. Collectively these perspectives provide a theoretical basis for examining the potential contribution of Arabic-English code-switching to teaching and learning in English language classrooms.

In the English language classroom, especially in bilingual environments where Libyan students and teachers are sharing Arabic as their first languages, code-switching has been identified as a means of communication that can perform multiple pedagogical functions. As stated by Sert (2005), teachers may use learners' first language to explain meaning, provide explanations for complex ideas, manage classroom interaction and facilitate communication when students struggle with target language. Likewise, Üstünel and Seedhouse (2005) demonstrated that teachers' language selections are often systematic based upon specific classroom purposes rather than random selection between languages.

The study "Teacher's Code Switching in EFL Undergraduate Classroom in Libya: Functions and Perceptions" was carried out by Adriosh and Razı (2019). In this study the researchers have examined code-switching in EFL classrooms at Libyan university by observing the classroom and interviewing students. The results demonstrated that Arabic was used on some occasions for pedagogical and social functions such as clarification, repetition, recapitulation and socialisation. The study also reported that teachers and students generally held positive attitudes towards the purposeful use of code-switching in classroom contexts.

Students might also be able to participate through code-switching as a means of overcoming communication barriers and supporting their participation. Cook (2001) argued that the first language helps with the second language acquisition because it enables students to connect new information to their existing linguistic knowledge. Hence, restricted use of students' first language might provide for classroom interaction but still keep English as the dominant medium of instruction.

Numerous studies have concluded that code-switching has many advantages when used in select contexts for specific instructional reasons. Based on Macaro (2001), the researchers believe that strategic utilization of first language can aid learners in comprehension and provide efficient explanations for complex linguistic information.

Despite this, however, excessive focus on code-switching can lead to problems. Research has demonstrated that students who speak English as their native language may deprive themselves of opportunities to communicate using that language. Swain (1985) reported that students need sufficient practice to utilize the target language and develop communicative competence. Thus frequent exposure to Arabic may limit opportunities for meaningful practice in English. Macaro (2009) also stated that although the first language can provide support for learning, over-reliance may result in dependency and decrease willingness to communicate in the target language.

Studies carried out in Algeria have also discussed the use of English-Algerian Arabic code-switching to EFL lessons. Adder and Bagui (2020) conducted a study of code-switching between teachers and students in the English Department at Tlemcen University, Algeria. Interviews with 16 teachers and classroom observations were conducted by researchers in order to collect data related to this study. Teachers generally reported unfavorable attitudes toward code-switching and attempted to promote English usage as main language for instruction in classrooms. Despite this, the teachers agreed that occasional use of Algerian Arabic could be pedagogically useful when explaining difficult vocabulary and phrases which may cause confusion in English for students. The study therefore suggested that although excessive use of Algerian Arabic was discouraged, its limited and purposeful use could be beneficial for students' academic achievement and language development. These findings are particularly relevant to the present study because they demonstrate that attitudes towards Arabic-English code-switching may be influenced by the context and purpose of its use in EFL classrooms (Abrahem et al., 2026; Albshkar, 2026; Hmouma, 2014: Masoud, 2026).

The above studies show that Arabic-English code-switching can serve several functions in English language classrooms when it is used selectively and for specific purposes. Research has shown that student use of first language may promote clarity and understanding in terms of vocabulary and concepts, support classroom interaction, assist students overcome communication barriers. Nonetheless, it has been indicated that excessive reliance on Arabic may reduce students' opportunities to practice English and create dependency on first language. Further studies in Libya and Algeria have also demonstrated that attitudes towards code switching may vary depending on the context, frequency, and purposes of use. Thus, code-switching seems to be most effective when used strategically while maintaining English as the predominant language of classroom instruction. These findings provide a basis for examining

English major students' attitudes towards Arabic-English code-switching, their views on appropriate situations for its use, and its perceived effects.

While prior studies have explored the functions and perceptions of classroom code-switching, relatively few investigations have examined English majors' attitudes toward Arabic-English code-switching and their perception of appropriate classroom contexts for using this type of language in Libyan universities.

**Research questions**

Based on the purpose of the study and the issues identified in the literature review, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What attitudes do English major students at a Libyan university hold toward Arabic-English code-switching in the English classroom?

2. In which classroom settings do the English majors at a Libyan University view Arabic-English code-switching as appropriate and beneficial?

3. What do classroom observations reveal about teachers' practices regarding Arabic-English code-switching in English major classrooms?

**Research design and Methodology**

In this section of the paper, the research design, participants, research instruments, data collection procedures, and methods of data analysis employed in the study will be presented.

**Research Design**

A descriptive quantitative research design was considered the most appropriate since the study sought to investigate both students' attitudes and teachers' classroom practices.

