

Algerian Undergraduate Students' Uses of Algerian Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic in EFL Writing

Hanane Bouziane ¹, Fatma Zohra Nedjai Mebtouche ²

¹University of Abu Al-Qasim Saadallah Alger2, Algeria, hanane.bouziane@alger2.dz

²School of Fine Arts, Algeria, conferencegender@gmail.com

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Abstract

The L1 use while learning a new language is controversial in academia but a natural phenomenon in EFL classrooms. The current study investigates the different uses of L1 (Arabic with its two varieties, Modern Standard Arabic and Algerian Arabic) in EFL writing by undergraduate learners. One hundred Algerian students participated in a two-section survey. The first section reports on how frequently learners use Arabic in different EFL situations. The second section focuses on which Arabic variety is more suitable for each activity. Using SPSS statistics 21 program, learners' responses revealed that there is high frequency of Arabic use in four EFL writing situations, which are mainly related to cultural context and thinking processes. Learners reported that they sometimes use Arabic in other four EFL writing activities related to word search, peers' discussions and agency related activities. The final two activities in this survey were translation and informal writings, to which learners reported rare practice and Arabic is occasionally used. As for the second variable, which is the most suitable Arabic variety for each activity, learners associated both varieties with thinking processes and informal writings. MSA was mainly associated with Islamic-related topics, text-generating activities and translation. AA is used in cultural Algerian-related topics and for peers' discussions. Based on these findings, the study recommends judicious L1 use in EFL writing curricula according to learners' actual uses.

Key words: Algerian Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, L1 use, EFL writing.

Introduction

L1 use in EFL writing is a controversial issue for teachers as well as for learners. Teachers can use or avoid L1 depending on their own perspectives, giving that they have a better command of the language. For learners, L1 use is almost inevitable. In other words, while classroom practices confirm learners' L1 use, EFL learning theories and approaches, for more than a century, established disfavoring instructional strategies towards L1 use in EFL learning. Thus, the use of L1 has often been associated with weak performance in the EFL classroom. With newly emerged approaches to SLA and composition studies, code switching and translingual studies become interesting areas of research. However, while some approaches tolerated code switching and translanguaging in speaking skills, writing has been always strongly gate-kept (Canagarajah, 2013)

There is widespread agreement among researchers about the benefits of L1 use for EFL writers, particularly under the process approach to L2 writing (Friedlander, 1990; Wang & Wen, 2002; Murphy & Roca De Larios, 2010). Some studies revealed that L1 use has a crucial role in generating ideas and planning for the L2 writing task, especially when the topic area is acquired in the L1 context (Friedlander, 1990; Lally, 2000). (Cumming, 1989) reported that students switched frequently from one language to another according to their train of thought. L1 use proves to be a unique L2 strategy for problem solving given that “as proficiency in the language improves, the writer becomes more able to perform in writing in his/her second language producing more effective texts” (Cumming, 1989, p. 118). In the same vein, (Murphy & Roca De Larios, 2010) used think-aloud protocols to explore L1 use of a group of EFL Spanish learners “engaged in solving lexical problems in two tasks: a narrative and an argumentative essay” (Murphy & Roca De Larios, 2010, p. 63). Results indicate that L1 use depended on the tasks' demands. Besides, L1 use helped the learners to evaluate whether the words “sounded odd” or were not “formal or sophisticated enough” (ibid, p. 73). It also helped to check the appropriateness of their word choice in the text. In addition to that, participants used their L1 to ask themselves questions that would help them “search their long-term memory” (ibid) and indicate uncertainty regarding the accuracy and suitability of words.

In the same endeavor, the translanguaging approach to EFL writing extended the importance of L1 use to another layer. With the international shift towards multilingualism as the norm (May, 2014), researchers claim that L1 use in EFL writing is a natural phenomenon. A growing body of research call for changing EFL classroom writing pedagogies according to the multilingual reality (Horner B. , Lu, Royster, & Timbur, 2011; Horner & Lu, 2015; Canagarajah, 2013; Canagarajah, 2011; Wang D. , 2016). L1 use in EFL writing, according to the translanguaging approach, is a self-regulated mechanism that is related to learner's identity and a crucial part of his/her linguistic repertoire (Vilasco & Garcia, 2014). Researchers argue that mixing languages, in general, is "an unmarked event" (Bailey, 2007). Learners bring "translanguaging practices" from outside the classroom, however, inside the classroom; learners' L1 use is hidden (Canagarajah, 2011; Lin & Martin, 2005). It can be said that EFL learners use their full linguistic repertoire to create meaning and all what they need is safe spaces in the classroom. Attitudes towards language use are socially constructed and learners are always confused as to which language use they adopt.

This paper contends that investigating learner's perceptions about their actual L1 use in EFL writing is extremely important to create suitable EFL writing pedagogies. Furthermore, the multilingual reality of the Algerian context requires better understanding as to what extent every language plays a role in different EFL writing situations. To fulfill those aims, a questionnaire of three sections was administered for undergraduate EFL learners. The first section collects learners' demographic and linguistic backgrounds. Section (02) explores the learners' perceptions about the frequency of Arabic use in different EFL writing situations. Section (03) focuses on the role of Arabic language varieties (MSA, AA or both) in the same EFL writing situations (as in section 02), i.e., which variety is mostly used in each situation.

This study investigates the use of Arabic with its two varieties, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Algerian Arabic (AA) in EFL writing in response to the need of creating sustainable teaching in a multilingual world. It is important to understand the learners' actual language use in EFL writing. This will help to create writing pedagogies that make use of diverse linguistic resources, suitable to the Algerian context. The purpose of this study is twofold, first, to know how frequently undergraduate learners use Arabic in their EFL writing, second, to examine the role of Arabic varieties (MSA and AA) in the same writing situations.

The paper is laid out as follows; the literature review section highlights two main approaches, the process approach to L2 writing and the translingual approach to writing. This is followed by a review of the Algerian sociolinguistic situation in the second section and a description of the research methodology and tools in the third section. The fourth section deals with data analysis and results while the fifth section discussed the findings obtained. Finally, the conclusion asserts that learner's L1 use in EFL writing varies from one activity to another in terms of both frequency and Arabic variety.

The current study "Algerian Learners' use of L1 (Arabic) in EFL Writing", therefore, explores the students' actual use of Arabic (with its two varieties) in EFL writing through a three-section questionnaire. The specific questions of this study include:

- How frequently do EFL learners use Arabic during EFL writing?
- Which Arabic variety (MSA or AA) is mostly used?

