

## **Learners' Attitudes toward Using the Arabic Mother Tongue in Hispanic Literature Classrooms**

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**Received on: 25-3-2018**

**Accepted on: 21-5-2018**

### **Abstract**

This paper measures student attitudes towards the use of the mother tongue (Arabic) in Hispanic literature classes at the University of Jordan, using a 14-item questionnaire. The study is carried out with a random sample of 86 out of the 160 students registered in the third and fourth year of Spanish Language and Literature major. The findings reveals that there is a relatively positive attitude towards using Arabic (L1) in Hispanic literature classrooms. This attitude results from a need to use Arabic by both lecturers and students. Lecturers can ensure that students understand and are confident about their comprehension. Students consult Arabic references to support their comprehension especially in cases where getting the general idea of the Spanish text would not suffice. Five factors influencing students' attitudes towards using Arabic in Hispanic literature classes are analyzed. Two factors are positively correlated with students' attitudes: students' linguistic competence in Spanish and the accepted ratio of using Arabic in these classes. Three factors are not significantly influential in forming students' attitudes: academic level (3rd, 4th, or 5th year), type of high school track, and GPA (University Grade Point Average out of 4).

**Keywords:** Student attitudes; second languages; Arabic (L1); Hispanic literature; linguistic competence; accepted ratio of using Arabic.

### **1. Introduction**

In the field of foreign language (FL) or second language (L2) teaching, the student's attitude is always valued as a significant factor in the process of language acquisition. It is obvious that the learning conditions differ according to economic, cultural or social factors. It is also undeniable that the role of TFL has developed and changed in response to educational needs. However, literature has always been an essential subject in TFL worldwide. Literature has its own peculiarities; teaching and learning about literature requires a slightly different approach than the one used for grammar, translation or linguistics. Therefore, it is expected that students' attitudes will differ in relation to how the literature course material is delivered.

Being aware of the role of attitudes in general, and in Hispanic literature classes (HLC) in the double major BA Program of Spanish/ English at The University of Jordan (UJ), the researchers of this study have been observing for the past few years an inclination among a considerable number of students to

register in courses taught by professors of literature who use both Spanish and Arabic in the classroom. Many Jordanian students of Spanish, Department of European Languages (DEL), at the University of Jordan (UJ) wonder ‘Why is literary commentary so complicated?’, ‘How can Hispanic literature serve in professional life in Jordan?’, or ‘What would interest our future bosses about literary movements, genres, poets and literary figures?’. In such a context, the need to investigate students’ attitudes towards using Arabic in (HLC) arose.

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What attitude exists towards the use of Arabic (L1) among students of HLC at UJ?
2. What is the role of L1 in teaching HLC?
3. Do students really need L1 in HLC?
4. Do the following five variables influence students’ attitudes toward using Arabic at HLC?
  1. Linguistic Competence in Spanish,
  2. Academic Level (3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, or 5<sup>th</sup> year)
  3. High School Track (Literary, Scientific or Information Management Track)
  4. GPA (University Grade Point Average out of 4) and
  5. The Accepted Ratio of Using Arabic in HLC

The double major BA Program of Spanish/ English offers three compulsory and three optional courses in Hispanic literature. The compulsory Hispanic literature courses are: Introduction to Hispanic Literature, Hispanic Literature till the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and Contemporary Hispanic Literature. The optional courses are: Specific Topic in Hispanic Literature, Latin American Literature, and Hispanic Novel. Students can take these literature courses starting their third academic year.

It is hoped that the results of the current study will allow lecturers of Hispanic literature at the UJ, and possibly at other Jordanian and Arab universities in the region, to make use of the factors that can contribute to improving the teaching of Hispanic literature. This study will also contribute to the literature on the need and importance of using L1 in the process of learning a FL, specifically the literature of that FL.

