

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

An Investigation of Perception, Purpose and Amount of L1 Use in EFL Classrooms: the Case of Grade Five Students in Atse Fasil General Elementary School

Dessie Alemayehu and Getnet Gidey¹

Abstract

The major purpose of the present study was to investigate perception, purpose and amount of L1 use in EFL classrooms. In the study, Atse Fasil General Elementary School was selected using simple random sampling technique out of 44 elementary schools in the city of Gondar, and only grade five was chosen using purposive sampling technique. In this grade level, there were 412 students as a total population. Out of these, 82 students (20%) were selected with systematic simple random sampling technique for participation. The study employed descriptive survey research design with mixed approach (qualitative and quantitative). To collect data, audio recording, questionnaire and interviews were used. The recorded data and the questionnaire data were analyzed quantitatively. The interview data were analyzed qualitatively. The findings of the study regarding the perception of the students indicated that Amharic should be used with limited amount in English language classrooms. It was also found that Amharic was used for clarifying difficult concept, providing instructions, maintaining discipline, checking comprehension, eliciting ideas, explaining rules and defining vocabularies. Also, the finding shows that EFL students employed 57% of Amharic in English contexts; Amharic was implemented in English classrooms before attempts were made within the target language (English). Based on the findings above, it was recommended EFL students should be given on how, what for and how much to utilize Amharic in English language learning situations.

Keywords: *Perception, Purpose and Amount of L1 use*

Introduction

There has been an unsettled argument on the use of students' first language in L2 (second language) classes (Brown, 2000; Rommel, 2017). On one hand, the use of L1 (first language) was a respected idea and applied in Grammar Translation Method excessively. Following this, various teaching methods have come into existence, for example, in the Silent Way to maintain feedback, in the Total Physical Response to introduce lessons and in the Suggestopedia to clarify dialogues. Even the current one, the Communicative Approach, appreciates the proper use of L1 (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

On the contrary, immediately after the Second World War, the two influential teaching methods, the Direct Method and the Audio-Lingual Method, came up with a number of objections. The one was from the idea of L1 interference; it was claimed that the goal of

1 University of Gondar, Department of English



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target language teaching is to eliminate students' habit formation (Ellis, 1997; Harmer, 2001). This orthodoxy was prominent while language was under the influence of behaviorists (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). The other one was in relation to teachers' competence; English-Only-Policy was associated with good teaching practice and competence of the teacher in these methods (Kayaoglu, 2012). Emphasizing the idea, the Input Hypothesis and the Monitor Model Theories of Krashen (1982) also eliminated the value of L1 in TL situations. Krashen in these theories postulates that students learn best L2 when they are solely surrounded by maximal exposures.

Additionally, advocates of English-Only-Policy usually argue against L1 in TL occasions from various points of views. For instance, it is a cause for depression (Heltai, 1989), time-consuming (Krashen, 1982; Ellis, 1997) and a sign of teachers' incompetence (Kayaoglu, 2012). English-Only-Policy has, consequently, been a badge of prestige in English language classes (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2011). However, this seems to be true when L1 is excessively employed.

Nonetheless, the proponents of L1 have contended the philosophies of English-Only-Policy in different dimensions. To disprove the total removal of L1 in Direct and Audio-lingual, Brown (2000, p.14) states that "there is no quick and easy method guaranteed to provide success." Supporters also claim that the mere exposure of TL might not be sometimes adequate enough. Rather, negotiation of meaning between L1 and L2 is also an ideal way. Scholars claim the only time L1 can reduce TL exposure is when users utilize it in-judiciously (Weschler, 1997; Alshehri, 2017). Besides, English-Only-Policy is impractical due to non-native English language teachers and reducing tensions of students. Thus, English-Only-Policy rests on unexamined perspective and reinforces inequities in L1 and L2 (Auerbach, 1993).

Again, experts put forward the inclusion and benefits of L1 saying that it is a time-saving instrument (Atkinson, 1987 and Weschler, 1997) and a sandwich mechanism (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2011). Alshehri (2017), therefore, argues that it is illogical to teach L2 without referring to students' L1. Language policy and curriculum also suggest the necessity of the inclusion of L1 in L2 contexts. According to Richards (1990), in curriculum development, L1 and L2 should be considered to favor students' learning approaches. Hence, the judicious use of L1 in L2 context looks beneficial.

