

Investigating the Impact of Direct Translation from Arabic (L1) to English (L2) on EFL Students' Conversational Skills: Evidence from Libyan University Context.

دراسة تأثير الترجمة المباشرة من اللغة العربية (اللغة الأولى) إلى اللغة الإنجليزية (اللغة الثانية) على مهارات المحادثة لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية: أدلة من سياق الجامعة الليبية.

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ملخص الدراسة:

كشفت هذه الدراسة البحثية عن تأثير الترجمة المباشرة من اللغة العربية (اللغة الأم) إلى اللغة الإنجليزية (اللغة الثانية) على مهارات المحادثة لدى طلاب تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من الليبيين في كلية التربية بجامعة طرابلس. وباتباع منهجية بحثية استكشافية متسلسلة تجمع بين الأساليب الكمية والنوعية، جمع البحث بيانات من 40 طالبًا وثلاثة مدرسين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية باستخدام مقابلات شبه منظمة واستبيان مغلق. وأشارت النتائج إلى أن غالبية الطالبات يعتمدن على عملية ذهنية من خطوتين، حيث تُصاغ الأفكار أولاً باللغة العربية ثم تُترجم إلى الإنجليزية. وقد أدى هذا الاعتماد على اللغة الأم بشكل ملحوظ إلى انخفاض الطلاقة وزيادة في الأخطاء النحوية والمعجمية، إذ يعتمد حوالي 90% من الطالبات اعتمادًا كبيرًا على الترجمة المباشرة. وكشفت النتائج الكمية أن 83.4% من المشاركات يميلون إلى التفكير باللغة العربية قبل التحدث، وأن 80% منهم أظهروا انخفاضًا ملحوظًا في الطلاقة نتيجة الاعتماد على اللغة الأم. كما أظهرت النتائج زيادة في القلق، وكثرة التوقفات والتردد، والعزوف عن الانخراط في التواصل الشفهي بين طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. أكد المدرسون أيضًا أن تأثير اللغة الأم (L1) يُشكل عائقًا رئيسيًا أمام الطلاقة في التحدث. وخلصت الدراسة عمومًا إلى أن تقليل الاعتماد على اللغة الأم يتطلب

تدخلات تعليمية أكثر تركيزًا، وزيادة التعرض للغة الثانية (L2)، وتدريبًا مهنيًا على استراتيجيات وممارسات التواصل باللغة الثانية فقط. الكلمات المفتاحية : اللغة الأم (L1) ، تأثير اللغة العربية، الترجمة المباشرة، الطلاقة في المحادثة، طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من ليبيا، المنهج المختلط.

Investigating the Impact of Direct Translation from Arabic (L1) to English (L2) on EFL Students' Conversational Skills: Evidence from Libyan University Context

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Abstract

This research study investigated how direct translation from Arabic (L1) in to English (L2) affects the conversational skills of Libyan EFL student-teachers at the Faculty of Education, University of Tripoli. Adopting a mixed methods sequential exploratory approach, the research gathered data from 40 students and three EFL instructors using semi-structured interviews and a closed-ended questionnaire. The findings indicated that the majority of students rely on a two-step mental process in which ideas are first formulated in Arabic and then translated into English. This L1 reliance significantly resulted in reduced fluency and a higher incidence of grammatical and lexical errors as around 90% of students rely heavily on direct translation. Quantitative findings revealed that 83.4% of participants tended to think in Arabic before speaking, and 80% of participants showed noticeable fluency reduction as a result of L1 reliance. Findings further showed increased anxiety, frequent pauses & hesitations, and reluctance to engage in oral communication among EFL students. Instructors also confirmed that interference from L1 is a major barrier to speaking fluency. Overall, the study concluded that reducing reliance on L1 entails more focused teaching interventions, increasing greater exposure to L2, and professional training in L2 only communicative strategies and practices.

Keywords: First Language(L1), Arabic Interference, Direct Translation, Conversational Fluency, Libyan EFL Students, Mixed Methods.