Since the questionnaire was intended to identify the classroom situations in which students considered code-switching appropriate, a researcher-developed questionnaire was adopted as the quantitative instrument. The questionnaire was administered to English major students and was designed to investigate students' attitudes toward Arabic-English code-switching. In order to observe teachers' actual use of Arabic-English code-switching, a structured observation checklist was adopted. This would allow the researcher to compare students' perceptions with classroom practice. Using both provides a more complete understanding of classroom code-switching.

The quantitative component of the study consisted of a researcher-developed questionnaire. The instrument sought to investigate students' attitudes toward Arabic-English code-switching. And the classroom situations in which students perceived code-switching as appropriate and beneficial. The collected data were used to examine the overall attitudes of English major students toward the use of Arabic in English language classrooms.

**Participants**

Thirty-six female English majors enrolled in the fourth semester participated in this study. All the students were enrolled in the fourth semester of English department, Faculty of Education, University of Tripoli. The fourth semester students, who had been taught using various teaching methods, were deemed fit for research on Arabic-English code-switching since they themselves have experienced the different ways of classroom instruction. A convenient sampling strategy was used and confidentiality maintained during the entire study.

**Research Instruments**

1. **Questionnaire**

This questionnaire was designed to understand how the students who have English as their major at the Faculty of Education, University of Tripoli view Arabic language in an English classroom. The items in the questionnaire were designed to represent classroom-based situations of Arabic-English code-switching. The questionnaire consisted of three sections:

The first section focused on students' general attitudes toward Arabic-English code-switching. The second section was meant to examine classroom situations in which code-switching may be considered appropriate. As for the third section, it was designed to explore students' perceptions of the effects of code-switching on classroom learning and interaction. The questionnaire included a total of 40 statements presented in this order:

10 statements related to general attitudes for the first section.

20 statements were about appropriate classroom situations for the second section.

10 statements related to the perceived effects of code-switching for the third section.

A five-point Likert scale was utilized to evaluate the responses of students, where students were required to choose from five options: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree or strongly disagree. This way it will be easier for them to express their opinion regarding how much they agree/disagree with each statement made during the survey process. 36 fourth semester English majors from the Department of English, Faculty of Education at the University of Tripoli had

responded to this survey. Students were allowed to participate in the study voluntarily. Responses were kept anonymous and confidential during the study.

**2. Classroom Observation Checklist**

To complement the questionnaire findings, a structured classroom observation checklist was used. The observation checklist was intended to identify classroom situations in which Arabic-English code-switching occurred. The use of classroom observation strengthened the findings by providing authentic classroom evidence. The observation checklist concentrated on the various pedagogical roles of classroom code-switching. Each observation was logged by the researcher using the categories never, rarely, sometimes, often and always. These observations were conducted in four separate fourth semester English classes. The collected data were analyzed to determine the frequency of teachers' use of Arabic-English code-switching.

**Data Collection Procedures**

The data for this study were collected from 36 fourth-semester English major female students at the Faculty of Education, University of Tripoli using a researcher-developed questionnaire. The researcher personally distributed the questionnaire to the participants. The purpose of the study was briefly explained to the participants before they completed the questionnaire and participants were informed that participation in the study was voluntary. The anonymity of the participants was maintained throughout the study. The second stage of data collection involved classroom observation. The observations were conducted in four separate fourth-semester English classes using the same structured observation checklist throughout each observation. The two instruments were complementary, as they evaluated both students' perceptions and teachers' classroom practices.

**Data Analysis**

Four separate classroom observations were conducted and each one was documented individually using the same checklist. After all observations were completed, the findings were summarized into a single table to identify the overall patterns of teachers' use of Arabic-English code-switching across the four classes.

The questionnaire and observation data were analyzed separately according to the nature of each instrument. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for each questionnaire item. The descriptive statistical analysis focused on identifying students' attitudes toward Arabic-English code-switching. The classroom observation data were analyzed descriptively then compared

with the questionnaire findings to identify similarities and differences between students' perceptions and teachers' classroom practices. The results of both instruments were interpreted together to provide a comprehensive understanding of Arabic-English code-switching in English classrooms.

## Results

This part of the study presents the findings obtained from the questionnaire and classroom observations. The results are organized according to the research questions of the study. The questionnaire findings are presented first, followed by the classroom observation results. Finally, the findings from both instruments are considered together to provide a clearer understanding of Arabic-English code-switching in English major classrooms.

## Questionnaire Results

This section presents the findings obtained from the questionnaire administered to the participants. Three sections of the questionnaire examined general attitudes towards Arabic-English code-switching as a whole, classroom situations in which use would be appropriate and student perceptions of its impact in English class. The results are reported in accordance with the following three sections.

### 1. Students' General Attitudes toward Arabic-English Code-Switching

Students' responses concerning their general attitudes toward Arabic-English code-switching are presented in this subsection. The initial part of the questionnaire included 10 items that attempted to gauge students' general stance toward using Arabic within English Language instruction. The responses are presented in Table 1.