Researchers such as Atkinson (1987), Kenenisa (2003) and Khati (2011) in their empirical studies reported that students perceived the use of L1 in L2 classes positively. In addition, Atkinson (1987) and Tang (2002) found that 5%, 5-10% of L1 use respectively could promote the TL. Again, regardless of the existence of oppositions on the use of L1, researchers reported that L1 was used for giving clue and opinions to the students and teaching grammar (Macaro, 2001), negotiating meaning (Al Sharaeai, 2012) and providing feedback (Kayaoglu, 2012). However, linguists strongly warn the negative effect of its unprincipled purposes and excessive use of L1 in L2 classes for fear that the excessive use of L1 may destroy the promotion of the TL (Atkinson, 1993; Turnbull, 2001; Afzal, 2013).

In the Ethiopian context, there are a number of first languages that might be used for the sake of teaching EFL. Among those, Amharic is an instance in Amhara region. However, English language teachers in the region have limitations of pedagogical issue on using Amharic in EFL classes (Dereje & Abiy, 2015). Majority of teachers and students are usually seen applying it in their real teaching and learning process; nonetheless, the utilization of L1 is still questionable in the field. Both teachers and students are not clear on the proper use of it.

To the researchers' knowledge, in the Ethiopian context, some related works were studied. For example, Kenenisa (2003) studied the use of Oromiffa in English class at Adama Teachers' College. His work dealt with the frequency of L1 use. He reported that both students and teachers 'sometimes' used it. Dereje and Abiy (2015) also assessed the disparities of male and female high school teachers' attitudes and reasons towards codeswitching in L2 class. The result of the study showed that most female and few male teachers had positive attitudes towards L1 use, and their reasons to use it were students' poor comprehension, and fear of speaking in English language. On the same issue, Jemal (2015) also explored the use of L1 in English class in Jimma Teachers' College: his research targeted at whether or not L1 was used in L2 class, and if used, how long it varied in different levels (1st, 2nd and 3rd year students). Thus, the findings of the study revealed that L1 was used, and 1st year students used it relatively longer time.

The present study was different from aforementioned local studies. In particular, this study explored students' perception, occasions and amount of using L1 in EFL lessons, while Kenenisa's work emphasized on the frequency of Oromiffa use in L2 class. Furthermore, the current study dealt with students' perception, occasions and amounts of L1 use regardless of gender differences, but Dereje and Abiy's work targeted at the disparities of male and female teachers' attitudes and reasons in using L1 in L2 class. What is more is that this study focused only on the same grade level, but Jemal's study investigated how different in different hierarchies (1st, 2nd and 3rd year college students). Thus, to fill this research gap, the present study intended to seek answers for the following basic questions:

1. What perceptions did EFL students hold about the use of L1 in English classes?
2. How much of L1 (Amharic) was used in English language classrooms?
3. What were the occasions in which L1 (Amharic) was used in EFL lessons?

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study may help English language students and teachers to be aware of what for and how much and how practical is the use of L1 in L2 classes. It might also be useful for schools to consider the proper occasions and number of students' L1 use in schools where English is the medium of instruction. It might also be significant for high institutions (colleges and universities) to design training on the judicious use of L1 in L2 occasions. The findings could also inspire other researchers to conduct further studies in the area.

Review of Related Literature

In the history of English language teaching, there are two opposite assumptions. On one side, the use of L1 is strictly forbidden. This assumption with some teaching methods like the Direct Method and the Audio-lingual Method supports the English-only policy. On the other side, the use of L1 is a respected view. This perspective with many teaching methods like Grammar Translation Method, the Silent Way, the Total Physical Response, the Suggestopedic Method and others support the inclusion of L1 in L2 classes (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Harmer, 2002; Rommel, 2017).

The advocates of the English-Only-Policy claimed the exclusive use of the target language and the complete banishment of L1 from L2 classrooms. The proponents of this approach claim that classroom is often the only place that foreign language learners receive L2 input. The major arguments for not using the L1 in the foreign language classroom are from

the view points of L2 input (Krashen, 1982; Phillipson, 1992; Turnbull 2002) and habit formation (Ellis, 1997). Thus, the English-Only-Policy were discrediting the inclusion of L1 in L2 context for first language acquisition system, language compartmentalization, exposure of target language and the overuse of L1 in grammar translation method. As a result, the monolingual approach has received considerable criticisms and oppositions from different dimensions. These are the impracticability of the English-Only-Policy, native teachers' view, inadequacy of mere exposure and inseparable entities of L1 and L2 (Atkinson 1987; Auerbach 1993; Wechsler, 1997).