## **2. Literature Review**

Since the emergence of the methodology of FLT, the role and use of mother tongue in the TFL classroom has been the subject of ongoing debate and discussion by many researchers. Texidor (2007) states that "se desecha un método, se adopta otro, y en cada uno de ellos hay un punto de vista diferente acerca de este tópico"<sup>1</sup>. However, there is not a single study that investigates this subject from the perspective of Spanish as a FL in Jordan. Some researchers recognize the inevitable and facilitator role of L1 in the FL or L2 classroom, such as Schweers, 1999; Cook, 2001; Tang, 2002; Ramírez Yance, 2010; Alshammari, 2011; among others. In Jordan, the only work that has been carried out in order to demonstrate information on attitudes towards the use of the mother tongue in FL classrooms was carried by Khassawneh (2011). In her research, Khassawneh examines the attitudes of EFL-students at Yarmouk

University in Jordan. The study concludes that the attitude of the students towards the use of L1 in the classroom is generally positive, especially among students with low English proficiency.

With the objectives that lead us to perform this research, we understand that part of this discussion arises out of lecturers' professional experience, where an FL instructor begins by employing a certain methodology and ends up using another to accommodate educational needs. Our experience shows that sometimes there is a need to use the mother tongue in HLC. The same observation was made by Harbord (1992, 350), who states that "many ELT (English Language Teaching) teachers have tried to create English-only classrooms but have found they have failed to get the meaning across, leading to student incomprehension and resentment". Therefore, the use of translation or transfer of content "is a natural phenomenon and an inevitable part of second language acquisition regardless of whether or not the teacher offers 'permit' of translation." Auerbach (1993) recognizes the positive role of L1 and cites a list of Piasecka (1988, 98-99), which suggests the following possible reasons for using L1: negotiation of syllabus and lesson, classroom management, language analysis, presentation of grammatical, phonological, morphological and orthographic rules, discussion of cultural issues, giving instructions and guidance, explanation of errors and checking for understanding. Both McCann (2005) and Cameron (2001) also consider using L1 as a type of positive translation which helps to explain the structures of the language, to carry out comments and to maintain the classroom discipline. Cook (2001, 418) proposes situations in which L1 can be used "deliberately and systematically" in class:

1. to provide a short-cut for giving instructions and explanations where the cost of the L2 is too great,
2. to build up the inter-linked L1 and L2 knowledge in students' minds,
3. to carry out learning tasks through collaborative dialogue with fellow-students,
4. and to develop L2 activities such as code-switching for later real-life use.

Cook (2001, 419) concludes that in the case of the use of the two languages, lecturers can develop certain techniques to improve the learning process once they feel they are "free of their inhibitions about using L1".

However, literature has its particularities. Teaching literature requires a balance among communicative competence, linguistic, sociolinguistic and strategic discourse.<sup>2</sup> The traditional textbook presents grammar lessons with an explicit source of data, explanations and examples rather than a text to be interpreted. The beauty of literature is professed for those who study it not as a means to learn a language but as an object of study itself. Since Spanish, our FL in this case, is only introduced to students at the university level, the advanced students of third and fourth year differ from those of first and second years, as they can express themselves using advanced tenses and can formulate whole paragraphs orally. In FL classes, the process of analyzing a literary text is expected to facilitate, in one way or another, the opportunity for students to achieve the FL linguistic competence. Of the four language skills, the skill of reading is most often used in literature and "el acto de leer no requiere interacción con otro interlocutor"<sup>3</sup> (Dearworth 2012, 21). The feature that distinguishes the literary text comes from the reading strategies that are completely different depending on the target as indicated by Sanz González (1995, 120) "No será suficiente a veces captar el sentido general del texto y habrá que prestar mayor atención a algunos pasajes

del mismo, repitiendo su lectura incluso. Hay pues muchos tipos de textos de lectura, que requieren una forma de lectura distinta en cada caso, según el texto y las necesidades del lector entre ellos".<sup>4</sup>

To make the student of Hispanic Literature capable of reading a literary text, we start by explaining the political, economic and literary environment of the time it was written. The students then try to deduce the topics, types and general situations reflected in the text. After that, students try to analyze details in the linguistic units of the literary text. This way, the student "se sirve de su conocimiento del mundo y del contexto discursivo específico para predecir, formular hipótesis e inferir, no sólo durante la audición, sino incluso antes o después de ella"<sup>5</sup>. When analyzing the text, the process becomes synthetic; the student builds a gradually more detailed mental image, increasing the perception through the phonetic, phonological, lexical, morphosyntactic and semantic levels to form a coherent text at a pragmatic level. To illustrate his understanding, the student consults the lecturer, dictionary, internet, grammar, etc., rebuilding the value of each sentence to entirely rebuild the text.