*Table 1 Students' General Attitudes toward Arabic-English Code-Switching*

| | Table Statements | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Arabic-English code-switching is a useful teaching strategy. | 0 | 3 | 0 | 8 | 25 |
| 2 | Teachers should occasionally use Arabic while teaching English. | 0 | 5 | 0 | 9 | 22 |
| 3 | Code-switching makes English lessons easier to understand. | 6 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 14 |
| 4 | I enjoy classes in which teachers occasionally switch to Arabic. | 0 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 12 |
| 5 | Teachers should avoid using Arabic during English classes. | 20 | 10 | 2 | 4 | 0 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | Code-switching increases my confidence during English lessons. | 4 | 6 | 9 | 10 | 7 |
| 7 | Arabic should only be used when absolutely necessary. | 20 | 12 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| 8 | Too much Arabic reduces my opportunity to practice English. | 31 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 9 | Teachers should encourage students to speak English most of the time. | 36 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 10 | Overall, I have a positive attitude toward classroom code-switching. | 0 | 0 | 3 | 33 | 0 |

Table 1 displays the views toward code-switching in English language classes. In general, the responses indicate a predominantly negative feeling toward the use of Arabic as an additional language during English classes. Only some of the students admitted that switching between Arabic and English might be beneficial in certain cases, but most did not think code-switching would benefit teaching English language. There was a clear indication of preference for English being used as the main language for teaching in all of the answers.

The first statement on table 1 addresses whether Arabic-English code-switching is a useful teaching strategy. Most of the students didn't agree since only three of the thirty-six students surveyed (8.3%) responded positively to the statement. Thus 91.7% of students surveyed (33) did not agree. Similar to statement one, thirty-one students (86.1%) disagreed that teachers should occasionally use Arabic while teaching English.

Responses to the third statement that code-switching makes English lessons easier to understand were varied. Disagreement was very pronounced with 23 of the students (63.9%) stating they do not agree or strongly disagree versus only ten students (27.8%) who stated that they do agree or strongly agree. 61.1% of the students, twenty two in total disagreed with "Classes where teachers sometimes speak Arabic are enjoyable for me" whereas only 6 students (16.7%) agreed with it. Therefore it was evident that the students generally did not prefer to occasionally use Arabic.

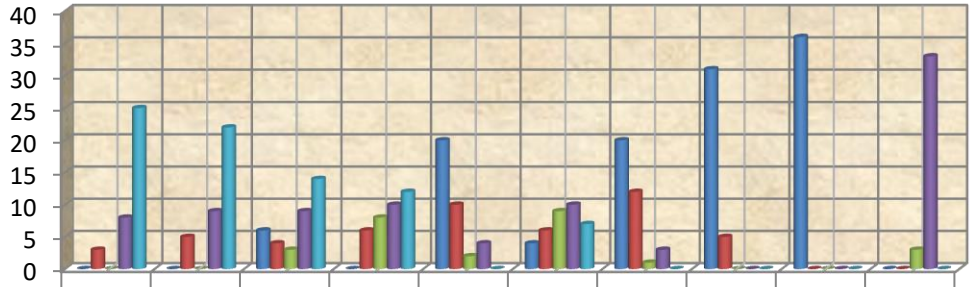
In statement 5, a stronger preference for not wanting Arabic was observed. Out of thirty six students 30 (83.3%) said they agreed or strongly agree with the notion that English teachers should not teach in Arabic during their classes while only 4 disagreed (11.1%). The sixth statement also indicated that the students' views regarding code-switching were limited. As for the sixth statement that says Code-switching increases my confidence during English lessons, 17 students (47.2%) disagree or strongly disagree while ten (27.8%) agreed or strongly agreed.

Nine remained neutral. It appears therefore that students were not persuaded of increased confidence through the change to Arabic.

While the results also demonstrate that students did not entirely reject the use of Arabic. Agree/strongly agree: 32 (88.9%): Arabic should only be used when absolutely necessary. This shows that their negative feelings towards Arabic were mainly due to excessive or unwarranted usage, rather than a total denial of the language. As further proof of this, the eighth statement also showed that all 36 students (100%) believed too much Arabic would take away their chance to practice English.

The best answer was given for statement 9. All 36 students (100%) said that they totally agree with the idea of teachers encouraging students to use English the most of the time. In the final statement, a negative attitude was again evident with 36 students (100%) stating they "disagree" or "strongly disagree" with the idea that their classroom code switching experience had been positive.