1. Introduction

Speaking is regarded as a key skill of communicative competence and is the main objective in second language acquisition or learning. Although, Libyan EFL students receive extensive exposure to English through formal instruction, many continue to experience difficulties with spontaneous and fluent oral communication. A major challenge contributing to this problem is the students' reliance on direct translation from their first language , Arabic, into English during language speech production. This two-step mental process, that is, thinking in L1 and then translating into L2 signals a strong reliance on Arabic linguistic structures, which often lead to grammatical errors and lexical errors, reduced fluency, and occasional breakdowns in communication.

This issue is especially important among university EFL students training to become future English teachers, as their level of oral proficiency has a direct impact on their future teaching effectiveness. The persistent reliance on L1 suggests that existing instructional approaches may not adequately address the mental and linguistic processes involved L2 speech production. While earlier research studies have examined L1 interference in EFL settings worldwide (Odlin, 1989; Selinker, 1972; Cook, 2001), research studies that specifically investigate Libyan EFL student-teachers remain scarce. Consequently, there remains a clear gap research regarding the patterns, frequency or prevalence, and effects of direct translation within this educational context.

To address this gap, the current study investigates the effects of direct translation from L1-to-L2 on conversational skills of Libyan EFL student-teachers at the Faculty of Education, University of Tripoli. Thus, by integrating the views of both students and instructors, the study aims to elucidate how cognitive translation strategies can influence oral conversational performance, identify prevalent forms of linguistic transfer, and explore pedagogical approaches and strategies to reduce L1 interference. This research study is therefore rooted in Linguistic Interference Theory and interlanguage frameworks (Selinker, 1972; Odlin, 1989), who emphasize the influence of first language structures on L2 acquisition and performance.

Therefore, this research study specifically aims to:

1-To identify linguistic elements transferred from L1 (Arabic) to L2 (English) in students' spoken English.

2-To investigate the impact of these transferred elements on communicative effectiveness.

3-To explore EFL teachers' perceptions and challenges in addressing L1 direct translation in students' speaking skills.

Accordingly, the presents study will address the following research questions:

1-What linguistic elements do EFL students transfer from Arabic to English during conversation?

2-How does direct translation from L1 affect students' communicative effectiveness in English?

3- What are EFL teachers' perceptions of and challenges in addressing L1 direct translation in speaking classes?

By answering these questions, the study seeks to provide some empirical evidence on L1 interference within the Libyan EFL context and to offer practical insights for improving oral proficiency and pedagogical practices.

2. Literature Review

2.1 L1 Use and Cognitive Processing in EFL Speaking

The functional role of the first language L1 in second language learning has long been debatable topic of discussion among applied linguistics. Early perspectives rooted in Contrastive Analysis (Lado, 1957) argued that differences between L1 and L2 structures are a major source of learner errors. Subsequently, Selinker's (1972) Interlanguage Theory proposed that learners develop an evolving linguistic system influenced by both transfer from L1 and internal developmental mechanisms.

A substantial body of research has indicated that EFL learners often rely on their mother tongue as a cognitive aid during speech planning and comprehension. Cook (2001), suggests that L1 functions as an internal resource that learners access when their L2 proficiency is inaequate for spontaneous speech production. In a similar vein, Kormos (2006) notes that mental translation is commonly prevalent in speaking tasks among learners at lower and intermediate proficiency levels, as as it helps reduce cognitive demands during the formulation stage of speech.

2.2 Linguistic transfer and negative interference

Linguistic transfer may have either positive or inhibitory effects, in EFL in contexts by limited language exposure, negative transfer tends to occur more infrequently (Odlin, 1989). Negative transfer arises when linguistic structures of the L1 are inappropriately mapped onto L2, leading to grammatical and syntactic inaccuracies, or pragmatic errors.