The process of comprehension is complex. Peris (2007, 5-6) recommends flexibility in the tasks related to the skill of comprehension "entender no es dar con la respuesta correcta, eliminando las falsas; entender es hacer una interpretación razonable [...] lo importante es "entender algo" (lo que interesa, lo que se busca), no necesariamente "entenderlo todo"<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, the oral speech of the lecturer differs from his written notes or explanation. Hence, lecturers should support their speech with expressive resources (Peris, 2007, 2). L1 is one of these resources which emerge under specific conditions controlled by the demand and the educational objectives of the class. Listening is a receptive skill as is reading. To perceive literature in HLC at the DEL- JU, the lecturer should depend more on sending directions and information to learners.

### 3. Methodology

Out of the 160 third and fourth (and sometimes fifth) year students of the Spanish section at the DEL at UJ, 86 were asked to fill in a paper questionnaire (see Appendix). All responses were valid. The age range was (20 - 23) years.

The questionnaire has two main sections. The first includes demographic information: linguistic competence in Spanish, academic level, high school track, GPA and accepted ratio of using Arabic in HLC as shown in Table 1. It has been decided not to include the factor of gender in our study, since the majority of students in this BA Program are females (94.2% of the respondents). As shown in Table 1, the prevalent percentage of the sample's competence in Spanish is (Very Good) (58.1%). Most of the respondents (72.1%) are in their fourth year. Those who did the Literary track in high school represent (52.3%) of the sample. More than a third of the sample (39.5%) has a current GPA of (2.5~2.99 out of 4). Finally, the majority of respondents (54.7%) believe that 25% is an accepted ratio of using Arabic when in HLC.

**Table 1:** The respondents' distribution according to demographic variables

Variable	Frequency	%
<b>Linguistic Competence in Spanish</b>		
Excellent	9	10.5
Very good	50	58.1
Good	23	26.7
Weak	4	4.7
<b>Academic Level</b>		
3 <sup>rd</sup> year	19	22.1
4 <sup>th</sup> year	62	72.1
5 <sup>th</sup> year	5	5.8
<b>High School Track</b>		
Scientific	17	19.8
Literary	45	52.3
Information Management	24	27.9
<b>GPA</b>		
3.65 - 4.00	7	8.1
3.00 - 3.64	30	34.9
2.50 - 2.99	34	39.5
2.00 - 2.49	15	17.4
<b>Accepted Ratio of Using Arabic in HLC</b>		
0%	9	10.5
25%	47	54.7
50%	26	30.2
75%	3	3.5
100%	1	1.2

The second section of the questionnaire includes 14 statements regarding students' attitudes towards using Arabic in HLC. The statements were designed after reviewing research on the use of L1 in the classroom of Spanish and other languages. This section includes six positive statements (shaded) that encourage the use of Arabic in HLC (3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 12) and eight negative statements that encourage the use of Spanish only in HLC (1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 11, 13, and 14) as shown in Table 2. The questionnaire employs the Likert (1-5) scale which allows measuring student attitudes toward using Arabic in HLC.

**Table 2:** The 14 statements used to investigate students' attitudes towards using Arabic (L1) in HLC

	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	The lecturer should explain the new terminology and expressions in Spanish.					
2	The lecturer should explain the grammar rules used in literary works in Spanish.					
3	I prefer to use a Spanish-Arabic dictionary to look up new terms.					
4	I prefer to use some Arabic websites to read about Hispanic literature.					
5	I understand the literature class better if the lecturer speaks in Spanish.					
6	The lecturer should support the Spanish class of literature by Arabic literary examples.					

	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
7	I feel more comfortable when I use Arabic with the lecturer in class.					
8	I prefer to use Arabic with my classmates in the class of Hispanic literature.					
9	I prefer using Spanish over Arabic when having a dialogue with the lecturer.					
10	I prefer the instructor to use Arabic when necessary.					
11	I prefer a lecturer who speaks Spanish fluently.					
12	I prefer to be allowed to speak Arabic in Hispanic literature classes.					
13	I feel more enthusiastic about the class when the lecturer explains the lecture in Spanish rather than in Arabic.					
14	I prefer that the lecturer simplifies the main ideas in Spanish and does not translate them in Arabic.					

Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the reliability of the scale and  $\alpha$  was (0.765) for the questionnaire. The figure is deemed satisfactory as far as reliability is concerned since it is greater than the accepted threshold of 0.60.

#### 4. Procedure

The questionnaire was subjected to initial test assessment through reviewing it by academics in three specialties: Spanish, Arabic, and psychometrics. Then a pilot survey was conducted to make the necessary modifications. The questionnaire was then presented to respondents in the classrooms where they receive literature classes. The students voluntarily completed the questionnaire. The process took about ten minutes. The questionnaires guaranteed the anonymity of the respondent. It was presented to respondents in Arabic and was translated into English in the final stages of the investigation.

#### 5. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were employed to describe and analyze the coded data using SPSS 22. Independent sample One Way ANOVA was used to test the hypotheses and Scheffe test was used to analyze the means and to figure out where the differences lie when the One-Way Analysis shows significance ( $p < 0.05$ ).

The student responses were corrected after converting the scale of verbal response to a numerical scale (Likert scale), giving "Strongly Agree" (5), "Agree" (4) "Do not know" (3), "Disagree" (2), and "Strongly disagree" (1) to the positive statements (3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 12). The numerical scale was reversed with the negative statements (1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 11, 13, and 14).

We also devised an arbitrary standard for judging the attitude of students towards using Arabic in HLC as follows: Low (1.00 - 2.25), Moderate (2.26 – 3.25) and High (3.26 - 5).

### 5.1. Results

Table 3 summarizes the scale of the students' answers that was used in the statistical analyses. Students' answers were given numbers according to Likert's scale (1-5) and the values for negative statements were reversed. Therefore, for positive statements, as the value of the answer increases above (3), positive attitudes towards using Arabic in HLC increase. For negative statements, as the value of the answer decreases below (3), positive attitudes towards using Arabic in HLC increase.

**Table 3:** Students' answers corrected for statistical analysis

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<b>Positive Statements</b> (3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 12)	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Negative Statements</b> (1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 11, 13, and 14)	1	2	3	4	5

← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← 3  
Positive  
← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← 3  
Positive

Table 4 shows the mean values of the answers by all (86) respondents to the 14 statements. It can be noticed that the mean values of all positive (shaded) statements are above the mean value of (3), suggesting a positive attitude towards using Arabic in HLC. Also, mean values of all negative statements are below the mean value of (3), suggesting a positive attitude towards using Arabic in HLC, as well. The mean values of both positive and negative statements reflect agreement with these statements.

**Table 4:** Mean values of the answers by all (86) respondents to the 14 statements

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1	86	1	4	2.01	.847
Q2	86	1	4	2.13	.992
Q3	86	1	5	3.93	1.071
Q4	86	1	5	3.36	1.137
Q5	86	1	4	2.87	1.072
Q6	86	1	5	4.00	1.188
Q7	86	1	5	3.45	1.175
Q8	86	1	5	3.02	1.158
Q9	86	1	5	2.55	1.036
Q10	86	1	5	1.69	.858
Q11	86	1	2	1.20	.401
Q12	86	1	5	3.42	1.090
Q13	85	1	5	2.76	1.161
Q14	86	1	5	1.64	.825
Grand Mean	86	1.93	3.64	2.7170	.36979
Valid N (list-wise)	85				

Table 5 shows an arbitrary standard for judging the attitude of students towards using Arabic in HLC based on the Grand Mean of all answers: Low (1.00 - 2.25), Moderate (2.26 – 3.25) and High (3.26 - 5). It can be seen that the Grand Mean (2.717) suggests that respondents' answers fall in the 'Moderate' category. This indicates that, in general, students' attitudes towards using Arabic in HLC is neither extremely negative (Low) nor extremely positive (High), but is rather midway (being both negative and positive) as will be further explained in the discussion.