Supporters of L1, on the other hand, appreciate that the systematic use of the first language would yield a positive result (Atkinson, 1987; Auerbach, 1993; Timor, 2012). They favor the importance of L1 as a linguistic tool (Auerbach, 1993). The role of L1 in L2 contexts may have sociological, psychological, pedagogic and linguistic merits (Kayaoglu, 2012).

From the foregoing discussion, L1 may have various purposes. They are: clarifying aspects of the target language, translating words/sentences, giving instructions, confirming comprehension, eliciting language, emphasizing pupils' attention, providing feedback, maintaining discipline, explaining complex rules, explaining abstract contents, giving instructions, checking for comprehension, rapport building and explaining vocabularies (Kayaoglu, 2012; Rommel, 2017).

However, a great deal of attention has been drawn from the amount of first language (L1) in the target language (TL) classrooms. In allowing users to use L1, researchers, hand in hand, warn both teachers and students not to apply over amount of L1 because of its side effect of limiting learners' target language. In other words, L1 can be a danger if not applied systematically in L2 classrooms (Atkinson, 1993; Turnbull, 2001; Al Sharaeai, 2012; Timor, 2012). This implies a random use of L1 with no rational purpose is not advisable.

Methodology

Design

The study employed descriptive survey design since it describes what actually exists regarding the current practices. This design was accompanied with mixed approach (qualitative and quantitative) as they jointly are approaches to achieve better understanding on the issue (Creswell, 2012; Salaria, 2012).

Source of Data

The source of the data was grade five Atse Fasil General Elementary School. In this grade level, there were 412 students as a total population. Among these, 82 students were taken for the questionnaire and three students for interview. In addition, at grade five, there were seven sections. From these, three sections were randomly selected for classroom observation.

Sampling Techniques

In Gondar town, there were forty-four elementary schools. Among those, Atse Fasil General Elementary School was selected through simple random sampling technique as this technique gives equal chance for participants. This was because all schools had similar cases in using L1 in L2 classes. In this school, only grade five was targeted using purpo-

sive sampling technique because as compared to other grade levels (6, 7 and 8), it seemed in this grade level where many learners usually demanded utilizing their L1. Hence, learners in this grade level looked under challenges and subjected to failure in target language development unless the case was studied and some possible suggestions are forwarded.

In this grade level, there were 7 sections. Among these, three sections (section 52, 53 and 57) were selected through simple random sampling technique. In addition, Gay and Airasian (2003 as cited in Jemal, 2015) put forward the idea of 10% to 20% sample size. Thus, the maximum percent, that is, 20% (82) of students were selected to increase the representativeness of the study. To this effect, systematic random sampling technique was used from the attendance list with five intervals.

Data Gathering Tools

Questionnaire

Questionnaire in this study was used to collect data on students' perceptions towards using L1 (Amharic) in EFL classes. The questionnaire was adapted from Samadi (2011) with some modification in line with the participants' context. It comprised eighteen closed ended questions in a Likert-scale format- five points rating from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' to show learners' perception towards L1 use in EFL classrooms. It was categorized into sub-variables like students' awareness, their preference, the amount and frequency of L1 use, reasons and purposes for using Amharic in English classes. Besides, one more close-ended question was designed in a specific interval having options like 5-10%, 11-20%, 21-30%, 31-40%, 41-50% and more than 50%, and the questionnaire was translated into Amharic version so as to avoid communication barrier.

The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were checked. Concerning the face and content validities, for instance, were seen: the sequence of two items was reordered; one item was removed because of having similar concept with another. An ambiguous phrase, that was, 'English-Only Policy' was rewritten as 'using only English'. Similarly, the Amharic version was checked. Then, these all comments were taken into account in a pilot study. The pilot study was purposively carried out in another elementary school (Felege Abiot Elementary School) so that the participants could not share information with the pilot involvers. Thirty students were involved in the pilot study. Then, its result (the Cronbach Alpha coefficient value) was 0.73 as computed and attached to the main study.

Audio Recording

Audio recording was employed to provide rich data on the basis of purpose and amount of students' utterances on L1 use. The audio recording was preferred in the study because it hardly destructed the attention of participants so that the participants could reveal the natural event (Jingxia, 2008). Thus, it was a primary tool in this study to gather a real existing data with regard to students' purpose and amount in using Amharic language in English classes. It was held on in three sections twice in each section with the total of six periods for about 40 minutes.