Research studies on Arabic-speaking EFL learners have consistently reported some difficulties with verb tense, prepositions, articles, and sentence structures stemming from fundamental structural differences between Arabic and English (Kharma & Hajjaj, 1997; Scott & Tucker, 1974). In particular, the absence of articles and the copular verb “to be” in certain Arabic constructions has been identified as a key contributor to recurring learner errors (Al-Jarf, 2010).

Research has also shown that idiomatic transfer constitutes another significant area of L1 interference. Littlemore and Low (2006), argue that literal translation of idiomatic expressions frequently result in semantic distortions and pragmatic misunderstandings. This tendency is further supported by research from Rahayu and Basri (2021) and Alfaifi and Saleem (2024) which confirms that EFL learners often tend to render idioms word-for-word when they have limited exposure to authentic L2 input.

2.3 Impact of L1 Reliance on Speaking Fluency and Communication

Speaking fluency is considered one of the most challenging skills for EFL learners to master, especially in EFL contexts with limited (Nation & Newton, 2009). According to Skehan (1998), over-reliance on form-focused processing strategies such as mental translation can negatively affect fluency by increasing cognitive demands and reducing automaticity of language production.

Empirical research has indicated that learners who depend extensively on L1 translation frequently exhibit hesitant speech marked by pauses, self-corrections, and slower speech rates (De Bot, 1992; Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005). Additionally, literal translation often produces grammatical errors and pragmatic misinterpretations, thereby affecting overall communicative effectiveness (Ellis, 2008).

2.4 Learners' Awareness and Instructional Approaches to Reducing L1 Interference

Recent research studies have emphasized the important role of learner awareness and metacognitive strategies in reducing L1 negative transfer. Oxford (2011) argues that learners who prioritize meaning over form-focused translation are more likely to achieve communicative competence. Similarly, Turnbull and Dailey-O'Cain (2009) advocated for the increased implementation of L2 only instructional practices to encourage direct thinking in the L2.

Research has also shown that the increased exposure to authentic English input, such as through media, can significantly reduce learners' reliance on L1 (Krashen, 1985; Webb & Rodgers, 2009). This type of exposure supports vocabulary acquisition growth, the use of formulaic language, and the development of pragmatic competence, which reduces the need for mental translation during speech production.

Nevertheless, teacher-related factors play a pivotal role. Al-Asi (2025) emphasizes that in the absence of systematic instructional strategies and adequate teacher training, learners frequently continue to depend on L1 even when they recognize its negative effects.

2.5 Teachers' Perspectives on L1 Interference

Teachers' views on L1 use provide important insights into classroom practices. Previous research by (Macaro, 2001; Littlewood & Yu, 2011) indicated that while instructors are generally aware of the negative impact of heavy L1 reliance on speaking fluency, they often encounter contextual challenges such as large class sizes, limited teaching time, and rigid curriculum demands.

Research studies conducted in EFL contexts comparable to Libya indicate that teachers often attribute L1 interference to learners' insufficient exposure to English and the scarcity of opportunities for authentic communication (Alshammari, 2011; Al-Nofaie, 2010). These studies further emphasize the need for increasing L2 exposure, encouraging the use of English–English dictionaries, and providing professional development for teachers—recommendations that hopefully mirror the interview findings in the present study.

2.3 Research Gap

Although previous research studies have broadly examined L1 interference in EFL contexts, empirical research evidence specifically investigating its impact on conversational fluency among Libyan EFL student-teachers remains scarce. Furthermore, most research studies have focused primarily on learners' perspectives alone, with limited attention given to teachers' insights on instructional challenges and strategies for reducing L1 reliance. As a result, there is an incomplete understanding of both the cognitive and pedagogical aspects of direct L1 to L2 translation in the Libyan setting. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating not only the linguistic elements transferred from Arabic to English and their effects on communicative effectiveness, but also by integrating EFL teachers' perceptions to identify practical strategies and approaches in order to reduce L1 interference in oral communication

3. Methodology

A mixed-methods sequential exploratory design was adopted to investigate the impact of direct translation from Arabic (L1) to English (L2) on Libyan conversational skills of EFL student-teachers . This approach integrated qualitative interviews and quantitative questionnaires to gain a comprehensive understanding of L1 interference (Creswell, 2014). In the qualitative phase, students' implicit cognitive strategies were investigated, and the insights obtained informed the construction of the quantitative questionnaire aimed at measuring the prevalence of these strategies across the broader student population.