**Table 5:** Arbitrary standard for judging the attitude of students towards using Arabic in HLC based on the Grand Mean of all answers

Category	Level
1-2.33	Low
2.33-3.66	Moderate
3.67-5	High

## 5.2. Influence of the Five Variables on Student's Attitudes towards Using Arabic in HLC

### 5.2.1. Linguistic Competence in Spanish

Using One way ANOVA, we found that (calculated  $F = 7.286$ ) is significant at (0.05) level. Hence there are significant differences in attitudes towards using Arabic in teaching HL according to Linguistic Competence in Spanish as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6:** Attitudes towards using Arabic in HLC according to Linguistic Competence in Spanish

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	2.446	3	.815	7.286	0.000
<b>Within Groups</b>	9.177	82	.112		
<b>Total</b>	11.623	85			

$P < 0.05$

By using Scheffe test, it was found that these differences tend to increase for respondents with (Very good) level as shown in Table 7. The values for (Very good) were the most significant (underlined).

**Table 7:** Scheffe test showing the differences trend among respondents according to Linguistic Competence in Spanish

(I) Level	(J) Level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
<b>Excellent</b>	Very good	-.00658-	.12113	1.000
	Good	.21336	.13153	.457
	Weak	.71413*	.20103	.008
<b>Very good</b>	Excellent	.00658	.12113	1.000
	Good	.21994	.08429	.087
	Weak	.72071*	.17383	<b>.001</b>
<b>Good</b>	Excellent	-.21336-	.13153	.457
	Very good	-.21994-	.08429	.087
	Weak	.50078	.18123	.062
<b>Weak</b>	Excellent	-.71413-*	.20103	.008
	Very good	-.72071-*	.17383	<b>.001</b>
	Good	-.50078-	.18123	.062

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

### 5.2.2. Academic Level (3rd, 4th, or 5th year)

Using One way ANOVA, we found that (calculated  $F = 0.054$ ) is not significant at (0.05) level. Hence, there are no significant differences in attitudes towards using Arabic in teaching HL according to the Academic Level as shown in Table 8.

**Table 8:** Attitudes towards using Arabic in HLC according to Academic Level

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	.015	2	.008	.054	.947
<b>Within Groups</b>	11.608	83	.140		
<b>Total</b>	11.623	85			

$P < 0.05$

### 5.2.3. High School Track (Literary, Scientific or Information Management Track)

By using One way ANOVA, it was found that (calculated  $F = 0.0843$ ) is not significant at (0.05) level. Hence there are no significant differences in attitudes toward using Arabic in teaching HL according to type of High School Track as shown in Table 9.

**Table 9:** Attitudes toward using Arabic in teaching HLC according to high school track

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	.080	2	.040	.286	.752
<b>Within Groups</b>	11.544	83	.139		
<b>Total</b>	11.623	85			

$P < 0.05$

### 5.2.4. GPA (University Grade Point Average out of 4)

Using One way ANOVA, we found that (calculated  $F = 2.656$ ) is not significant at (0.05) level. Hence, there are no relevant differences in attitudes towards using Arabic in teaching HL according to GPA as shown in Table 10.

**Table 10:** Attitudes towards using Arabic in teaching HLC according to GPA

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	1.030	3	.343	2.656	.054
<b>Within Groups</b>	10.594	82	.129		
<b>Total</b>	11.623	85			

$P < 0.05$

### 5.2.5. The Accepted Ratio of Using Arabic in HLC Classes

By using One way ANOVA, it was found that (calculated  $F = 10.970$ ) is noteworthy at the (0.05) level. Hence, there are significant differences in attitudes towards using Arabic in teaching HL according to the Accepted Ratio of Using Arabic in Teaching HLC as shown in Table 11.

**Table 11:** Attitudes towards using Arabic in teaching HLC according to the Accepted Ratio of Using Arabic in HLC

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	4.084	4	1.021	10.970	.000
<b>Within Groups</b>	7.539	81	.093		
<b>Total</b>	11.623	85			

$P < 0.05$

Using Scheffe test, we found that these differences tend to increase for respondents who accept (50%) of the lecture to be in Arabic while teaching HL as shown in Table 12.