For the most part, responses to each of the 10 statements were negative towards code switching from Arabic-English. Students preferred English as primary language used during classroom instruction and expressed concerns regarding increased usage of Arabic potentially limiting opportunities for students to practice English. On the other hand strong agreement on Arabic use when necessary shows that students did not entirely deny code-switching. They preferred restricted use of Arabic when there is clear reason to do so instead of unlimited use.




| | Statement 1 | Statement 2 | Statement 3 | Statement 4 | Statement 5 | Statement 6 | Statement 7 | Statement 8 | Statement 9 | Statement 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 20 | 4 | 20 | 31 | 36 | 0 |
| Agree | 3 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 10 | 6 | 12 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Neutral | 0 | 0 | 3 | 8 | 2 | 9 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Disagree | 8 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 4 | 10 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 33 |
| Strongly Disagree | 25 | 22 | 14 | 12 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

**Fig 1:** Students' General Attitudes towards Arabic-English Code-Switching

## 2. Appropriate Classroom Situations for Arabic-English Code-Switching

The following section examines the classroom situations in which students considered Arabic-English code-switching appropriate. The second section of the questionnaire consisted of twenty statements designed to identify the situations in which students believed the use of Arabic could support English language teaching and learning. The responses are presented in Table 2.

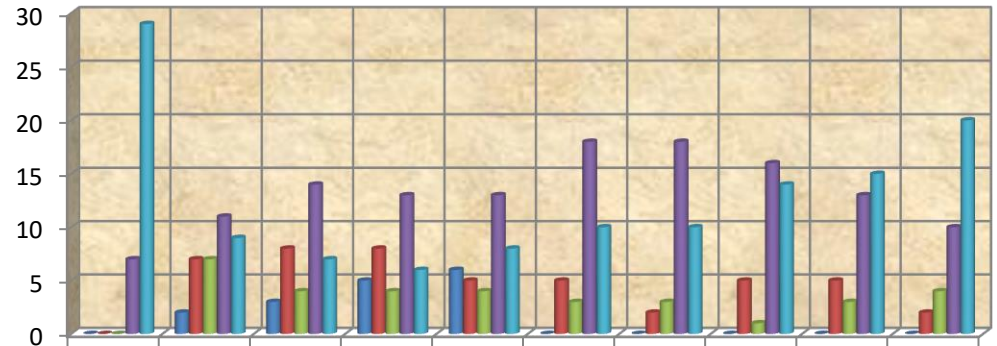
*Table 2 Appropriate Classroom Situations for Arabic-English Code-Switching*

| | Table Statements<br><br>Teachers should use Arabic when: | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | explaining difficult grammar. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 29 |
| 2 | explaining new vocabulary. | 2 | 7 | 7 | 11 | 9 |
| 3 | explaining abstract concepts. | 3 | 8 | 4 | 14 | 7 |
| 4 | giving examination instructions. | 5 | 8 | 4 | 13 | 6 |
| 5 | giving homework instructions. | 6 | 5 | 4 | 13 | 8 |
| 6 | discussing cultural differences. | 0 | 5 | 3 | 18 | 10 |
| 7 | checking students' understanding. | 0 | 2 | 3 | 18 | 10 |
| 8 | correcting students' mistakes. | 0 | 5 | 1 | 16 | 14 |
| 9 | introducing a new lesson. | 0 | 5 | 3 | 13 | 15 |
| 10 | summarizing the lesson. | 0 | 2 | 4 | 10 | 20 |
| 11 | explaining assignment requirements. | 0 | 0 | 2 | 15 | 19 |
| 12 | helping weak students. | 8 | 5 | 5 | 10 | 8 |
| 13 | encouraging shy students. | 0 | 7 | 3 | 18 | 8 |
| 14 | joking with students. | 0 | 4 | 0 | 22 | 10 |
| 15 | maintaining classroom discipline. | 0 | 5 | 2 | 24 | 5 |
| 16 | answering students' questions. | 0 | 1 | 0 | 10 | 25 |
| 17 | discussing administrative issues. | 1 | 5 | 0 | 9 | 21 |
| 18 | introducing unfamiliar terminology. | 2 | 10 | 6 | 9 | 9 |
| 19 | explaining difficult reading passages. | 3 | 9 | 3 | 11 | 10 |
| 20 | giving feedback after presentations. | 3 | 5 | 0 | 18 | 10 |

Table 2 presents the students' responses to different possible uses of Arabic in English classes. Looking at the results as a whole, the students were mostly unwilling to support Arabic use. The clearest example is difficult grammar, since none of the 36 students agreed that teachers should use Arabic in this case. Thirty students (83.3%) also disagreed with using Arabic for correcting students' errors, and the same number rejected it for summarizing a lesson. The statement about beginning a new lesson in Arabic received a similar response, with 28 students (77.8%) disagreeing. There was, however, some difference when the situation involved explaining new vocabulary or abstract ideas, since 11 students disagreed and 9 strongly disagreed, but 9 students agreed or strongly agreed for switching to Arabic for new vocabulary

explanation. The response to abstract concepts was also less negative, with 21 students disagreeing and 11 agreeing or strongly agreeing. This may indicate that some students see Arabic as useful when the English explanation itself may not be enough.