3.1 Research Context

This study was carried out at the English Language Department of Faculty of Education of University of Tripoli in Libya, which prepares future English teachers through instruction in speaking, grammar, and pedagogical skills.

3.2 Participants and Sampling

The study involved 40 EFL student-teachers enrolled in *Speaking 3* courses along with 3 EFL instructors from the English language departments. All student participants were females, reflecting the actual gender composition of the speaking 3 classes during the data collection period and where female

enrollment was predominant. As such, the inclusion of female students was context driven rather than selective and no male students were available within the targeted classes at the time of study. This ensured sample homogeneity and minimized potential gender related variation in speaking behavior. This purposive sampling techniques was employed to ensure that participants had direct and recent experience with English oral communication tasks, which was essential for investigating the impact of L1 on L2 translation conversational skills. The student sample size was not arbitrarily determined. All students enrolled in the speaking 3 classes during the fall 2025 were invited to participate in the study. Of the 40 eligible students, 30 students completed the questionnaire, representing the final quantitative sample based on voluntary response. From this group, 10 students were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews. Selection criteria for the interview participants included willingness to participate, regular attendance in speaking classes, and the ability to reflect their speaking experience. The 3 EFL instructors participated in the qualitative phase of the study were purposively selected based on their teaching experience in speaking courses, their direct observation of students' oral performance and their familiarity with L1 interference in EFL classrooms. Overall, the sampling procedures were carefully aligned with the research objectives and ensured that participants possessed the necessary linguistic and instructional experience. The clear definition of inclusion criteria and sampling rationale enhances the transparency, validity, and reproducibility of the study.

3.3 Research Instruments

Semi-structured interviews were conducted online with students and teachers lasting approximately 20 minutes each. Student interviews focused on cognitive processes, awareness of L1 interference, types of errors, and emotional responses. Teacher interviews explored observed L1 interference, its underlying causes, and instructional challenges. All responses were manually documented and analyzed thematically .

Questionnaire included 18 Likert-scale items organized into four sections: L1 reliance, linguistic transfer, communicative impact, and perceptions of

strategies to reduce L1 interference . It was administered electronically during Fall 2025 semester.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

This data collection method followed sequential approach deriving significant insights from qualitative interviews to guide the questionnaire design. Interview responses were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes. Quantitative questionnaire data were analyzed descriptively, with frequencies and percentages calculated and presented in tables to illustrate the key points.

4. Results

The findings obtained from the study begin with demographic information of students, followed by results on L1 reliance derived from the quantitative and qualitative measurements, linguistic transfer, and communicative impact. The quantitative data are presented in tables for clarity, while qualitative interview insights obtained from students and teachers are used to support and explain the statistical results, providing an integrated view of how Arabic-English translation can affect conversational performance.

1. Demographic Information of EFL Students (n = 30)

Variables	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	30	100
	Male	0	0
Academic Year	2nd Year	19	63.3
	3rd Year	10	33.3
	Other	1	3.4
Age Group	18–20 years	25	83.3
	21–23 years	5	16.7

Table 1: Demographic information of participants

Table 1 above summarizes the background information of the EFL students (n = 30). All respondents were females (100%), which indicates a predominant female enrollment in the Speaking 3 classes at the Faculty of Education of the University of Tripoli, Libya. The majority of EFL students

Investigating the Impact of Direct Translation from Arabic (L1) to English (L2) on EFL Students' Conversational Skills: Evidence from Libyan University Context.

were second-year students (63.3%), followed by third-year students (33.3%), while a small percentage of them (3.4%) fell into other academic categories indicating at an intermediate stage of English proficiency.