**Table 12:** Scheffe test showing the differences trend of respondents

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
0%	9	2.2778	.32624	.10875	2.0270	2.5286
25%	47	2.6474	.30899	.04507	2.5567	2.7381
50%	26	<b>2.9951</b>	.29462	.05778	2.8761	3.1141
75%	3	2.6190	.25085	.14483	1.9959	3.2422
100%	1	3.0000	.	.	.	.
Total	86	2.7170	.36979	.03988	2.6377	2.7963

## 6. Discussion

This paper investigates the use of the mother tongue in the HLC at the University of Jordan. Students' attitudes towards using L1 in teaching FL is highly valued since it usually corresponds to the learning conditions; economic, cultural, or social. Teaching the literature of a foreign language has its own particularities. At the Department of European Languages- University of Jordan, a previous study (*cf.* Sbaihat et al., 2013) has revealed that students of the Spanish major only take the literature courses in their program when it is compulsory but do not choose the optional literary courses.

The first research question was 'What attitude exists towards the use of Arabic (L1) among students of HLC at UJ?'

Table 13 summarizes the frequencies of "strongly agree" and "agree" answers to all 14 statements. The statements are shown in order of the highest percentages of responses for "strongly agree" and "agree". The highest percentages almost entirely reflect the negative statements being highly supported by students. In contrast, the positive statements regarding using Arabic in HLC are found at the bottom end of Table 13.

**Table 13:** The statements in order of the highest percentages of responses for "strongly agree" and "agree"

N.	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Total
11	I prefer a lecturer who speaks Spanish fluently.	80.2	19.8	100
14	I prefer that the lecturer simplifies the main ideas in Spanish and does not translate it in Arabic.	50.0	43.0	93.0
10	I prefer that the instructor uses Arabic when necessary.	47.7	44.2	91.9
1	The lecturer should explain the new terminology and expressions in Spanish.	23.3	64.0	87.3
2	The lecturer should explain the grammar rules used in literary works in Spanish.	25.6	53.5	79.1
9	I prefer using Spanish over Arabic to hold a dialogue with the lecturer.	14.0	43.0	57.0
13	I feel more enthusiastic about the class when the lecturer explains the lecture in Spanish rather than in Arabic.	10.5	41.9	52.4
8	I prefer to use Arabic with my classmates in the class of Hispanic literature.	4.7	43.0	47.7

N.	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Total
5	I understand the literature class better if the lecturer speaks in Spanish.	10.5	32.6	43.1
4	I prefer to use some Arabic websites to read about Hispanic literature.	3.5	29.1	32.6
7	I feel more comfortable when I use Arabic with the lecturer in class.	3.5	27.9	31.4
12	I prefer to be allowed to speak Arabic in Hispanic literature classes.	2.3	25.6	27.9
3	I prefer to use a Spanish-Arabic dictionary to look up new terms.	2.3	14.0	16.3
6	The lecturer should support the Spanish class of literature by Arabic literary examples.	4.7	11.6	16.3

However, taking the statistical analyses into account, Table 4 above shows that the sample of respondents' answers fall in the category of 'Moderate' attitude towards using Arabic in HLC. This suggests that students favor the use of Arabic in HLC depending on different variables, but would also like to be taught HL or Spanish in general by lecturers who are fluent in Spanish and who encourage using Spanish in class.

Furthermore, Table 1 above, shows that (54.7%) of respondents favor the use of Arabic in HLC in 25% of the time. However, Scheffe test in Table 12 shows that the most significant differences in answers regarding the accepted ratio are by students who accept using Arabic in 50% of the time. This suggests that the need to use more Arabic in HLC is significantly important.

Therefore, to answer the first research question, we would claim that there is, in general, a 'Moderate' attitude towards using Arabic in HLC reflected in the General Mean of answers (2.717). This suggests that the attitude cannot be negative or extremely positive, but depends on different factors.

The second research question was 'Do the students really need L1 in HLC?'

The need to use Arabic in HLC is reflected in the answers of those who favor using Arabic in 50% of the time. In general, the lecturer is preferred to give the lesson in Spanish and, occasionally, to use Arabic to ensure that students understand and feel more confident about their comprehension.

However, this need is related to the third research question 'What is the role of L1 in teaching HLC?'

The present results show a preference for using Arabic more among students themselves. Students use Arabic when consulting Arabic references for some literary passages where getting the general idea of the Spanish piece would not suffice (see note 4). Also, students refer to such Arabic references when getting information not only during listening but also before or even after (see note 5).