For examination and homework instructions, the majority still preferred English. This can be clearly noticed by glancing at the numbers on the table. 19 students (52.8%) disagreed with giving examination instructions in Arabic, while 21 (58.3%) disagreed about homework instructions. The students were less accepting of Arabic for discussing cultural differences and checking comprehension, with 28 students (77.8%) disagreeing in both cases. Only two students (5.6%) agreed that Arabic should be used for checking comprehension. Therefore, the results do not suggest that students completely reject Arabic-English code-switching. Rather, they appear to prefer English as the normal classroom language and Arabic only in some limited situations. New vocabulary and abstract concepts were the situations in which Arabic received the most acceptances while most of the other classroom uses were clearly rejected.



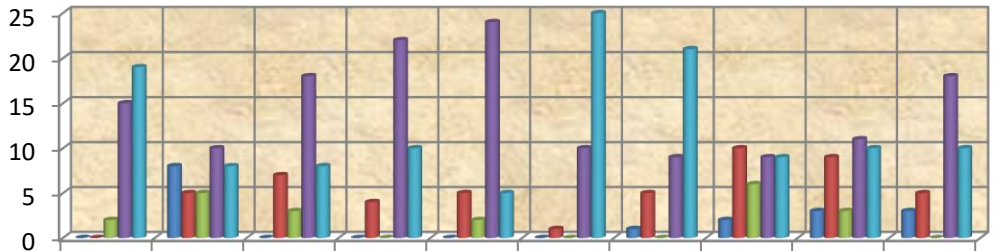

| | Statement 1 | Statement 2 | Statement 3 | Statement 4 | Statement 5 | Statement 6 | Statement 7 | Statement 8 | Statement 9 | Statement 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 0 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Agree | 0 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 2 |
| Neutral | 0 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Disagree | 7 | 11 | 14 | 13 | 13 | 18 | 18 | 16 | 13 | 10 |
| Strongly Disagree | 29 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 10 | 14 | 15 | 20 |

**Fig 2:** Appropriate Classrom Situations for Arabic-English Code-Switching The First 10 Statements

A large part of the students did not support using Arabic in these situations. This can be seen clearly in the statement about assignment requirements, where 34 students (94.4%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Only two students selected neutral. The statement about answering

students' inquiries had an even higher disagreement, with 35 students (97.2%) not supporting the use of Arabic. Most students were also against Arabic when joking with peers (88.9%), dealing with discipline (80.6%), discussing administrative matters (83.3%), and giving feedback after presentations (77.8%). The result for motivating shy students was also mostly negative, with 26 students (72.2%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Nevertheless, the responses regarding supporting weaker students were not the same, since 18 students (50%) disagreed, but 13 students (36.1%) agreed or strongly agreed. 8 students strongly agreed with this statement, which was more than in the other situations. This may suggest that some students could see a reason for using Arabic when it helps weaker students.

Switching to Arabic to explain unfamiliar terms generated responses that were more divided than in most of the other cases since 18 students (50%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, six were neutral, and 12 (33.4%) agreed or strongly agreed. Switching to Arabic when lecturers explain difficult reading passages also produced a somewhat similar result, since 21 students (58.3%) disagreed/ strongly disagreed and 12 (33.3%) agreed/strongly agreed. From these answers students generally wanted English to remain the language used in class. However, they didn't completely reject the Arabic language in every situation. Some of the students accepted it when there was an issue with understanding, or if they needed additional assistance. So Arabic appears to be more acceptable when used for a definite reason and not as part of the everyday classroom language.




| | Statement 11 | Statement 12 | Statement 13 | Statement 14 | Statement 15 | Statement 16 | Statement 17 | Statement 18 | Statement 19 | Statement 20 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Agree | 0 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 10 | 9 | 5 |
| Neutral | 2 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 3 | 0 |
| Disagree | 15 | 10 | 18 | 22 | 24 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 11 | 18 |
| Strongly Disagree | 19 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 5 | 25 | 21 | 9 | 10 | 10 |

**Fig 3:** Appropriate Classroom Situations for Arabic-English Code-Switching The Last 10 Statements

### 3. Perceived Effects for Arabic-English Code-Switching

This subsection presents the findings related to students' perceptions of the effects of Arabic-English code-switching in English classrooms. The third section of the questionnaire consisted of ten statements designed to examine how students perceived the effects of code-switching on different aspects of English language learning. The responses are presented in Table 3.