Literature review

L1 use has long been debated in EFL learning in general and in writing, in particular (Goodman & Tastanbek, 2020; Canagarajah, 2013; Horner & Lu, 2015). According to (Horner & Lu, 2015), L1 use in EFL writing has shifted four times during the last century. Three shifts are monolingually oriented, the Eradicationist approach, the assimilationist approach, and the accommodationist approach. The last one is labeled "the translingual approach" and is aligned with plurilingualism. The monolingual approaches established three main ideologies towards L1 use in EFL writing, which are linked to the "written error". First, English has to be maximized and L1 eradicated or minimized. Second, Standard English is the only accepted variety in the academic written context. Third, the native speaker's competence is the aim of any EFL learning. The translingual approach questioned and criticized the previous ideologies advocating the right of multilinguals to use their full linguistic repertoire in EFL writing and scholars argued that translanguaging is a naturally occurred phenomenon (Canagarajah, 2011; Canagarajah, 2013; Vilasco & Garcia, 2014; Wang D. , 2016)

L2 writing studies under the process approach

L1 use in EFL writing was extensively researched during the decades 1990's and 2000's under the process approach to writing. It was investigated as a strategy that is mainly used in the pre-writing phase of L2 writing (Friedlander, 1990; Qi, 1998; Kobayashi & Rinnet, 1992; Wang & Wen, 2002; Wang L. , 2003; Wolfersbrger, 2003; Centeno-Cortés & Jiménez Jiménez, 2004; Weijen, Bergh, Rijlaarsdam, & Sanders, 2009)

(Friedlander, 1990), interested in the effects of L1 on composing in English as a L2, hypothesized that “the first language will assist retrieval of information on certain topics” (p. 111). His participants were asked to reply to two letters. The first group was instructed to plan in Chinese for the Chinese topic and in English for the English topic (match condition). The other group was to plan in English for the Chinese topic and in Chinese for the English topic (mismatch condition). A subgroup of students provided verbal thinkaloud protocols during the two tasks. Students were also interviewed after their writing sessions. In general, Friedlander indicated that writers benefit when they match the language to the topic. Using the first language, when planning culturally related topics, appears to allow writers to better retrieve ideas. From his study, he concluded that “ESL writers would be able to produce better texts and their writing would be enhanced if they plan in the language related to acquisition of knowledge of a topic area” (p. 123). Although Friedlander's main goal was to test the hypothesis stated before, through the think aloud protocols he found that some writers language-switched from English to Chinese and from Chinese to English. Such switching was linked to culture specific terms and concepts, but mainly those writers used their L1 because of vocabulary difficulties or for terms that were clearly culture-based.

(Qi, 1998) conducted a case study on the condition that would make a high proficient writer switch languages while writing in L2. She, also, looked at how language switching affected L2 composing. Qi concluded that the participant reverted to her L1 to generate ideas, encode a meaning quickly, check the appropriateness of a word or a phrase, and to minimize the over-load of working memory.

(Kobayashi & Rinnet, 1992) used Friedlander's method and made an experiment on “direct/indirect” writing. However, they extended their L1 use instruction to all the writing

process stages through asking their 48 participants to write the whole text in L1, then translate it into their L2, taking in consideration their participants' L2 proficiency level. However, both methods (planning in L1 and translating) aimed at examining the correlation between thinking in L1 and writing in L2. Kobayashi & Rinnet found that lower proficiency writers tended to benefit from translation in terms of quality of content, organization and style, whereas, higher-level writers did not benefit much; they tended to make more errors that interfered with intended meaning in translation than in direct writing, but lower level students did not show any difference.

(Wolfersbrger, 2003) reported that L1 use is a strategy used by L2 low-proficient writers "to solidify content and organization before dealing with the L2 issues of translation and rhetorical style" (p.9). Murphy & Roca (2010) noticed that L1 use depended on the tasks' demands. Besides, L1 was used to evaluate whether the words "sounded odd" or were not "formal or sophisticated enough" (p.73). It was also used to check the appropriateness of their word choice in the text. In addition to that, participants used their L1 to ask themselves questions that would help them "search their long-term memory" (ibid).

(Wang & Wen, 2002) investigated the effects of L2 proficiency and writing modes on L1 use. Wang & Wen categorized five purposes of language switching; text-generation, idea-generation, task examining, idea organizing, and process controlling. The results showed that L2 writers tend to use L1 for text-generation and idea-generation more than the other categories, whereas, L2 was used more than L1 during the construction of sentences and response to the writing tasks. Students used their L1 in task examining and idea-generation more in the narrative task than in the argumentative task.

(Wang L. , 2003) examined the frequency of language switching, purposes of switching and the qualitative difference in language switching process. The findings revealed that students used their L1 frequently and language switching varied "according to the participants' L2 proficiency" (p.359). Wang noticed that language switching is more frequent by students with high proficiency than those with low proficiency are. The purposes for switching were mainly for "idea generation, lexical searching and meta-comments" (p.360).

(Centeno-Cortés & Jiménez Jiménez, 2004) conducted a study to analyze the private verbal thinking (PVT) during problem-solving activities in a L2, and associated this with the role that L1 and L2 can play in this process. Findings revealed that more than 60% of the self-guiding private speech by the intermediate Spanish language learners was expressed in their L1; while they used L2 for repetition or reading-aloud. Advanced learners, from the other hand, were the least likely to revert to their L1, but they tended to do so when task demands, “become too difficult” (p.31).

(Weijen, Bergh, Rijlaarsdam, & Sanders, 2009) also explored the L2 writers’ use of their L1 using think-aloud protocols. Findings reveal that general writing proficiency has a negative influence on L1 use during L2 writing and L1 use proved to be negatively related to L2 text quality. However, researchers noticed that L2 writers revert to their L1 when they experience cognitive overload. Purposes of using L1 during L2 vary, but there seems to be a consensus that generating ideas, lexical searching, and preventing cognitive overload are the main reasons, which lay behind this phenomenon.

Translingual studies

L1 use in EFL writing witnessed a paradigm shift in the last decade (2010-2020) (Canagarajah, 2013; Horner & Lu, 2015; Goodman & Tastanbek, 2020; Sun & Lan, 2021). The phenomenon, known as “code-switching” and “code-mixing” is now widely labeled “translanguaging”. The most prominent authors in the area of “translingual research” (Canagarajah, Horner, Matsuda, Lee, Silva, Atkinson...etc.) adopt the term with a new conceptualization to language. Traditional monolingual ideologies treat languages as separate linguistic systems in the minds of bi/multilinguals, whereas, translingual ideologies believe that multilingual speakers and writers have one repertoire of integrated languages and are naturally able to shuttle between diverse languages as resources of meaning creation (Canagarajah, 2011; Canagarajah, 2013).