The majority were aged 18 - 20 (83.3%), with a smaller group aged 21–23 (16.7%). Overall, the sample was relatively homogeneous in gender and age, allowing the findings to more clearly represent patterns of L1 reliance and linguistic transfer among Libyan EFL student-teachers .

2.Students' reliance on L1 (Arabic)

Item	Agree / Strongly Agree (%)
Thinking in Arabic before speaking English	83.4
Word-for-word translation from Arabic	70.0
Mental translation for comprehension	90.0
Arabic as primary resource for sentence formation	50.0

Table 2: Students' reliance on L1 (Arabic)

Table 2 shows a high level of L1 reliance among the participants during English speaking production and comprehension. Most students (83.4%) tended to think in Arabic before speaking English, and 90.0% indicated that they mentally translate new English phrases to aid understanding. Additionally (70.0%) also reported using word-for-word translation from Arabic to English. However, only 50.0% of the participants viewed that Arabic is their primary resource for sentence formation, indicating some variability in L1 reliance. On the whole, these findings suggest that L1 reliance can play a key role in EFL learners' comprehension and pre-speech planning, which may potentially influence their English spoken fluency.

3. Linguistic elements transferred (linguistic interference)

Transferred Element	Agree / Strongly Agree (%)
Arabic sentence structure (syntax)	66.7
Literal translation of idioms	76.6
Difficulty with verb tenses	70.0
Errors with prepositions	66.6
Struggle with articles (a, an, the)	46.6
Omission of verb "to be"	43.3

Table 3: Linguistic Elements Transferred from Arabic to English

The data in table 3 above presents EFL students' widespread negative transfer from (L1) to (L2) observed in several linguistic areas of negative linguistic interference. The most common issue was literal translation of Arabic idioms (76.6%) resulting in pragmatic and semantic errors.. Many participants also reported challenges with verb tenses (70.0%), sentence structure errors (66.7%), and preposition errors (66.6%), indicating a strong impact of syntactic and grammatical interference. In contrast, Lower but still notable levels of interference were observed in the use of articles (46.6%) and the omission of verb *to be* (43.3%). Overall, these findings exhibit that L1 interference affects various linguistic levels, notable, syntactic, grammatical structures, idiomatic expressions, tense uses, and sentence structures representing the greatest challenges facing EFL students. On the whole, these findings can provide empirical evidence of systematic negative transfer from learners' L1 to L2 among the participants of the study.

4. Impact of L1 on Communication Effectiveness

Impact Area	Agree / Strongly Agree (%)
Reduced speaking fluency	80.0
Frequent grammatical errors	83.3
Misunderstanding by fluent speakers	70.0

Table 4: Impact of L1 on Communication Effectiveness

Table 4 shows that reliance on Arabic negatively affects the effectiveness of students' English communication. The findings indicate that most students (80.0) reported reduced speaking fluency, leading to slower and more hesitant speech, while 83.3% of the students linked direct translation to frequent grammatical errors. Furthermore, 70.0% of students indicated that literal translation often leads to misunderstandings with fluent speakers. Overall, L1 reliance negatively affects spoken fluency, grammatical accuracy, and clarity in spoken English. These findings reflect the extent to

which direct translation interference can negatively affect a successful spoken interaction in English among the study participants.

5. Students' Perceptions of Learning and Remediation

Statement	Agree / Strongly Agree (%)
Focusing on meaning is easier than translation	86.7
Desire for L2-only classroom activities	86.7
English media exposure reduces translation need	90.0
Teachers effectively address L1 interference	~50.0

Table 5: Students' Perceptions of Learning and Remediation.