Interview

Interview is believed to provide wider freedom for interviewees. Thus, semi-structured interview was employed as a supplementary tool to gain data with respect to students' perceptions towards Amharic language use in English classes since this type of interview enables the researcher to have more questions based on the situation. The interview was

adapted from Elmetwally's (2012) work and comprised four questions. Three students (one student from each recording class) were involved in the interview. The number was limited for making it manageable.

Ethical Issues of the Study

To be able to conduct the study, the researchers had got an official letter from DELL, UoG. Then, the researchers made a brief discussion with the school director of Atse Fasil who accepted the letter positively, coordinated the process and wrote an announcing letter to EFL teachers and students at grade five. The teachers and students volunteered to participate and the researchers got EFL classes to record the utterances of teachers and students. Besides, both teachers and students were valued when giving the required information in questionnaire and interview throughout the study after the researchers explained to them that the information would be kept confidentially and anonymously.

Data Collection Procedure and Analysis Technique

Audio recording was first taken in three sections twice with the total of six. Secondly, words in the recorded material were categorized into Amharic and English languages. Thirdly, Amharic words were further categorized into their purposes like maintaining discipline, checking comprehension, explaining difficult concepts, defining vocabulary, praising learners, providing directions, eliciting ideas and explaining grammar rules. Furthermore, the questionnaire data were collected and categorized in line with sub-variables of perception such as awareness, preference, amount and frequency, reasons and purposes of L1 use. Similarly, the interview data were collected and organized. Then, they were categorized into sub-variables for the convenience of analysis. Finally, the audio recording and the questionnaire data were analyzed quantitatively, whereas the interview data were analyzed qualitatively.

Data Analysis

In this section, students' data were analyzed to investigate their perception, purpose and amount of Amharic use in English contexts and question-based analysis was used.

Questionnaire Data Analysis

1. What perceptions did students have towards the use of L1 in English classes?

Table 1: Students' awareness on the use or not use of L1 and its importance in English classes

Table 1: Students' awareness on the use or not use of L1 and its importance in English classes													
No.	Item	Responses										To- tal	Mean
		5		4		3		2		1			
1	The lesson would be difficult if my teacher uses only English in English lesson.	F 26	% 31.7	F 27	% 32.9	F 8	% 9.8	F 9	% 11	F 12	% 14.6	82	3.56
2	Using Amharic helps me learn English language better.	47	57.3	18	22	8	9.8	5	6.1	4	4.9	82	4.21
3	Amharic should be used in English classes.	47	57.3	17	20.7	10	12.2	7	8.5	1	1.2	82	4.24
Grand Mean													4.00

Key: 1. 5= strongly agree 4= agree 3= undecided 2= disagree 1= strongly disagree

2. The data in Likert scale 'Agree' with 'Strongly Agree', and 'Disagree' with 'Strongly Agree' are interpreted together for the convenience of the analysis. 3. F=Frequency %=Percent

The above Table shows series of three items with respect to awareness of learners on the inclusion/exclusion and significance of Amharic in EFL classes. Regarding content complexity during the exclusive use of English in English language classes (see item1), some respondents (25.6%) disagreed upon the idea. Nevertheless, 64% of participants agreed that English lesson can be sophisticated on conditions that it is exclusively delivered in its classes. This is supported by the mean value (3.56) which is rather less than the grand mean (4.00).

In response to item 2, few respondents, that is, 9 (11%) showed their disagreement on the necessity of L1 in target language occasions. However, the dominant respondents (79.3%) approved that L1 is invaluable to scaffold the target language learning. The idea is also substantiated by the mean value (4.21) that is fairly greater than the grand mean (4.00). The majority of the interviewed students (88.8%) reported that Amharic should be included in English classes.

Regarding students' awareness towards the use of Amharic in English class, 9.7% of participants disagreed on the inclusion of L1 (Amharic) in English classes. However, majority of students (78%) agree that L1 ought to be utilized in L2 occasions. This is supported by the mean value (4.24) which is moderately greater than the grand mean (4.00). Therefore, the data suggest that pupils seemed to have positive perception towards the inclusion of their first language.