Since the publication of the opinion piece « Language Difference in Writing: Toward a Translingual Approach » by (Horner B. , Lu, Royster, & Timbur, 2011), ‘trans’ studies in writing start burgeoning worldwide. The translingual approach sees L1 as a resource rather than a problem in EFL writing and grows as a response to the dominance of multilingualism over the

world especially in the USA, where the first traits of this approach appeared. Challenging monolingual constructs was the starting point for conceptual and pedagogical foundations of the translingual approach. Although L2 writing and translingual approach belong to different theoretical lines, both agree on the positive and necessary role of L1 use in EFL writing.

The translingual approach to writing presents a sustainable model towards language use in pedagogy. Languages are interconnected codes that are not stable; rather, they are fluid, changing and intermingling (Canagarajah, 2013; Horner B. , Lu, Royster, & Timbur, 2011). Translingualism values language difference to be the norm. Language varieties in speech or text manifest the agency of the language user. The learner's Languages are "resources to be preserved, developed and utilized, rather than just rights" (Horner et al. 2011, p. 304). Furthermore, the approach goes beyond classroom interests to social and sustainable linguistic policies aiming at ignoring power relations and social inequalities among language users, and creating more chances for multi-linguals worldwide. Horner et al. 2011 pointed out "the ability to negotiate differences and to improvise ways to produce meaning across language differences with whatever language resources are available is becoming increasingly necessary, not only to careers and commerce, but to the chances for peace and justice" (p. 312-313).

Scholars argue that translingual approach to writing is a midpoint between composition studies and L2 writing research; thus, its development requires a serious collaboration across composition studies, ESL, applied linguistics, literacy studies, foreign language instructions and translation studies (Atkinson, et al., 2015; Horner B. , Lu, Royster, & Timbur, 2011; Jeffery, Keiffer, & Matsuda, 2013). Scholars encourage conversations between translingual and L2 writing empirical studies to reconcile the relationship between the two bodies of knowledge, which have more similarities than differences (Silva & Wang, 2020). The main differences center on the idea of fluidity and hybridity of language resources in meaning making. (Matsuda, 2014) contends that this idea might prevent critical and informed discussions on similarities and differences among language issues. However, translingual studies succeed to collide between writing studies and multilingual education.

The Algerian linguistic profile

The Algerian context was not directly concerned with the debate over EFL exactly; however, the monolingual ideologies dominated the sociolinguistic landscape. Throughout the Algerian history, every époque is characterized with the dominance of one language that eradicates others, e.g. during the French colonization, French was imposed as the language of education and administration with the aim of eradicating Arabic and Tamazight (Benrabah, *Language conflict in Algeria: from colonialism to post-independence*, 2013). Exclusive language policies continued after independence, the “Arabization” policy privileged the Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and eradicated the local varieties (Algerian Arabic and Tamazight). Strikingly enough, Tamazight was marginalized by the government but defended by its speakers who fought for its official recognition, whereas, the Algerian Arabic variety was under-estimated by the government and its speakers as well (Belmihoub, 2018).

Arabic is not the only L1 for Algerian students. Berber languages with their many variants (Tamazight, Chaouia, and Tuareg) are also L1s spoken by more than 27% of the population (World Atlas, 2019). AA or Derja is the local variety of Arabic and it is the L1 spoken by 73% of the population. MSA is the language of school. All Algerian pupils, regardless their spoken L1, learn the writing skill for the first time in MSA. Official status of languages in Algeria do not reflect the sociolinguistic reality of the country. MSA is the official language since independence; however, it remains the language of school, formal documents, and formal speech in the public sectors. Algerians write in MSA but never speak it (Mostari, 2004). Tamazight language has been recognized as a second official language in 2016; however, it has no use other than being the language of daily communication by its native speakers. French has no official recognition but it is the language of scientific and technical fields in higher education and the economic sector. Most Algerians comprehend and speak French. Algerians mix the French language with both local varieties, AA and Berber in daily communication. English is getting more importance in Algeria during the 2020's, notably, at the educational level. Official political decisions have run between 2022 and 2023 to integrate English as foreign language at the primary school and shifting the university medium of instruction from French into English. Moreover, in February 2023, the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research sent official instructions to all Algerian universities to provide extensive training programs in English language for all their teachers in all disciplines.

In 1964, the Algerian government rejected the institutionalization of AA and Tamazight as was recommended by a team of American sociolinguists, who were hired to draw up the sociolinguistic profile of the country. The Ministry of Education, at that time, aimed not only to ban the AA from schools, but also to correct the language of Algerian families through reinforcing children use of MSA in an attempt to eradicate the AA naturally (Benrabah, Language conflict in Algeria: from colonialism to post-independence, 2013). MSA is the language used in schools by political imposition. It was successful as the Algerians' L1 in the written medium; however, it fails at the oral level. Having a written system and being associated with the post-colonial identity restoration, the MSA gained the position of "high variety" and "official language" (Mostari, 2004). Although the AA is the strongest language demographically and its speakers have higher "ethno-linguistic vitality" (Lasagabaster, 2003), it is constantly described as "a dialect", "impure language", "a simplified mix of French and Arabic words", "unsophisticated" and so on (Benrabah, 1999; Chaker, 1981; Belmihoub, 2018;)

Method

Participants

Participants in this study were 100 undergraduate students of English language from the University Mohamed El Bachir El Ibrahimi of Bordj Bou Arreridj. Thirty-four students participated in the pilot study and helped in adjusting and deleting some questions, thus, they did not participate in the final survey. The sample is not linguistically homogenous, 91 students were Algerian Arabic speakers and 09 students were Tamazight speakers. However, both groups use MSA as a language of education during their primary, middle and high schools. They learn the writing medium for the first time in MSA and they use AA in mixed group interactions. At university, the students have "writing" as a fundamental subject in their undergraduate three years. During their third undergraduate year, they focus on essay writing and types of development. In terms of English language proficiency, the students are intermediate. These students answered a questionnaire about the frequency of Arabic (MSA and AA) use in their EFL writing.

Data collection

The questionnaire

The questionnaire (see Appendix A) contained three sections; the first section investigates the sociolinguistic background of the students. The second section contained 10 questions about students' frequency of Arabic use in different EFL writing stages and situations. The first five items represent the monolingual view towards L1 use in EFL writing. The monolingual orientation is aligned with Second Language Acquisition (SLA) approaches. Some of these approaches such as the assimilationist claim that using L1 in EFL writing is inappropriate in the EFL classroom but acceptable in informal writings. Others, such as the accommodationist experimentally confirm the existence of cognitive and affective roles for L1 use in EFL writing but maintain "power relationships" between English and learners' L1s. The rest of the items represent the translanguaging orientation, which argues that any language the learners know before English, L1 among them is part of identity, self-regulation and social use. The third section includes identical items as in the second section and attempts to specify the roles of Arabic varieties (MSA and AA) in EFL writing situations.

