



## English Foreign Language Teachers' Attitude Towards and Practice of Using L1 in the EFL Classroom in Case of Goh and Gelila Highschool in South Omo Zone, Ethiopia

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### ARTICLE INFO

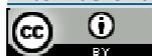
*Keywords:* Attitude, Practice, Context of Learning, L1, L2, Aaraph, EFL Teacher, EFL Classroom

*Received :* 6 December

*Revised :* 18 December

*Accepted:* 20 January

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores EFL teacher's attitude forward and practice of using L1 in their classroom. It also considers that the context of using Aaraph in EFL classroom in high school level of two selected schools in south Omo zone, South and North Ari woreda's (Goh and Gelila High School). It was a descriptive study. The study employed mixed research method using questionnaire, interview, and observation. Data through questionnaires were collected from 11 EFL teachers and 263 students from both school in south and north Ari. In addition, semi-structured interviews were carried out with five English teachers to get an in-depth understanding of their attitude forwards using Aaraph in EFL classrooms. Comprehensive sampling was employed so as to select and include all EFL teachers of the sampled secondary schools. Moreover, simple random sampling was used for selecting samples from the students for cross checking purpose. The study revealed that, almost all EFL teachers dominantly used Aaraph than target language. The purpose of EFL use of L1 while teaching English language was to translate concepts, to favour L1 use, and to support learners. EFL teachers don't believe L1 has a negative effect on learner's language learning. However, EFL Teachers have a negative attitude towards the use of L1 in the EFL classroom and implemented in different context of making a communication. The conclusion is that teachers employ L1 not only as a communication tool, but also as a supportive tool that helps in developing TL skills for students

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of language teaching, methods of classroom instruction have been one of the most controversial topics of debate among different scholars. Though there have been numerous studies carried out to find the ways of more effective language instruction, there still no single and agreed up on consensus among the scholars.

Krashen (1981), language learners develop their competence if teachers expose them to lots of comprehensible input. If the input is not comprehensible enough, acquisition will not be complete. To do so, the mother tongue can be a helpful tool. For instance, if the text is too difficult for the students to comprehend or if its comprehension depends on having some background knowledge, the teacher can build this background using students' mother tongue.

Similarly, Atkinson (1987) recommends using the L1 equivalents for eliciting language and comprehension checking by both teacher and student in the form of "How do you say in English?" Thus first language use can facilitate the flow of communication in the target language.

TuranPakera, and ÖzlemKaraagaç 2015 has favored the use of mother tongue contribution to language learning process in various occasions in the learning teaching process but the excessive use of it may result in too much dependence on it, which is less desired outcome.

On the other hand, some researchers argue that using L1 in the L2 classroom might affect students' learning process negatively since it reduces the learners' exposure to the L2 and reduces their opportunities for using the target language (Deller & Rinvoluceri, 2002; Polio & Duff, 1994). According to Krashen & Terrell (1983), L1 should not be used in the L2 classroom to enhance students' exposure to the L2, since students acquire the L2 through the same way they acquire their L1.

In the same vein, it has also caught attention of different scholars from countries like Ethiopia where English is taught as foreign language. Similarly, some local studies conducted in Ethiopia indicated importance in EFL classroom instructions. For instance, Kifle, Temesgen, and Yemanebirhan, 2017; Abiy and Mohammed, 2011; and Abiy, 2012 were some studies that have supported the use of first language in EFL classes. These researchers favored the use of Amharic if not used excessively to support the students learning.

In Ethiopian, the globalization and democratic movement have moved from behaviorism to cognitive belief due to this there has been a strictness of using L1 is declining in the classroom interaction. Some of the text book has invited the use of L1 in their syllabus. This approach is more humanistic view that L1 brings some wealth and richness in recognizing and acquiring other languages. There is another view always English has become teach English in English but not ignoring the native language. We Ethiopian teachers of English have been very little affected by this change in approach both in theory and practice since communicative language teaching has been introduced. There are teachers who entirely depending on the use of L1 or would totally refusing it. There are a lot of teachers following the structural approach, and reform minded teachers do not appear to be rapidly replacing them. This study stemming from the

experiences that attempts to investigate the attitude forwards and practice of EFL teachers using L1 in the EFL classrooms.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There have been a number of researches on the use of L1 in L2 classes. Harbord (1992) for example, indicated that many second language teachers have attempted to create English-only classrooms but unfortunately, it led to students misunderstanding. He, therefore, drew the conclusion to use translation method to make student understand better. This view was in line with researches done by Cameron (2001) and McCann (2005) who proposed that translation can be used positively in explaining the structures of language and giving feedback. Turnbull (2001) stressed that teachers may use L1 in appropriate ways to help students understand unfamiliar words.

As far as the researcher's learning experience and observation is concerned, teachers and students in the sample study area intuitively use L1 in the EFL classes. Some Language teachers has been seen making use of L1 or mother tongue( Aaraph) in EFL classes in order to justify some difficult and sophisticated issues and concepts and also give instructions so as to manage the class. Some others use Mother tongue (Aaraph) suddenly and implement word by word translation and interpretation intensively without having background of using L1. Some other teachers still instruct their students to use only native language and refusing Mother tongue or L1.