Table 2: Students' preference and satisfaction on the amount and frequency of using L1 in L2 classes													
No.	Items	Responses										Total	Mean
		5		4		3		2		1			
1	Amharic should be used with limited amount in English lesson.	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	82	3.79
		32	40.2	22	26.8	10	12.2	11	13.4	6	7.3		
2	I believe that I should use Amharic sometimes in English language classrooms.	27	32.9	38	46.3	2	2.4	8	9.8	7	8.5	82	3.85
3	I prefer using more Amharic words to English in English classes.	13	15.9	10	12.2	11	13.4	21	25.6	27	32.9	82	2.52
4	I am satisfied with the amount of Amharic language we utilize in English class.	33	40.2	20	24.4	14	17.1	4	4.9	11	13.4	82	3.73
	Grand mean												3.47

As depicted in item 1 in Table 2, some respondents (13.4%) indicated that they did not accept the judicious use of mother tongue. Conversely, the mean (3.79) which is somewhat greater than the grand mean (3.47) disclosed that the dominant participants (67%) viewed their L1 should be employed with restricted quantity.

Regarding the frequency of L1 (item 2), 18.3% participants reported their disagreement on occasional use of it. Contrary, 79.2% agreed upon the intermittent utilization of Amharic. Therefore, it sounds logical to say that most students perceived some amount of native language as a linguistic resource in target language classes.

As shown in Table 3, regarding students' preference in using L1, 28.1% of students stated that they preferred to use more Amharic language in English classes. However, 58.5% of students claimed that they did not. This is also supported by the mean value (2.52) which is extensively less than the grand mean (3.47).

As also depicted in item 4, the data disclosed that 15 (18%) of participants were not contented with the amount of their L1 use in L2 classrooms. In contrast, 53 (64.6%) of respondent agreed that they were satisfied with the amount of their L1 use in foreign language contexts. Their satisfaction is also consolidated by the mean value (3.73) that is to some extent greater than the grand mean (3.47).

On the basis of the aforementioned findings, one can conclude that the majority of the participants perceived that their L1 should be used with restricted amount, and most students also perceived that some amount of native language is a facilitating resource in target language teaching and learning contexts.

Table 3: Situations and reasons for using Amharic in English classes

No.	Items	Responses										Total	Mean
		5		4		3		2		1			
1	Using Amharic helps me express my ideas when I fail to do that in English.	F 45	% 54.9	F 14	% 17.1	F 7	% 8.5	F 11	% 13.4	F 5	% 6.1	82	4.01
2	Translating from English into Amharic is a good way to save time.	25	30.5	23	28	17	20.7	14	17.1	3	3.7	82	3.65
3	Amharic is used to learn complicated linguistic structures.	38	46.3	18	22	18	22	5	6	3	3.7	81	4.01
4	Amharic is used to explain difficult concepts in English lesson.	47	57.3	22	26.8	10	12.2	2	2.4	1	1.2	82	4.37
5	Amharic language is used to provide instructions in English lesson.	31	37.8	22	26.8	16	19.5	8	9.8	5	6.1	82	3.81
6	Amharic is utilized to check learners' comprehension.	36	43.9	25	30.5	14	17.1	4	4.9	3	3.7	82	4.06
7	Amharic is vital to maintain discipline problems of students.	42	51.2	23	28	8	9.8	6	7.3	3	3.7	82	4.16
8	Amharic language is used to give meanings of vocabularies in English class.	41	50	30	36.6	6	7.3	3	3.7	2	2.4	82	4.28

9	Amharic is used to elicit ideas in English classrooms.	35	42.7	26	31.7	11	13.4	6	7.3	4	4.9	82	4
10	Amharic is used to praise students to participate more in English lesson.	33	40.2	20	24.4	7	8.5	10	12.2	12	14.6	82	3.63
		Grand Mean											4.00

The Table above treated a series of items regarding reasons and purposes of L1 in L2 situations. Particularly, item 1 assessed learners' reason in using Amharic when they could not express their ideas in L2. In this regard, 19% of respondents disagreed on the point. Nevertheless, 72% agreed on using MT while they have dearth of expressing ideas in TL. This is also confirmed by the mean value (4.01) which is slightly greater than the grand mean (4.00). Therefore, the mean in collaboration with the grand mean depicted that L1 can be used when learners were in failure of using the TL. Thus, it sounds reasonable to say that pupils apply their own language in English classrooms while they encounter difficulties to express their feelings.

The data in item 2 also disclosed that more than half of the respondents (58.5%) ensured Amharic can be utilized as a good means in order to save time of the target language. The idea is also supported by the mean value (3.65) which is considerably below the grand mean (4.00).