Participants' profile and sociolinguistic background

Table (01). Learners' mother tongue

Mother tongue	Algerian Arabic	Tamazight	Other
Number	90	09	01
Percentage	90%	09%	01%

Table (02). Learners' gender

Gender	Male	Female
Number	26	74
Percentage	26%	74%

Table (02): Learners' gender

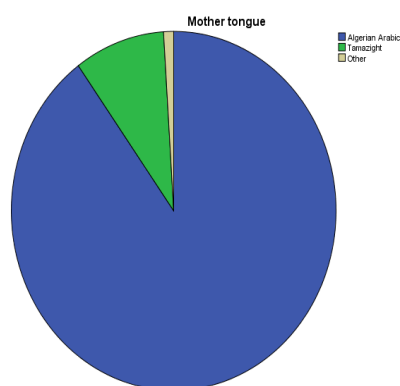


Figure (01). Participants' mother tongue

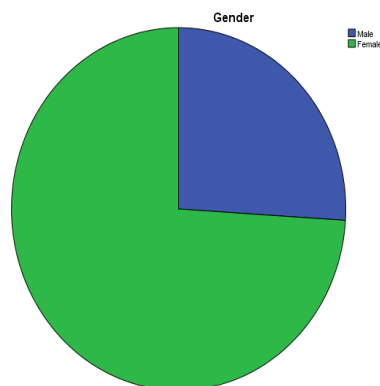


Figure (02). Participants' gender

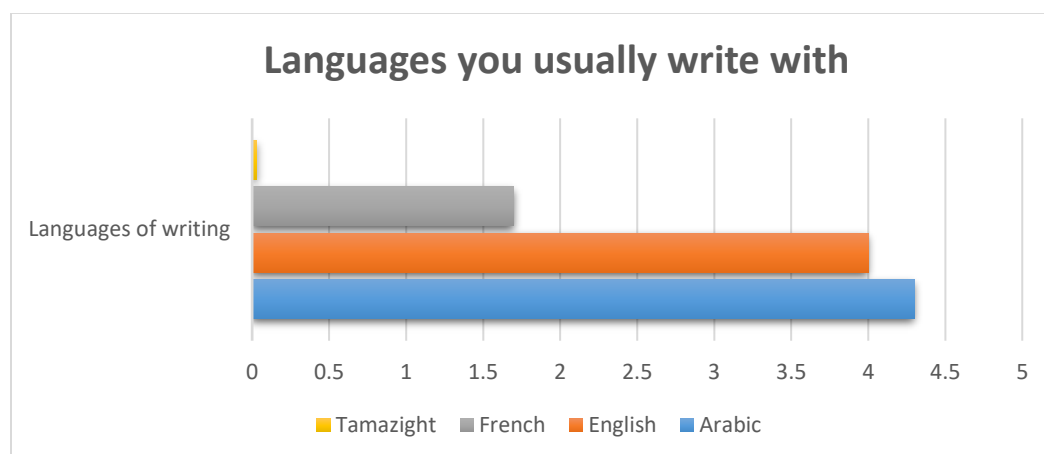


Figure (03). Languages of writing

Participants in this study are 100 English undergraduate students from the University Mohamed El-Bachir El-Ibrahimi of Borj Bou Arreridj-Algeria from which 74% were female. The students volunteered to participate in this survey. They were 90% Algerian Arabic and 10% Tamazight speakers; however, both groups use Arabic with its both varieties (MSA and AA) in educational settings. The scope of this study is limited to the Arabic two varieties for their roles in the skill of writing and classroom interaction. Tamazight language, generally, is not used for writing in educational settings even as a L1; in addition to that, it is not used as a language of interaction within mixed Arabic-Tamazight in-class groups. However, Tamazight students use MSA as a L1 in writing and AA in classroom interactions. The majority of students indicate that they usually write in Arabic (86%) and English (81%). About 39% of participants state that they

usually write in French and 7% report that they write in Tamazight. Thus, Arabic and English are the dominant languages of writing for Algerian EFL learners.

Procedures

A three-section questionnaire and a descriptive study were opted for to uncover the learners' use of Arabic in EFL writing in terms of frequency, perceptions and Arabic variety (MSA or AA). The questionnaire was administered during April 2023 through an electronic form through the University Moodle Platform and the students were informed that participation is voluntary. The first section contains questions about gender, mother tongue and the main language of writing. The second section investigates learners' frequency of Arabic use in EFL writing using a Likert scale. Based on different studies, which revealed the main uses of L1 in specific EFL writing situations (Friedlander, 1990; Qi, 1998; Wang & Wen, 2002; Wang D. , 2016), the researcher designed the questionnaire items. The third section includes identical items as in the second section; however, it highlights which Arabic variety (MSA and AA) is most useful in the different situations of Arabic use in EFL writing.

Pilot study

The researcher conducted a pilot study to test the questionnaire's reliability and clarity. The questionnaire contained 16 items in its initial version. Students who participated in the pilot study were 34 undergraduate students. Results of the pilot study showed that four questions were not clear for the students and six items decreased the reliability mean according to Alpha Cronbach test. The final version of the questionnaire contained four modified and six deleted items

Results

Using SPSS Statistics 21 program, a test of reliability was run. The test shows an acceptable mean and the questionnaire is reliable with 76.5% as shown in table (03).

Table (03). Alpha Cronbach Test

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
.765	10

Data analysis for sections 2 and 3 of the questionnaire showed a different order to the questions suggested at first. Using SPSS statistics 21 program, the questionnaire items have been reordered according to the frequency of Arabic use in each writing situation. Direction frequency according to a Likert Scale of five scales is shown in table (02). Table (03) summarizes the mean, standard deviation, percentage and frequency direction of the participants.

Table (04). Statistical Means of Directions according to a five scales Likert scale.

Direction	Always	Often	Sometimes	Occasionally	Never
Category	4.2-5	3.4-4.2	2.6-3.4	1.8-2.6	1-1.8

Table (05). Summary of frequency statistics of Arabic use in EFL writing

Number of items	Mean	Standard D	Percentage	Direction	Rank of items
1	2.6	1.20	52%	Occasionnally	3 - 9
2	3.54	1.37	70.8%	Often	7 - 3
3	3,96	1.16	79.2%	Often	2 - 1
4	3.20	1.38	64%	Sometimes	6 - 5
5	2.13	1.28	42.6%	Occasionally	4 - 10
6	3.44	1.25	68.8%	Often	10 - 4
7	3.72	1.18	74.4%	Often	8 - 2
8	2.99	1.25	59.8%	Sometimes	9- 7
9	2.86	1.27	57.2%	Sometimes	1 - 8
10	3.18	1.19	63.6%	Sometimes	5 - 6

Results analysis will follow the frequency classification from the situation where Arabic is most frequently used to the least. Accordingly, item (03) ranked as the first situation where students use Arabic more frequently. About 80% of students affirmed that they think in Arabic when they do not find ideas in English, however, they were divided over which Arabic variety they use when they do so. An equal percentage of 31% selected MSA and AA separately while 36% of students selected both varieties as shown in Figure (05).