Table 5 shows students' awareness of effective learning strategies and instructional support in reducing L1 interference. A large majority of students (86.7%) agreed that focusing on meaning rather than literal translation improves speaking English, and the same percentage expressed a clear desire for L2-only classroom activities. English media exposure reported the highest level of support (90.0%) as a way to reduce translation reliance. In contrast, teachers' views on reducing L1 interference were mixed, with approximately half of the participants perceiving the teachers' active support. Overall, students indicated a high level of metacognitive awareness of how L1 interference can be reduced and favor immersive, meaning-focused approaches. While they perceive inconsistent instructional implementation and support.

6. Summary of Teachers' Interview Findings (n = 3)

Theme	Key Observations
Frequency of L1 reliance	Approximately 90% of students rely on direct translation
Observable effects	Pauses, hesitations, reduced fluency
Common errors	Grammar, word choice, idiomatic misuse
Primary cause	Insufficient English exposure
Self-correction ability	Very low
Recommended solutions	L2 exposure, English-English dictionaries, teacher training
Theme	Key Observations

Table 6: Teachers' Perspectives on L1 Interference in Speaking

The data in Table 6 above summarizes the key themes obtained from the interviews carried out with EFL teachers regarding EFL students' L1 reliance during English speaking activities. Teachers indicated that around 90% of EFL students rely extensively on L1 when speaking English resulting in frequent pauses, recurring hesitations, and reduced speaking fluency. They also observed recurring grammatical errors associated with L1, inappropriate word choice, and literal idiom expressions. This L1 reliance was mainly attributed to insufficient English exposure and students' weak self-correction skills. Teachers recommended solutions to increase L2 dominant classroom practices, encouraging greater use of English–English dictionaries, and providing professional development and training for teachers. Overall, the findings indicate that L1 interference was seen as a major obstacle to the development of conversational fluency.

5. Discussion

This study investigated Arabic (L1) reliance among Libyan EFL students during English speaking, the linguistic areas affected by L1 transfer and its impact on communication effectiveness. The following discussion integrates both quantitative and qualitative findings with relevant literature.

5.1 L1 Reliance as a Cognitive Strategy in Speaking

The findings show strong reliance on Arabic during English speaking, especially for comprehension and pre-speech planning. Most students reported thinking in Arabic and mentally translating before speaking. This pattern supports previous research that views L1 as a cognitive mediator when L2 automaticity in the target language is low (Cook, 2001; Kormos, 2006). According to interlanguage perspective (Selinker, 1972), learners rely on their L1 to compensate for gaps in L2 proficiency, a finding also observed by De Bot (1992). In the Libyan EFL context, where exposure to English outside classroom is limited makes this reliance natural but potentially restrictive strategy.

5.2 Linguistic Interference and Negative Transfer

The study identified widespread negative transfer in sentence structure, verb tenses, prepositions, articles, and idiomatic expressions. These findings strongly support the views of Odlin's (1989) theory of negative transfer,

which states that structural differences between L1 and L2 cause learner errors.

Difficulties with tenses and syntax mirror well-documented differences between Arabic and English (Kharma & Hajjaj, 1997; Scott & Tucker, 1974), while recurring problems with prepositions and articles align with the findings of Al-Jarf (2010) indicating that such features remain persistent error sources as a result of their limited or different realization in Arabic.. The high rate of literal translation of idioms further confirms research by (Littlemore & Low, 2006), that limited exposure to authentic English results in semantic and pragmatic failure, a finding reflected by recent studies (Rahayu & Basri, 2021; Alfaihi & Saleem, 2024) confirming that idiomatic transfer is one of the major problems of L1 interference in EFL speaking.