The study suggests that using Arabic for HL purposes can be categorized in three bi-relations:

1. **Lecturer-student:** it is extremely needed to reinforce information by explaining the new terminology, new grammar, or class examples.
2. **Student-lecturer/student:** The student feels more comfortable when discussing the material in Arabic either with the lecturer or with classmates.

3. **Student-references:** Students are inclined to confirm or extend their literary information by using Arabic references to support their comprehension (e.g.: online sources or Arabic-Spanish dictionaries).

It was mentioned earlier that the learning conditions and needs differ according to economic, cultural and social factors. The need to use Arabic can be further justified in terms of factors not represented in our data. The bad economic situation in Jordan is reflected in the students' inability to pay high university fees. Students prefer lecturers with whom faster and better results can be achieved. They clearly show a preference for a fast track that will lead them to graduation and then to the work force. Additionally, a fairly high percentage of respondents show a preference to use Spanish in HL by using simplified Spanish to facilitate understanding, namely as it is located in the "storehouse of knowledge" of their minds. This can be explained by referring to a previous study (*cf* Sbaihat et al., 2013) which shows that our alumni study Hispanic literature as a means to expand and improve their communication and language skills, and not as an object of knowledge itself, in order to obtain a career opportunity.

The fourth research question examines student's attitudes towards using Arabic (L1) when teaching HLC in terms of five factors: Linguistic Competence in Spanish, Academic Level (3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, or 5<sup>th</sup> year), High Schools Track (Literary, Scientific or Information Management track), GPA (out of 4), and The Accepted Ratio of Using Arabic in HLC. It is found that competence of Spanish and the accepted ratio of using Arabic in HLC are significant factors in shaping students' attitudes towards using Arabic in HLC. However, the three remaining factors (academic level, high school track and GPA) do not play a significant role in students' attitudes in this regard.

It was expected that the linguistic competence of Spanish would influence the attitudes of students towards using Arabic in HLC. Table 7 shows that students who label themselves as (Very Good) in mastering Spanish have the most significant answers in increasing attitudes towards using Arabic.

Moreover, the accepted ratio of using Arabic in HLC was expected to be significant in shaping students attitudes. As mentioned earlier, those who accepted 50% of Arabic in class have the most significant influence in shaping positive attitudes towards using Arabic in HLC.

The Academic level factor is not found to be significant since the majority of respondents (72.1%) are in their fourth academic year, as shown in Table 1. Fourth year students best mirror students' linguistic needs. By the fourth year, students would have taken all the basic courses and prerequisites; hence, they better recognize their weaknesses and linguistic needs. Therefore, their attitudes reflect most closely how the course material is to be delivered.

High school track results were not expected to play a role in students' attitudes towards using Arabic in HLC. The majority of the students in this department are either from the Literary track or Information Management track, and a low percentage of students are from the scientific track (and are more used to scientific than literary subjects). This was a natural outcome as almost all students who enter the Spanish Section would have no prior knowledge of the language and would all start as beginners. Public Schools in Jordan do not teach foreign languages other than English. Some private schools in Jordan provide French as another foreign language alongside English. The reason for including this factor was a

possibility of the advantage of having studied the literary track, which usually focuses more on languages and languages skills (whether English or Arabic). However, our results do not support any such advantage.

GPA was thought to reflect the linguistic competence in Spanish; hence, for it to be similarly significant. However, this assumption was not corroborated by the results. This can be explained by the fact that students of Spanish also study English Language and Literature courses (40% of their courses). Therefore, their GPA would not reflect their competence in Spanish courses but only their command of English. Moreover, the GPA reflects achievement in courses of different language skills and not only that of reading, which is the skill most needed in better appreciating literature.

On the basis of our experience in teaching Spanish to university students, we feel that students with low GPA generally do not prefer a strict lecturer. The lecturers of literature used to utilize Spanish only without any intervention of L1; however, over a period of time, they ended up inserting Arabic words to confirm comprehension of the information, to entertain the students who find such classes boring and to give instructions.

## **7. Conclusion**

Literature has always been an essential course in the syllabus of foreign language teaching worldwide. Many studies have shown progress and modifications to their role responding to educational needs. However, literature has its own particularities. Therefore, the student's attitude is different when it comes to learning literature. Thus, the researchers, considering this specification, have decided to conduct this study to investigate the attitudes of students towards using Arabic in HLC of the double major Spanish/ English in the DEL at the UJ.