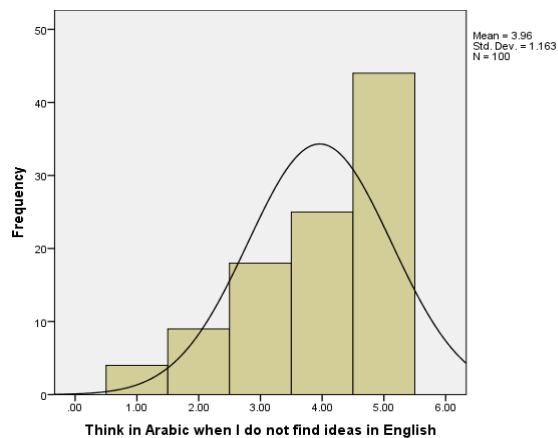


Figure (04). Frequency of Arabic use
(When students do not find ideas in English)

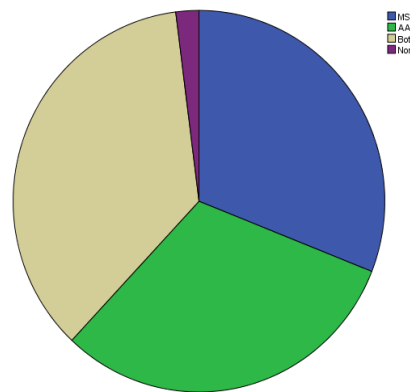


Figure (05). Arabic variety used
(When students do not find ideas in English)

The second situation where students use Arabic most is when the task information is related to the Islamic culture. More than 70% of students confirmed that they use Arabic words when the task information is related to the Islamic topics. The majority (58%) selected MSA as the relevant variety for Islamic concepts while 24% of students chose both varieties as shown in Figure (06).

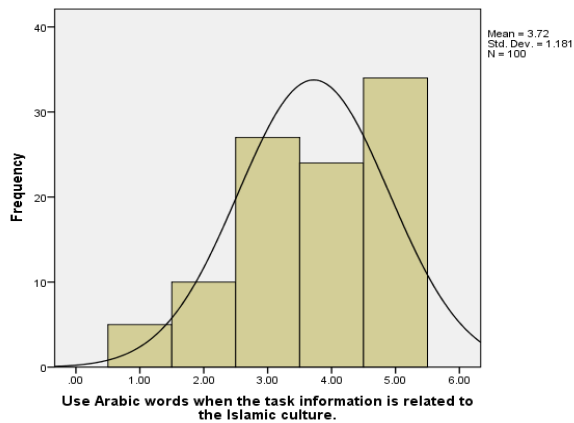


Figure (06). Frequency of Arabic use (Task is related to the Islamic culture)

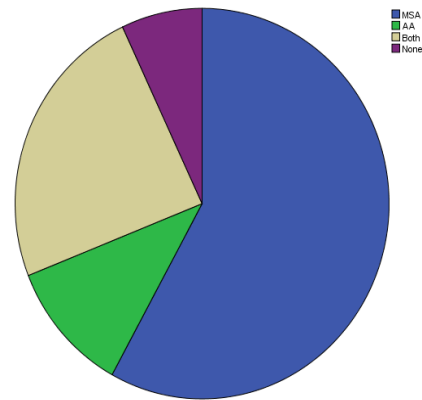


Figure (07). Arabic variety used (Task is related to the Islamic culture)

More than 70% of students believe that they often make comparisons between English and Arabic meanings to test appropriateness of English writing. For that, 52% selected MSA as a more relevant variety to do so and 26% believe that both Arabic varieties serve the purpose.

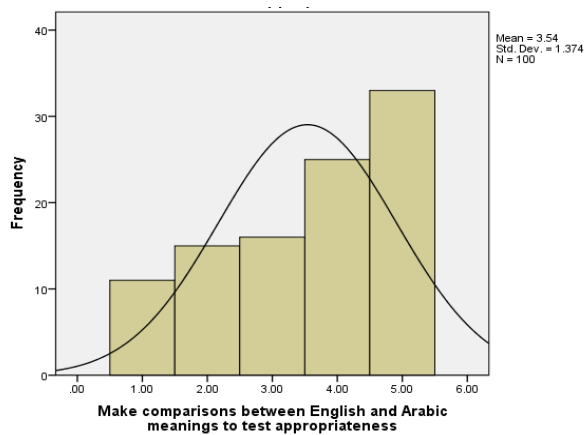


Figure (08). Frequency of Arabic use (Test language appropriateness)

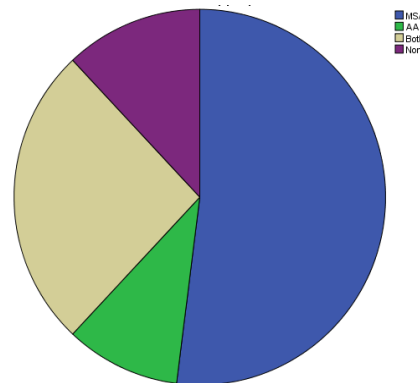


Figure (09). Arabic variety used in item (Test language appropriateness)

Students with a percentage of 64 reported that they often use Arabic when the task information belongs to the local culture. About half the students (49%) selected the local variety as most suitable while 33% of students think that both Arabic varieties provide them with words when the topic is related to the local culture.

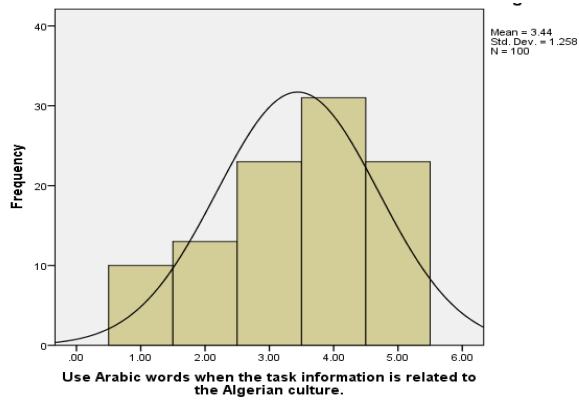


Figure (10). Frequency of Arabic use
 (Task is related to the Algerian culture)

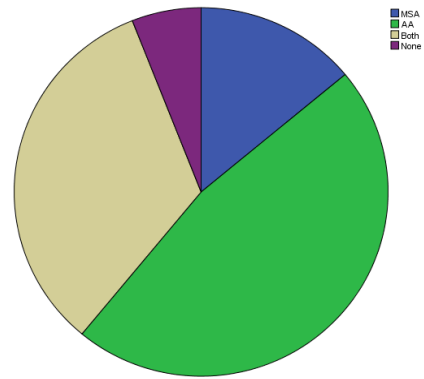


Figure (11). Arabic variety used
 (Task is related to the Algerian culture)

Unexpectedly, translating words from Arabic into English ranked as a fifth purpose for which 42% of students sometimes use Arabic in EFL writing. The majority of students (65%) agreed that MSA is the most suitable variety for translation purposes; however, 25% of students think that both varieties can be used to retrieve vocabulary from Arabic.