Furthermore, concerning the use of L1 for explaining concepts, the data indicated that 3.6% of the respondents did not accept the idea. However, the prevalent number (84.1%) of participants felt that their mother tongue was employed to explain difficult concepts in EFL contexts. Emphasizing this, the mean value (4.37) which is much greater than the grand mean (4.00) disclosed that most learners applied MT to make clear certain ideas in English classes.

Concerning students' feeling towards L1 use for providing instruction, 15.9% of them disagreed upon the issue. On the contrary, 64.6% of them agreed that it can be employed for instruction intent. This is substantiated by the mean value (3.81) which is rather less than the grand mean (4.00).

Moreover, according to item 6, the data showed that only 8.6% respondents never accepted the use of Amharic language so as to check whether learners could comprehend the lesson or not. In contrast, 74.4% of participants proved that L1 was utilized to assure learners' understanding during L2 teaching learning occasions. To toughen the idea, the mean value (4.06) with fairly statistical difference over the grand mean (4.00) uncovered the agreement of dominant respondents on using L1 for comprehension sake.

In relation to item 7, for the purpose of managing discipline problems, a few participants (11%) replied that they hardly agreed on the issue. Yet, the majority of participants (79.2%) argued that first language was applied in EFL classrooms to maintain discipline. The idea is also witnessed by the mean value (4.16) which is quite greater than the grand mean (4.00).

On top of item 8, it was merely 6.1% of respondents disagree with the use of L1 for defining new words in EFL classes. Conversely, most of the respondents (86.6%) perceived that they utilized their MT to explain meanings of L2. This is advocated by the mean value (4.28) that is significantly greater than the grand mean (4.00). Hence, one could say that most students use L1 to define terms in TL.

Regarding the use of L1 for praising purpose, some of the students (26.4%) did not agree on the issue. In contrast, 64.6% of them agreed. But, this seems to be supported by the mean value (3.63) which is notably less than the grand mean (4.00). In line with the open ended item, most students supported the purposes of L1 for defining new words and explaining difficult points. All in all, the mean values with reference to the grand mean (4.00) suggested purposes like defining vocabularies, explaining difficult concepts, maintaining discipline, checking comprehension, explaining structures and eliciting ideas were beyond the grand mean, whereas giving instruction, praising students and saving time were under the grand mean value.

Table 4: Learners' perception on quantity of L1 real utilization in L2 classes

No	Item	Choices	Frequency	%
1	How much of Amharic language do you think you use in English class?	5-10%	56	68.3
		11-20%	11	13.4
		21-30%	6	7.3
		31-40%	4	4.9
		40-51%	1	1.2
		> 50%	4	4.9
		Total	82	100

As indicated here above, very few participants (1.2%) explained that 40-51% of first language was employed in English classes. On the contrary, the majority of students (68.3%)

viewed that they really applied 5-10% of their L1 in L2 instructional process. Thus, it sounds that students might have positive awareness towards the amount of L1 use in EFL circumstances.

Analysis of Students' Interview

L1 use or not use related students' perception

As the recording witnessed in the interview, Student 1 replied, "If it is necessary, I use that. Em...it is better to know what says in Amharic." Student 2 also reported that it is good to use Amharic language. Likewise, Student 3 said, "Of course sometimes, it is important to learn by translation." And, three of them reported that using only English in English classrooms would cause communication barriers and failure of the lesson. However, three of the interviewed students explained that L1 should be used in target language contexts.

Reason and purpose related students' perception on L1 Use

As interviewed students revealed, L1 was used for different reasons and purposes. Student 1 narrated that the use of L1 is conditioned on their background and said that L1 would be used for providing meanings of words, phrases and sentences. Moreover, Student 2 and 3 explained that L1 should be used when the lesson is difficult to comprehend. They forwarded the major purposes saying L1 (Amharic) could be used to explain complex lessons and define new words in English classrooms. Therefore, this implies that EFL students had the view of L1 use for clarifying difficult concepts and defining vocabularies when communication failure happened in TL classrooms.

Students' perception on frequency and amount of L1 use

Three of the students explained that they should use L1 'sometimes'. Student 1 and 3 stated that not more than 5% could be effective in English language classes. Student 2 also reported that 5% of L1 use would be profitable in L2 situations. Hence, the data tend to tell us students perceived Amharic might be used 'sometimes' with managed amount in L2 classrooms.

