

## Exploring Teachers' Beliefs and Practices on the Use of the Mother Tongue as a Mediational Tool in a Saudi EFL Classroom

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### Abstract

This study reports the findings of a qualitative study of non-native English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' beliefs about the role of the first language (L1) as a mediating tool in a Saudi EFL classroom at a university level. As such, this research was conducted with the aim of answering the main research question which seeks a better understanding and deeper insights into the beliefs that directly affect the teachers' use of the L1 in the classroom as a mediational tool. The sample consisted of twenty (twelve male and eight female) EFL teachers who answered an open-ended question in an online survey. Four teachers (two male and two female) participated voluntarily in semi-structured interviews. Analysis of the data produced several themes. Those findings revealed that despite all the literature acknowledging the benefits of using the mother tongue in the classroom, many English Language Institute (ELI) teachers still believe in limiting its use as a mediational tool in the English Language Teaching (ELT) classroom as much as possible. In addition, it appeared that the lower the level of students' English proficiency, the more the teacher is likely to use L1 in the classroom. These findings have implications for classroom practice and could be employed to emphasise the value of teachers' beliefs about the role of L1 as a mediational tool in the ELT classroom.

**Keywords:** First language (L1), EFL, mother tongue (MT), mediational tool, Saudi context

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