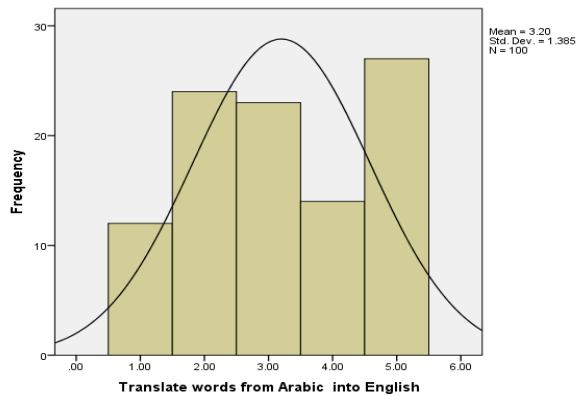


Figure (12). Frequency of Arabic use
 (Translation of words)

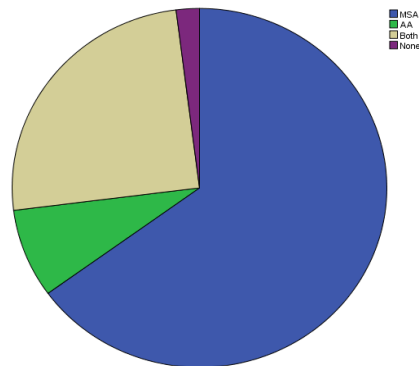


Figure (13). Arabic variety used
 (Translation of words)

About 63% of students report that they use Arabic in collaborative writing tasks, mainly for discussions. The majority attribute this function to AA variety. Another group of students believes that both AA and MSA can serve the collaborative writing discussions.

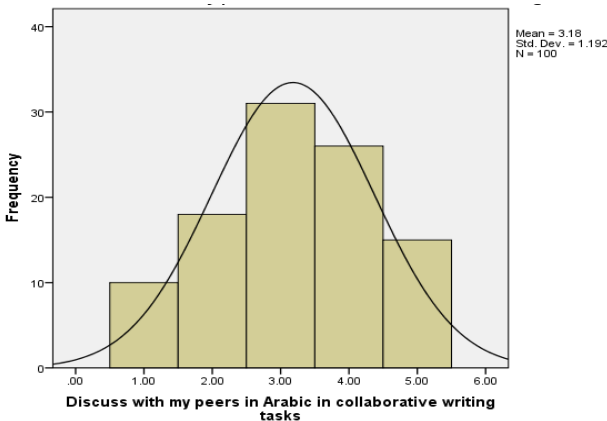


Figure (14). Frequency of Arabic use (Peers' discussions in collaborative tasks)

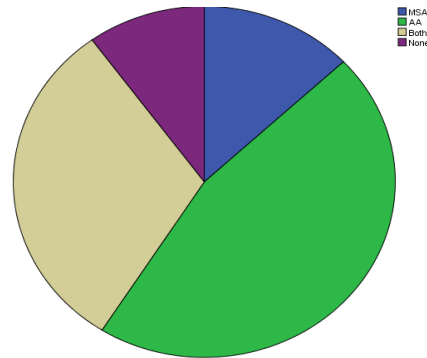


Figure (15). Arabic variety used (Peers' discussions in collaborative tasks)

The identity and agency purposes, in general, rank as the least frequent purpose of Arabic use in EFL writing. Less than 60% of the students report that they sometimes think in Arabic to retreat their personal experience and beliefs. They were not unified about the most appropriate variety for this purpose as 33% think that both varieties serve it while 50% of them were divided between AA and MSA.

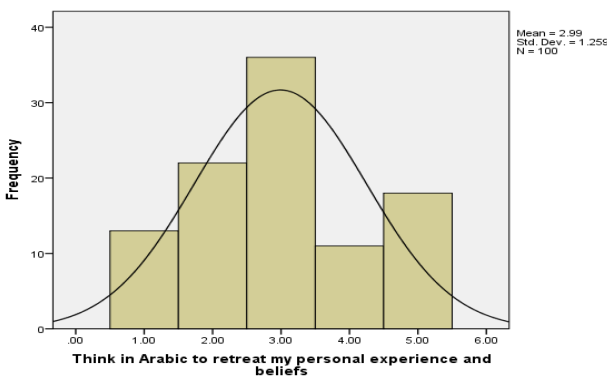


Figure (16). Frequency of Arabic use (Personal experience and beliefs)

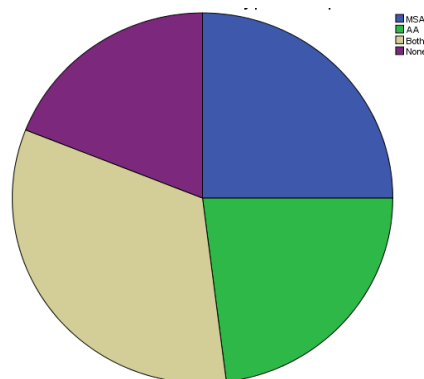


Figure (17). Arabic variety used (Personal experience and beliefs)

In the eighth position, using Arabic to formulate arguments for opinions seems to be less useful. About 57% of students state that they sometimes use Arabic to argue for their opinions. As far as the appropriate variety to this purpose, the students gave nearly the same percentages as in the previous purpose “retreating personal experience and beliefs”. About 40% of students think that both varieties serve it while 50% were equally divided between AA and MSA.