5.3 Impact of L1 Reliance on Fluency and Communication Effectiveness

The findings regarding the EFL students' reliance on Arabic showed a negative effect on students speaking fluency, grammatical accuracy, and intelligibility. Students reported frequent pauses, grammatical errors, and misunderstanding by fluent speakers. These results are in agreement with Skehan's (1998) which suggests that excessive focus on form, like translation hinders learners' ability to speak fluently and spontaneously.. Mental translation has been associated with hesitations and speech breakdowns (Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005), and can produce grammatically accurate but pragmatically inappropriate utterances (Ellis, 2008). Overall, the findings indicate that L1 reliance affects not only accuracy but also communicative competence, supporting the need for direct thinking in the target language for fluency development (Nation & Newton, 2009)

5.4 Learners' Awareness and Preferences for Remedial Strategies

Interestingly, the findings indicate that students have a high level of strategy awareness to reduce L1 interference favoring meaning over translation, engaging in L2 only classroom activities, and increased exposure. This finding aligns with Oxford's (2011) emphasis on metacognitive strategy use in successful language learning and supports the view of Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis on the importance of meaningful input. Media exposure has been noted to improve fluency and reduce L1 reliance on translation (Webb & Rodgers, 2009). However, students' mixed views on

teacher effectiveness suggest an instructional gap that classroom practices may not sufficiently promote immersive, meaning-focused learning activities.

5.5 Teachers' Perspectives and Instructional Challenges

The interview results indicate that teachers viewed L1 interference as a widespread and a recurring problem, mainly due to limited English exposure and few opportunities for authentic communication. This aligns with the finding of Macaro (2001) and Littlewood & Yu (2011), who noted that teachers recognize L1's negative effects but encounter contextual barriers. In similar EFL contexts, teachers frequently rely on L1 use themselves to manage classrooms unintentionally reinforcing students' translation habits (Al-Nofaie, 2010; Alshammari, 2011), and without targeted professional training, L1 interference is likely to persist (Al-Asi, 2025). Teachers' recommendations in the present study, such as increasing L2 exposure, encouraging English-English dictionary use, and providing professional development are therefore consistent with the existing literature. Overall, the findings of this study match with established theories of interlanguage and negative transfer that L1 reliance is a dominant cognitive strategy that facilitates comprehension but hinders speaking fluency, grammatical accuracy, and communication, while students' strategy awareness contrasts with instructional practices and exposure limitations.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the impact of direct Arabic to English translation on the conversational skills of Libyan EFL student-teachers using a mixed-methods approach. Results show widespread L1 reliance: Around 83.4% of students think in Arabic before speaking, approximately 90% use mental translation for comprehension, and many rely on word-for-word translation, literal idiomatic translation, and syntactic transfer. This L1 reliance led to reduced speaking fluency, increased errors, and caused misunderstandings, supporting Interlanguage Theory and negative transfer models of negative transfer. EFL students revealed a high level of strategy awareness in order to help them reduce L1 interference by employing activities, such as focusing on meaning rather than literal translation, engaging in L2-only activities, and increasing greater exposure to authentic English in L2. Teachers

confirmed these challenges and recommended immersive L2 instruction, use of English–English dictionaries, and provide professional development to better equip teachers to reduce L1 reliance.

Key Recommendations:

1. To teach structural differences between Arabic and English to reduce common sources of negative transfer through explicit instruction.
2. To use L2-only communicative activities such as debates, role-plays, discussions to promote direct English thinking.
3. To incorporate more authentic English media to create meaningful input and reduce reliance on Arabic.
4. To encourage the use of monolingual English–English dictionaries to improve semantic understanding.
5. To provide professional and training teaching programs to support strategies that reduce L1 reliance.
6. To raise students' metacognitive awareness of strategy use to help self-monitor and reduce translation habits.

Suggestions for Future Research

- To examine the long term effects of sustained L2-only instruction on fluency.
- To Investigate institutional factors, such as curriculum design and class size that influence L2 immersion.
- To expand studies to include broader and more diverse samples across Libyan universities.
- To carry out more experimental research studies or intervention studies in order to evaluate strategies, such as idiomatic training or media-based immersion programs.

In conclusion, although there is evidence that direct translation can support EFL students' short-term comprehension, it can also hinder their speaking fluency, grammatical accuracy, and their overall communicative effectiveness. As a consequence, effective pedagogical and teaching interventions, increasing greater L2 exposure, and teacher professional and training support are essential to promote direct English thinking and improve conversational competence among Libyan EFL learners.

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