*Table 3 Perceived Effects for Arabic-English Code-Switching*

| | Table Statements Arabic-English code-switching: | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | improves my understanding. | 5 | 5 | 4 | 11 | 11 |
| 2 | helps me remember new vocabulary. | 3 | 8 | 2 | 12 | 11 |
| 3 | reduces my anxiety. | 3 | 3 | 4 | 18 | 8 |
| 4 | motivates me to participate. | 0 | 5 | 0 | 15 | 16 |
| 5 | increases classroom interaction. | 0 | 3 | 0 | 18 | 15 |
| 6 | saves classroom time. | 1 | 5 | 0 | 15 | 15 |
| 7 | improves communication between teacher and students. | 1 | 5 | 1 | 17 | 12 |
| 8 | should be used more frequently. | 0 | 3 | 0 | 13 | 20 |
| 9 | should be used less frequently. | 22 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| 10 | should depend on students' proficiency level. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 31 |

Table 3 shows that students' opinions regarding the impact of Arabic-English code-switching tend to be negative rather than positive. Most students do not consider switching to Arabic useful for English language classes. For example, 22 students disagreed or strongly disagreed that switching to Arabic has any improvement for their comprehension while only ten (27.8%) agreed or strongly agreed. Almost similar results were obtained for recalling new vocabulary where 23 of the participants (63.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement versus 11 participants (30.6%) who agreed or strongly agreed with it. 6 (16.7%) of the students surveyed stated that code-switching reduced their anxiety levels. The majority of the students in this study did not support the use of Arabic to improve understanding, recalling new vocabulary or reduce their anxiety.

The negative comments increased significantly when students were asked if they participate because code-switching motivates them. The statement received disagreements and strong disagreements from (86.1%) of the participants in this study (31 students). 16 students strongly disagreed, and 15 disagreed. 5 of the students (13.9%) stated that code-switching would motivate them to participate. Interestingly, none of the students selected strongly agree. No students selected the neutral option either. This demonstrates clearly that the majority of

students do not believe it is helpful for them to get involved with classroom activities when they switch to Arabic. The result therefore provides little support for the idea that code-switching increases student participation.

The responses were also almost entirely negative regarding classroom interaction since 33 (91.7%) students strongly disagreed/disagreed that code-switching increases classroom interaction. There was a very strong opposition to the statement from 15 students, whereas there were 18 who disagreed. Three students concurred with the statement (8.3%). Not one of the students expressed a strong positive opinion towards the statement and not one selected the neutral choice. Based on the findings previously discussed, it is evident that students do not agree with the notion that Arabic-English code-switching results in increased interaction between students and teachers. In this instance, there was a clear distinction between negative and positive responses. Generally speaking, the students did not associate code-switching with enhanced classroom interaction.

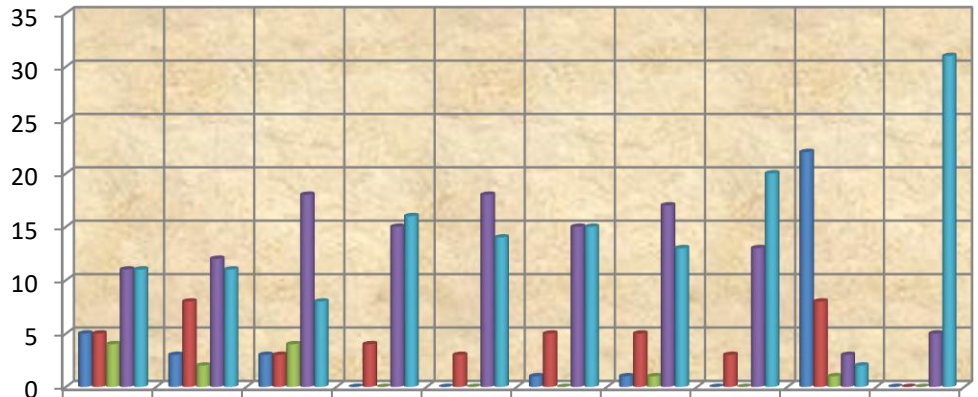
In addition, students showed a negative reaction to the notion that code-switching saves classroom time. Thirty students (83.3%) did not agree with this statement; fifteen disagreed strongly and fifteen disagreed. Only 6 of the students (16.7%) said they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. None of the students selected option neutral however. Although the students' views were overwhelmingly negative, it appears that they were not unanimous on the matter of whether Arabic English code-switching saves classroom time. On the other hand, students appeared to think that English was sufficient for the lesson and therefore did not require frequent transitions between languages.

A similar tendency was also noticed by the students in their responses concerning the communication between teacher and students. 80.6% or twenty-nine of the students surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed that code-switching facilitates communication between teachers and students. Seventeen did not agree with the statement while twelve students strongly disagreed. Six students (16.7%) said they strongly agreed with or agreed with the statement.