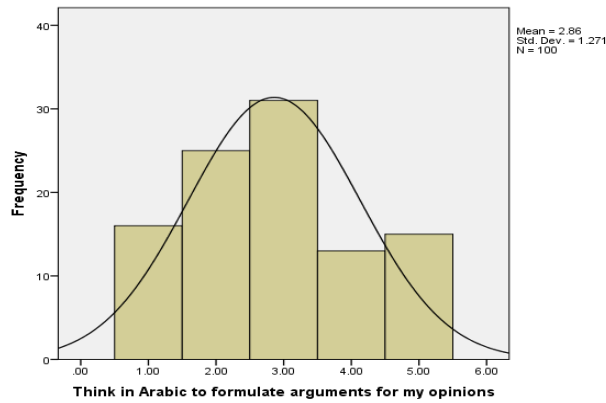


Figure (18). Frequency of Arabic use (Formulating arguments)

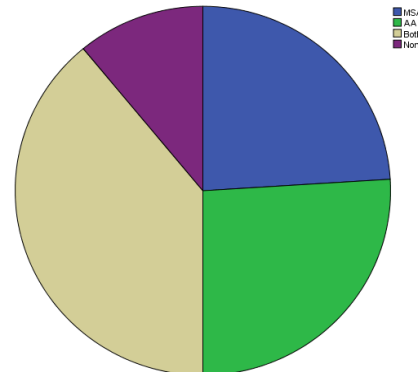


Figure (19). Arabic variety used (Formulating arguments)

Being the before-last writing activity in which students use Arabic to write in EFL, informal and personal writings, like diaries, (are not one of the purposes of Arabic use) according to 52% of students who reveal that they occasionally use Arabic expressions in their personal writings. However, about 50% of the students believe that expressions from both varieties could be used in informal writings.

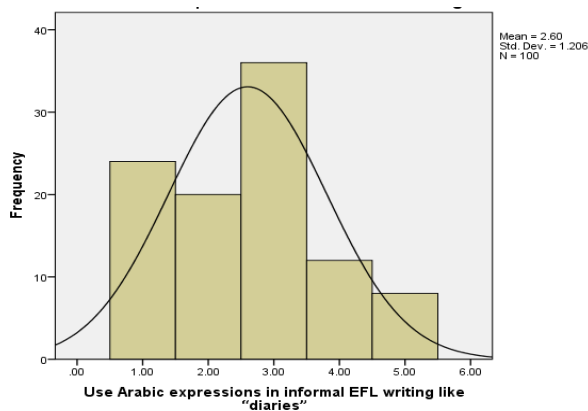


Figure (20). Frequency of Arabic use

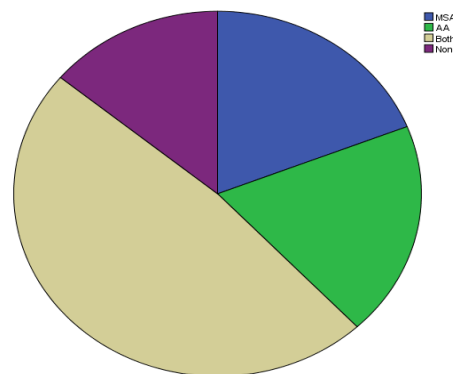


Figure (21). Arabic variety used

(Informal writings)

(Informal writings)

In the last position, translating the whole text from Arabic into English was seen as a very rare activity. Only 42% of the students report that they occasionally write in Arabic and then translate into English. However, about 50% of the students think that MSA is the most appropriate variety if anyone is to write in Arabic first and then translate into English.

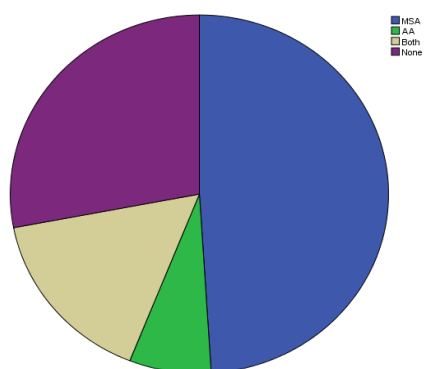
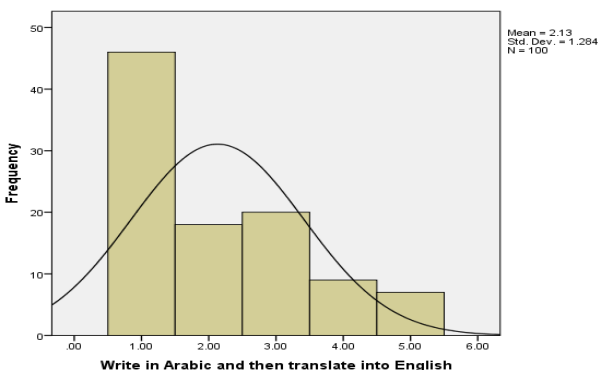


Figure (22). Frequency of Arabic use
 (Translation of whole texts)

Figure (23). Arabic variety used
 (Translation of whole texts)

Discussion

Taking a statistical descriptive approach, this study investigated the purposes of L1 (Arabic) use in EFL writing by undergraduate students in Algerian universities, in addition to which Arabic variety serves better each of the purposes. The study found out that students use Arabic mostly for cognitive and cultural purposes and least for identity and agency purposes. As for the appropriate variety for each purpose, students have associated each purpose with a preferred variety (AA), (MSA) or both. The findings from this study provided a clear view of students' use

of Arabic in EFL writing besides their beliefs about varieties' appropriateness to different L1 uses in EFL writing situations.

Findings from the two research questions pointed to a need to consider one major issue: how can EFL writing classes include L1 use in its pedagogies and teaching strategies? Students' responses confirm that EFL writing includes translanguaging practices through using Arabic in different EFL writing situations with varying degrees of frequency, i. e. shuttling from one language to another, in the sense that writing in a new language requires the help of the native or previously acquired languages. Students also manifest strategic use of Arabic in EFL writing. They attribute high frequency of Arabic use to specific purposes and very less frequency to others.

Frequency of Arabic use

Learners have selected four EFL writing situations where they **often** use Arabic. The first one is thinking in Arabic when they do not find ideas in English and when they compare between the two languages to test words' appropriateness. L1 use, according to Algerian EFL learners serves mainly idea generation, appropriate English use. These findings are similar to (Wang & Wen, 2002) and (Murphy & Roca De Larios, 2010). Both studies found out the cognitive role that L1 could play in learning L2. The two other situations where students **often** use Arabic are when the EFL writing topics relate to Islamic and Algerian cultures. (Friedlander, 1990) found that Chinese students construct better essays when they plan their writings in Chinese for Chinese-related topics and in English for English-related topics. In this study, learners' perceptions are much aligned with the process approach to writing. Learners attribute the need to Arabic mainly for cognitive purposes, idea generation, search for appropriate lexical items and language-culture match.

Learners have selected other four EFL writing situations where they **sometimes** use Arabic. Unexpectedly, learners report that they **sometimes, not often** translate words from Arabic into English and discuss with their peers in Arabic. From this intermediate frequency of Arabic use in these situations, we can claim that Arabic is neither the primary resource of vocabulary nor the sole language of classroom interaction; it is one of the students' helping linguistic resources but

not the only one. In addition, learners report that they **sometimes** think in Arabic to retreat their personal experience and beliefs and to formulate arguments for their opinions. These findings affirm that EFL learners' writings is not neutral of values. Their use of L1 is a sign of voice, agency and value expression.