Students' perception on the limitations of the overuse of L1

With the questions probing during the interview, the interviewed students stated the limitation of the overuse of L1 (Amharic language). In particular, Student 1 clarified that the overuse of native language may have considerable amount of limitations such as ignoring and forgetting the target language, developing abhorrence and holding negative awareness about L2. Student 2 pointed out that the over use of L1 might make learners demand teachers to translate everything in L1. Student 3 also reported that it could result in adaptation of native language in L2 situations, dearth of developing the target language, and learners might incline to use mother tongue rather than the target language, as a result.

From the above data analysis, it is possible to conclude that students perceived that they should 'sometimes' use their first language in their English language classes when necessary; they felt that the excessive use of their native language has several limitations on the development of the target language.

2. How much of Amharic language was used in English classrooms?

Table 5: The amount of Amharic (L1) use against that of English (L2) in EFL classes

Sections	Lessons	Recording Duration in Minutes	Amharic utterances		English utterances		Total utterances	
			Words	Percent	Words	Percent	Words	Percent
5 ²	L1	36	154	32.01	327	67.983	481	100
	L2	34	331	46.81	376	53.18	707	100
	Mean	39	242.5	40.82	351.5	59.17	594	100

Sections	Lessons	Recording Duration in Minutes	Amharic utterances		English utterances		Total utterances	
5 ³	L1	37	410	59.24	282	40.75	692	100
	L2	38	462	63.81	262	36.18	724	100
	Mean	35	436	61.58	272	38.41	708	100
5 ⁷	L1	39	702	63.47	404	36.52	1106	100
	L2	37	489	66.8	242.5	33.2	731.5	100
	Grand Mean	36.3	389.16	57.42	288.66	42.59	677.8	100

NB: 5²= grade 5 section 2 5³= grade 5 section 3 and 5⁷ = section 7 L1 = lesson 1 L2= lesson 2

As can be disclosed in the Table above, at individual level, the mean in section 2 depicted that approximately 41% of Amharic and 59% of English was utilized in EFL classrooms. Additionally, the mean in section 3 indicated that nearly 62% of Amharic and 38% of English was employed. Again, it was evidenced that the mean in section 7 displayed 67% of Amharic and 33% of English was utilized in English as a foreign language class. The grand mean disclosed that approximately 57% of Amharic and 43% of English was employed in EFL classrooms.

Besides, contradicting results were also discovered from their actual practice (the data from the recording) and their perceptions (the data from the questionnaire and the interviews). As the data were depicted in Table 2 in students' questionnaire (see item 4 and 5), the dominant participants with a significant grand mean (3. 8232) disclosed that they believed their first language use with restricted amount. In reply to item 19 (see Table 8), the majority of students (68.3%) viewed that 5%-10% of L1 was used in their English classes. The interviewed student also reported that a managed amount of Amharic use was vital and could have contributions to promote English as foreign language learning. Yet, practically they utilized 57% of Amharic language. This implies that no matter how positive perceptions students seemed to hold towards L1 use, the reality in their classroom practices was different.

3. What were the occasions in which L1 (Amharic) was used in EFL lessons?

Table 6: Purpose-based Classification of Amharic Utterances

teachers	Lessons	Recording Duration in Minute	amharic Utter- ance	word	Explaining concepts	word	Defining vocab- ulary	word	Checking com- prehension	Giving Instruc- tion	%	Explaining grammar	%	Maintaining discipline	%	Eliciting ideas	%	Praising students	%
5	L1	32	154	6	3.9	8	5.2	47	30.5	58	37.6	-	-	22	14.3	9	5.8	4	2.6
	L2	36	331	71	21.5	16	4.8	94	28.4	72	21.8	23	6.9	34	10.3	18	5.4	3	0.9
	Mean	34	242.5	38.5	12.7	12	5	70.5	29.5	65	29.7	11.5	3.5	28	12.3	13.5	5.6	3.5	1.8
5	L1	39	410	123	30	25	6.1	162	39.5	39	9.5	-	-	47	11.5	9	2.2	5	1.2
	L2	37	347	119	42.3	32	9.2	161	46.4	78	22.5	-	-	38	10.9	34	9.8	-	-
5	Mean	38	378.5	121	36.2	28.5	7.7	161.5	42.9	58.5	16	-	-	42.5	11.2	21.5	6	2.5	0.6
	L1	35	276	75	21.2	-	-	96	47.8	20	7.2	13	4.7	64	23.2	8	2.9	-	-
Grand mean		36.3	370	78.6	21.5	21.3	4.9	131.3	37.5	83.5	22	6	2	45.6	13.3	16.5	4.9	6.2	1.4

As displayed in the Table above, regarding L1 use for clarification intent, the mean value showed that 12.7% of Amharic was used in section 2 to express difficult concepts. The mean also revealed that 36.2% of Amharic was in section 3, whereas 16.2% was by section 7 students. In combination, the grand mean witnessed 21.5% was utilized to clarify ideas. Thus, one can infer that much of L1 was used for explaining difficult concepts.