On the whole, the results indicate that even though students generally like to be taught by a lecturer with fluent Spanish, there is an inclination and a need to use Arabic for certain purposes in the HLC. The use of Arabic is highly demanded and recommended to reinforce students' comprehension and ability to feel more confident when learning Spanish. Students are found to use Arabic to consult Arabic or Arabic-Spanish references, websites, and dictionaries, particularly when reading literary texts. Furthermore, it was found that there is no significant correlation between the students' attitudes towards using Arabic in HLC and academic level, high school track, and GPA. However, there is a significant influence of the linguistic competence in Spanish and the accepted ratio of use of Arabic in HLC on students' attitudes in that regard.

However, such attitudes should be further investigated by considering other factors, such as the socio-economic status of the students, speaking another foreign language other than English and Spanish, future work aspirations of the students, and the linguistic competence of the students measured by the students' scores in Spanish language skills. The results of investigating such factors can give us more insight into sociolinguistic factors, the individual cognitive abilities of students, and the interplay of other languages on learning a third or a fourth FL.

## اتجاهات الطلبة في استعمال اللغة العربية الأم في محاضرات الأدب الإسباني

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### الملخص

تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى دراسة اتجاهات الطلبة في استعمال اللغة العربية الأم في محاضرات الأدب الإسباني في برنامج اللغة الإسبانية في الجامعة الأردنية. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف صمّم الباحثون استبياناً من 14 بنداً لقياس هذه الاتجاهات، ثم أجريت الدراسة على عيّنة عشوائية عددها 86 طالباً من أصل 160 طالباً مسجلين في السنوات الثالثة والرابعة في برنامج اللغة الإسبانية. وتكشف نتائج الدراسة عن توجه إيجابي نحو استعمال الطالب والمدرس اللغة العربية الأم في محاضرات الأدب الإسباني. وتبين أن توجه المدرس لاستعمالها يكون لضمان فهم الطالب للمادة المشروحة بالإسبانية والتأكيد عليها، في حين يتجه الطلبة لاستعمالها للاطلاع على مراجع تدعم فهمهم للمادة وبخاصة في الحالات التي تقدم فيها معلومات عامة وغير تفصيلية خلال الدرس. وقد عملت الدراسة على تحليل خمسة عوامل تساهم في التأثير في سلوك الطالب هذا، وظهر أن عاملين أثراً إيجابياً في استعمال الطالب للغة وهما: الكفاءة اللغوية في اللغة الإسبانية، ونسبة استعمال اللغة الإسبانية خلال المحاضرة، في حين لم تظهر ثلاثة عوامل أيّ تأثير، وهي: السنة الدراسية، ونوع التخصص في الثانوية العامة، والمعدل التراكمي للطلّاب في الجامعة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** اتجاهات الطلبة، اللغة الأم، اللغة الثانية، أدب إسباني، الكفاءة اللغوية، الجامعة الأردنية، اللغة الإسبانية.

## End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Translation: a method is discarded, another is adopted, and in each of them there is a different point of view on this topic.
- <sup>2</sup> The competences mentioned by Brandl, Klaus (2008: 6).
- <sup>3</sup> Translation: the act of reading does not require interaction with another interlocutor.
- <sup>4</sup> Translation: Sometimes it is not enough to get the general meaning of the text and more attention should be paid to some passages of the same text, even to repeat reading it. There are many types of reading materials, which require a different way of reading in each case, according to the text and the reader's needs.
- <sup>5</sup> Centro Virtual Cervantes, *Diccionario de Términos Clave de ELE*.  
[http://cvc.cervantes.es/ensenanza/biblioteca\\_ele/diccio\\_ele/diccionario/comprensionauditiva.htm](http://cvc.cervantes.es/ensenanza/biblioteca_ele/diccio_ele/diccionario/comprensionauditiva.htm)  
Translation: uses his knowledge of the world and the specific discursive context to predict and formulate hypotheses, not only during the hearing, but even before or after it.
- <sup>6</sup> Translation: Understanding is not to give the correct answer, eliminating the false ones; understanding is to make a reasonable interpretation [...] it is most important to "understand something" (what matters, what is sought), not necessarily "understand everything".

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