Finally, the learners seem to rarely write diaries or translate whole texts from Arabic into English. Accordingly, they report that they **occasionally** use Arabic in them. The text generation stage in EFL writing is generally processed in English as many researchers argue. Wang & Wen (2002) found out that participants in his study tend to generate EFL text directly in English. Other scholars argue that textual output cannot have more than one 'grapholect' (Elbow, 2002, p. 128).

Elbow proposed to encourage EFL and ESL learners to acquire the Standard Written English (SWE) to have access to the "dominant culture of literacy" that leads to educational and social success. Meanwhile, mother tongues and local varieties can be useful in "low-stakes activities" (ibid, p. 126) like diaries and informal types of EFL writing. This approach of teaching has been strongly favored by most EFL pedagogies during the last two decades. Consequently, learners develop relative attitudes.

Arabic varieties uses

For the second research question, which Arabic variety is used for each EFL writing situation? Learners made logical associations between different writing activities and the most suitable variety for each activity. Their selections were in accordance with contextual and linguistic factors that will be discussed in the section below.

Uses of both varieties (MSA and AA)

Learners have selected both varieties (AA and MSA) as useful for the stages that require thinking and informal writings. Both varieties of Arabic serve idea retrieval when English does not. The learners seem to use their entire linguistic repertoire when they search for ideas and languages cannot be separated in this case. The language that fits learners' needs is used in an integral way without language selection. A concept that has been strongly emphasized by the translingual theory to language learning. Canagarajah argues that multilingual learners have the

ability “to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system”. (Canagarajah, 2011, p. 104)

Uses of MSA

Learners associate MSA with other writing situations and purposes. They use it mostly with topics related to the Islamic culture and textual-generating processes. These results explain a lot about the status of MSA in Algeria and its close ties with Islam religion and the written medium (Belmihoub, 2018; Benrabah, 2004; Mostari, 2004). Learners prefer to compare MSA with Standard English to test language appropriateness. Languages in Algeria as in all societies are split into standard vs. non-standard where the former is frequently described as “pure”, “correct” and “appropriate” (Benrabah, 2013; Canagarajah, 2013). Therefore, any language comparisons in the learners’ minds implicitly entail the languages’ statuses. Translation activities also are associated with MSA. Translation is one of the activities that usually occur among standard languages through a written-medium tool, which is the dictionary.

Uses of AA

Learners associate the use of AA to two Algerian-specific activities, first, when the task information is related to the Algerian culture and when they discuss with peers in collaborative tasks. AA is seen informal but it is the language of everyday communication. Learners use AA specifically for social purposes. The latter is an always-present fact, actual practice brought from outside the classroom by learners despite the teachers’ instructions about maximizing the target language use.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have tried to explore the different uses of L1 (Arabic) in EFL writing. The scope of this research entailed two variables, the frequency and the variety (MSA, AA or both). Learners seem to have their own preferences in terms of L1 use frequency and language variety in every EFL writing situation. They pointed that Arabic is necessary for some activities and useless for others. They also associated some uses to both Arabic varieties (MSA and AA) at the same time, some specific uses to MSA only and others uniquely to AA.

We believe that this study contributes to the existing literature in at least two respects. First, the investigation of both varieties' use (MSA and AA) in the Algerian context of EFL writing is a gap in research. Second, the previous studies about the L1 use in the Algerian context have been mostly approached through “code switching”, “interference” or “contrastive rhetoric” theoretical lines. This study adopted more contemporary approaches and theories, which are L2 writing and translingual scholarships. The main claim of the new approaches is “languages don't have to be conflictual, but exist side by side” (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 8).

The results derived in this paper suggest that learners already make their preferences of where and how to use their L1 with its different varieties in different EFL writing situations. These practices prove to be free from teachers' instructions; rather, they are totally subject to learners' decisions in their own learning process. However, there are common influencing factors on such decisions, some of them are cognitive, others are cultural and some others are social. Furthermore, the writing activity type also affects the use of L1, thinking activities, which imply idea generating and testing language appropriateness need more frequent use of Arabic. Islamic and Algerian culture-related topics also imply high frequency of Arabic use. From the other hand, text-generating activities imply very low frequency of Arabic use. Findings reveal important preferences for learners concerning which Arabic variety use is best for each EFL writing situation. While both varieties serve thinking activities and informal writings, MSA was more useful for language comparison, Islamic cultural related topics and translation activities. AA seems to have less specific uses, which have social aspects. It is useful most for Algerian cultural-related topics and for peer discussions activities.

This study pictures an actual learning practice from the perspective of learners themselves. Arabic use in EFL writing can have its pedagogical frame according to what learners do with their various acquired languages during the writing process.

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Apendices

Appendix A : Students' Questionnaire

Section 01 : Demographic information

Please circle the appropriate response:

- **Gender:**

A. Male B. Female

- **Mother tongue:**

A. Algerian Arabic (AA). B. Tamazight. C. Other (**mention it**)

- **I usually write in**

You can tick more than one answer

1. Arabic 2. English 3. French 4. Tamazight

Section 02: Frequency of using Arabic in EFL writing

How frequently do you use the following strategies when you write in English?

The following statement precedes all the questionnaire items.

“When I write in English, I”

	When I write in English, I	Always	Often	Sometimes	Occasionally	Never
1	Use Arabic expressions in informal EFL writing like “diaries”					
2	Make comparisons between English and Arabic meanings to test appropriateness					
3	Think in Arabic when I do not find ideas in English					

4	Translate words from Arabic into English					
5	Write in Arabic and then translate into English					
6	Use Arabic words when the task information is related to the Algerian culture.					
7	Use Arabic words when the task information is related to the Islamic culture.					
8	Think in Arabic to retreat my personal experience and beliefs.					
9	Think in Arabic to formulate arguments for my opinions					
10	Discuss with my peers in Arabic in collaborative writing tasks					

Arabic use		Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)	Algerian Arabic (AA)	Both	None
1	Use Arabic expressions in informal EFL writing like “diaries”				

2	Make comparisons between English and Arabic meanings to test appropriateness				
3	Think in Arabic when I do not find ideas in English				
4	Translate words from Arabic into English				
5	Write in Arabic and then translate into English				
6	Use Arabic words when the task information is related to the Algerian culture.				
7	Use Arabic words when the task information is related to the Islamic culture.				
8	Think in Arabic to retreat my personal experience and beliefs.				
9	Think in Arabic to formulate arguments for my opinions				
10	Discuss with my peers in Arabic in collaborative writing tasks				

Section (03): Which Arabic variety do you use most? Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), Algerian Arabic (AA), Both or None