As we approach to the statement before last, the students disagreed with the idea that Arabic-English code-switching should be used more frequently. There were 33 (91.7%) responses of 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' in the thirty-six student answers. In this group of students there were twenty that strongly disagreed and thirteen that disagreed. Only three students (8.3%) agreed with this statement. None of the students strongly agreed and none selected "neutral". The result is strong evidence that the students did not wish for a higher frequency of

Arabic-English code-switching to be used in the English classrooms. Interestingly, the responses changed when students were asked if they believed code-switching should be used less frequently. Out of thirty-six students responded to the questionnaire's statements, twenty-two strongly agreed and eight agreed. This finding further reinforces the students' preference for minimal use of Arabic. Students were not entirely opposed to code-switching but it seems they certainly did not wish for the frequent use. The strong agreement with using code-switching less often suggests that students preferred English to remain the main language of classroom instruction.

The final statement had the strongest result, as all 36 students (100%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that code-switching should be based on the students' English proficiency level. Overall, the responses to the ten statements show a mainly negative view of the effects of Arabic-English code-switching. Students did not see Arabic as necessary for improving understanding, vocabulary, participation, interaction, time, or communication. However, the results do not mean that students completely reject Arabic in English classes. Rather, they seem to accept its use in some necessary situations, while preferring English to remain the main classroom language.




| | Statement 1 | Statement 2 | Statement 3 | Statement 4 | Statement 5 | Statement 6 | Statement 7 | Statement 8 | Statement 9 | Statement 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 5 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 22 | 0 |
| Agree | 5 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 8 | 0 |
| Neutral | 4 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Disagree | 11 | 12 | 18 | 15 | 18 | 15 | 17 | 13 | 3 | 5 |
| Strongly Disagree | 11 | 11 | 8 | 16 | 14 | 15 | 13 | 20 | 2 | 31 |

**Fig 4:** Perceived Effects for Arabic-English Code-Switching

## Classroom Observation Results

This section provides an overview of the classroom observation findings. Four observations were conducted in four different English major classes, with a different teacher in each class. The observations followed the same checklist so that the data could be compared more smoothly. Although each classroom visit was completed separately, the results were summarized in one table to show the general patterns of Arabic-English code-switching. Table 4 presents this summary.

(C1= Class 1, C2= Class 2, C3= Class 3, C4= Class 4, N= Never, R= Rarely, O= Often, S= Sometimes, and A= Always).

*Table 4 Summary of Classroom Observation Results Across Four Observed Classes*

| No | Observation Item.<br>Teacher used Arabic: | C 1 | C 2 | C 3 | C 4 | Overall Pattern |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | to explain difficult grammar. | R | R | S | R | Rarely |
| 2 | to explain new vocabulary. | S | S | O | S | Sometimes |
| 3 | to explain abstract concepts. | S | S | S | R | Sometimes |
| 4 | when giving classroom instructions. | R | R | S | R | Rarely |
| 5 | for assignment/ exam instructions. | S | S | R | S | Sometimes |
| 6 | to check students' understanding. | O | O | O | S | Often |
| 7 | when answering students' questions. | S | O | S | S | Sometimes |
| 8 | to summarize the lesson. | N | N | N | N | Never |
| 9 | to explain difficult reading passages. | S | R | S | S | Sometimes |
| 10 | to introduce unfamiliar terminology. | S | S | O | S | Sometimes |
| 11 | to support low-proficiency students. | O | O | S | O | Often |
| 12 | to encourage shy or hesitant students. | R | R | S | R | Rarely |
| 13 | to maintain classroom discipline. | N | N | N | R | Never |
| 14 | to provide corrective feedback. | R | R | N | R | Rarely |
| 15 | to discuss cultural concepts. | S | S | R | S | Sometimes |
| 16 | Code-switching was brief and purposeful. | O | O | A | O | Often |
| 17 | English remained the main language of instruction. | A | A | A | A | Always |
| 18 | Students responded positively after code-switching. | O | O | S | O | Often |
| 19 | Students became more engaged after code-switching. | O | S | O | O | Often |
| 20 | Teacher switched back to English after using Arabic. | A | A | O | A | Always |

The observations showed that English remained the primary language of instruction across all four classes. Arabic-English code-switching occurred selectively, most often when teachers checked students' understanding or supported lower-proficiency students, while it was less frequent for grammar explanation, classroom instructions, discipline, and corrective feedback. Teachers generally engaged in brief and purposeful code-switching, returning to English after using Arabic. The students also seemed to appreciate it too as there was greater participation in most of the classes.

**Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to explore how English-major students viewed Arabic-English code-switching and the situations in which they considered it appropriate. To achieve this, a well-constructed questionnaire was designed. Four classroom observations were also conducted to compare students' perceptions with teachers' actual classroom practices. The following discussion interprets the findings in relation to the research questions and previous studies.

The findings from both approaches adopted for data collection suggest that English major students value continuous exposure to English during classroom instruction. Their firm stance for limiting Arabic use may reflect the belief that frequent use of English provides greater opportunities to develop speaking, listening, and overall language proficiency. Since the participants specialized in English, they may have expected the classroom environment to encourage maximum use of the target language.