For comprehension checking, the mean pointed out that 29.5% was employed by section 2 students. With a great difference, the mean also signaled that 42.9% of L1 was used in section 3, and 40.2% was in section 7. In amalgam of the three means, the grand mean assured that 37.5% was employed in EFL classes. This implies much of L1 was utilized for the sake of checking comprehension.

Moreover, for maintaining instructions, the mean indicated that 29.7% of L1 was implemented by section 2 students, and 16% was by section 3 learners, while 20.3% was in section 7. In combination, the grand mean confirmed that 22% of mother tongue was used to promote orders in English classes. Thus, it is likely to say that much of learners' first language was used to provide orders in English as a foreign language classroom.

As seen in the Table, the mean divulged that 1.8% of MT in section 2, 0.6% in section 3 and 1.3% in section 7 was employed in English contexts. The grand mean also ensured that 1.4% of L1 was utilized in EFL context. The grand mean, hence, uncovers that the least amount of Amharic was utilized to praise learners.

Thus, it was found that L1 was used for various pedagogical purposes. No matter how for different purposes L1 was used, the grand means implies that very little was utilized for defining terms, elaborating grammar points and appreciating learners. Yet, much of L1 was devoted for checking comprehension, maintaining instructions and clarifying difficult concepts in English classes.

Discussion

The result revealed that the majority of students had affirmative perceptions towards the inclusion of their first language in L2 classes. They reported that the elimination of Amharic could be ineffective in EFL learning contexts. In support of this, Harbord (1992) argued against the idea of English only policy by saying rigidly elimination of L1 does not promote TL learning. The result also showed that students believed L1 should be used 'sometimes'. This finding also looks to fit with the findings of local researcher (Kenenisa, 2003) indicating students believed they 'sometimes' use Oromiffa in English classes.

What is more is that the finding disclosed, 57% of Amharic was really employed in EFL classrooms. This finding matches with neither the findings of outsiders like Atkinson (1987) and Tang (2002) that found 5%, 5-10% and 5-17% of L1 use respectively nor the findings of local researcher, example, Kenenisa (2003) that reported 1.25% of Oromiffa in L2 context. Again, considerable researchers in the literature claimed that due attention has to be given towards the excessive use of L1 in TL classrooms since it can be a danger (Turnbull, 2001; 2008; Khati, 2011). Besides, as 57% use of L1 was employed, more time was devoted to L1 as long as it looks the end/the target language. In contrast to this result, Auerbach (1993) claimed that more time should be paid to L2 rather than L1.

The finding of the study also revealed that though EFL students had positive perceptions towards L1 use, the reality in their classroom was different. The discrepancy between their perceptions and utilization seemed to contradict with the idea of Pajares (1992) that

stated one's perception usually influences his or her own real performance. If so, one has to observe others how they act and then determine their perceptions on the basis of the observed behavior.

In addition, it was found that EFL students employed L1 in various occasions: clarifying abstract concepts, defining words, giving instructions, confirming comprehension, eliciting language, explaining grammar and maintaining discipline. This finding seems to fit with those of (Raman & Yigitoglu, 2015).

Conclusions and Recommendation

The findings of the study showed that EFL students perceived 5-10% of L1 could play a significant role to scaffold TL. However, it was found that 57% of L1 was practically utilized in English classes. Besides, Amharic was used in different occasions such as clarifying difficult concept, providing instructions, maintaining discipline, checking comprehension, eliciting ideas, praising learners, explaining rules, and defining vocabularies. It was also discovered that Amharic was used for elementary lessons that did not demand any clarification with L1. From this, one can conclude that though EFL students held positive perception towards the judicious use of L1 in English language, they seemed to utilize it excessively and improperly in a way that could reduce the exposure of the TL. Based on the findings and conclusions, it was, thus, recommended that EFL learners ought to be provided training on pedagogical application of L1 in English classrooms.

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