Students' negative attitudes may also reflect their concern that excessive Arabic use reduces valuable opportunities to practice English. Since classroom interaction often provides one of the few environments in which students regularly communicate in English, participants may have viewed frequent code-switching as limiting their language development.

Despite the fact that the Libyan college students recognized that Arabic may be useful in situations requiring additional clarification, they generally preferred English as the language of instruction. Some classroom situations received relatively higher levels of agreement. These situations represented in the directed involvement in explaining unfamiliar terminology, clarifying difficult reading passages, and supporting for weaker students. These findings imply that students accepted Arabic as a supportive instructional tool rather than as a replacement for English.

Although both datasets showed that English remained the main classroom language and that Arabic was not used continuously, some differences emerged regarding the situations in which Arabic was considered appropriate. For example, students generally did not support using Arabic to check understanding or answer questions, whereas these were among the situations in which teachers were observed using Arabic. Thus, the two datasets showed broad agreement about the limited role of Arabic, but differed in some specific classroom uses.

Although the classroom observations showed that teachers sometimes used Arabic when they found it necessary for teaching purposes, Libyan college students generally showed negative attitudes toward frequent use of code-switching in the classroom. This indicates that teachers used their own judgment to help students understand difficult points while keeping English as the main language of instruction.

The findings also show that English major students prefer to have more exposure to English during classroom instruction. This finding is consistent with the results reported by Al-Nofaie (2010), who found that university students preferred English to remain the dominant language in English classrooms.

The observation findings also support the results of Alshammari (2011), who found that teachers switched to the first language primarily for instructional purposes rather than as a regular classroom language. Likewise, the teachers observed in the present study used Arabic selectively to explain difficult concepts, check students' understanding, and assist lower-proficiency learners.

In general, the participants preferred classrooms where English was used most of the time, while accepting occasional Arabic use for specific teaching purposes. Similarly, the classroom observations demonstrated that teachers employed Arabic selectively and purposefully rather than as a regular medium of instruction. These findings suggest that balanced and carefully planned code-switching may support learning without reducing students' exposure to English.

## Conclusion

The questionnaire results showed that most Libyan college students preferred English to remain the language used for classroom communication. The present study was conducted to investigate how English-major students perceive the use of Arabic-English code-switching in their classrooms and to understand the situations in which they believe the use of Arabic may be appropriate. The study also attempted to compare students' views with what actually happens

inside classrooms through observing teachers' language practices. The results provided a clearer picture of the two languages, Arabic and English, regarding the way and time in which they can be used in the English-major classrooms at the Faculty of Education, University of Tripoli.

The Libyan college students felt that regular exposure to English gives them more chances to develop their listening and speaking skills. For this specific reason, many students were concerned that the repeated use of Arabic could reduce those opportunities. Based on the questionnaire and observation findings, many students would accept the limited use of Arabic during regular lectures when there was a good reason for it, such as explaining unknown vocabulary, making difficult points easier to understand, or supporting students who were struggling to follow the lesson.

The four classroom observations added another perspective to the questionnaire results. Although English was obviously the dominant language used by the teachers, switching to Arabic appeared in some classroom situations when teachers felt that it could make a point clearer. The observed use of Arabic was generally limited and was followed by a return to English. This suggests that teachers were not using Arabic as an alternative to English, but rather as an additional resource whenever needed.

Based on the above, teachers need to make careful decisions about when to switch languages and ensure that such switching serves a clear teaching purpose. The findings of this study contribute to the understanding of Arabic-English code-switching in the Libyan university context and provide evidence that classroom language choices should consider both the goals of English learning and the actual needs of students.

**Recommendations**

The present study, which investigated the attitudes of Libyan learners toward Arabic-English code-switching, showed some interesting results. The results indicate that English should remain the main language used in English major classrooms. However, the findings also showed that Libyan students did not completely reject the use of Arabic. Instead, they believed that it can be beneficial in a variety of classroom situations.

It can be written, based on these findings that English language teachers are to be encouraged to use English as much as possible during classroom instruction. This would increase students' opportunities to hear and use the language in meaningful classroom activities.

The use of Arabic should not become a regular classroom habit. It may be more useful when students have difficulty understanding a new term, a difficult reading text, or an abstract idea that cannot be explained easily in English.

It is also recommended that teachers think carefully before switching to Arabic. In some lessons there may be no need for it, while in others a short explanation in Arabic may save time and help students continue following the lesson.

English departments may also benefit from discussing this issue with their teaching staff. Since different teachers use different classroom practices, exchanging experiences may help them decide when code-switching is helpful and when it is better to continue using English.

Finally, more studies are still needed in the Libyan context. Similar studies that examine the attitude of Libyan learners toward Arabic-English code-switching could include students from other universities or compare the views of students and teachers. It may also be useful to examine whether students' attitudes change as their level of English improves.

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