These views were supported by Machaal (2012) and Salaah & Farrah (2012). Machaal (2012) verified the attitude and beliefs of the scholars, foreign language academics, and policymakers towards the use of the first language in foreign language categories. The findings showed that the majority of the participants in agreement and supported the use of L1 in the L2 classroom. Duff and Polio (1990) researched how much L2 was used in EFL classrooms. The study involved thirteen teachers. Their findings showed that the participant teachers were not aware of the quantity and frequency learners' first language may be utilized in EFL classes, as the use of L2 widely ranged between ten to hundred per cent. It also indicated that, in several cases, a lot of students had a very limited exposure to the target language.

Swain and Lapkin (2000) argue that L1 use should be available for learners in the target language classrooms. However, it should not "be actively encouraged as it may substitute for, rather than support, second language learning" (p. 268). And again their study showed that teachers were not aware of the frequency learners' mother tongue may be used in EFL classrooms. It also indicated that students' exposure to the TL was affected by the quantity of L1 use.

Another important study was carried out by Burden (2001). It explored the issue of when learners and their teachers felt there was a need to use Japanese in English classes. The results indicated that there was a general agreement between teachers and students regarding the importance of L1 use in the TL classes.

In Ethiopian context, Kenenisa (2003) argued that based on class recordings and observation, the ratio between English words and the Oromo

language was about 1:77. That showed teachers and students in the EFL classroom at this college used certain amount of Oromo language is found to be less than what both students and teachers ought to have in the 50 minutes English lessons. According to their views, 6-10% of the 50 minutes class time for Oromo language use was deemed acceptable.

There is another points that depicts almost all EFL teachers speak one of the countries' languages in the classroom. According to Kifle etl, 2017, the teachers unconditionally use Amharic in EFL classrooms. Besides, the study conducted by Abyi and Mohammed, 2011 in Bahir Dar elementary schools indicated positive correlation between EFL teachers' use of Amharic (L1) in classroom and the learners' attitude towards its use. Again, Abiy (2012) focused on the use of Amharic during English pre-writing lesson at Belay Zeleke Preparatory School and still his study favored the use of it for its relevance to enhance students writing ability.

Abrham Y. & Dejene E. (2019), conclude that students faced many problems in relation to Aaraph language influence on English language learning and teaching classroom in the case of North and South Ari woreda's secondary school students. Besides, Tafesse(1988) concluded that there was an over use of Amharic in the EFL classroom. Though the topics are similar, difference however, exist between Tafesse's work and mine in the area of research aims, purposes, tools, and contexts.

As a result, this paper examines the attitude forwards and practice of EFL teachers in using L1 in EFL classroom in Ari woreda high school with regard to the use of L1 in the EFL classroom

### **Research Questions**

To achieve the purpose of the study, the researcher raised the following three questions.

- ✓ What are the attitudes of EFL teachers across the high school level towards using L1 in the EFL classroom?
- ✓ How are the practice of the EFL teachers across the high school level in relation to their attitude towards the use of L1 (Aaraph) in the EFL classroom?
- ✓ What are the context do the EFL teachers use L1 (Aaraph) in the EFL classroom?

### **Objectives of the Study**

#### **A. General Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to investigate teachers' attitude forwards and practice of using L1 (Aaraph) in EFL classes of selected high schools in Ari district (Woreda).

### **B. Specific Objectives of the Study**

More specifically the study has the following objectives:

- To identify EFL teachers attitudes towards across the high school level of using L1 (Aaraph) in the EFL classroom.
- To investigate the practice of the EFL teachers across the high school level in relation to their attitude towards the use of L1 (Aaraph) in EFL classroom.
- To find out the context of EFL teachers using L1 (Aaraph) in the EFL classroom.

### **METHODS**

This section contains methods and design that the researcher used to undertake the study. The research methodologies employed in the study were both qualitative and quantitative methods.

#### **Research**

Ary (2010: 426) states that, research design is the researcher's plan of how to proceed to gain an understanding of some group or some phenomenon in its context. Based on that theory, the research design of this research is descriptive design with mixed approach. The design of this study was descriptive research design.

#### **Research Setting**

This study is to be conducted in Southern, Nation, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State, particularly in South Omo Zone on two selected High schools (at South and North Ari). South Omo zone comprises sixteen (16) nations from fifty-six Nations in Southern Regional State. The zone is 743 km away from Addis Ababa. In South Omo zone, there are thirty (30) Secondary and preparatory Schools, but the researcher selected two high schools from 30 Secondary and preparatory Schools in the zone due to their proximity to the researcher residence.

#### **Population Of The Study**

The accessible population for the study was all high school English teachers and some students, who taught and learned respectively in the academic year in the selected high schools. There are thirty (30) secondary and preparatory schools in south Omo zone. Among those high schools the researcher selected two high schools in North and South Ari wereda as a target area of the study by using a purposive sampling because the researcher believed those two selected schools are the best data sources which entails the language they speak. They are Aaraph language native speakers than of the other schools. The other school teachers are not a native in Aaraph language would rather the speaker Oromiffa, Amharic, Tigrigna, wolloyta and Konso as well. They haven't used Aaraph language in the classroom. However, they were switching the language they had.

### **Sample and Sampling Techniques**

Sample members are chosen only on the basis of the researcher's knowledge and judgment. It enables the researchers to select cases that will best enable the researchers to answer the research question(s) and to meet the research objectives. Purposive or judgmental sampling is a strategy in which particular settings persons or events are selected deliberately in order to provide important information that cannot be obtained from other choices (Maxwell, 1996).

It is where the researcher includes cases or participants in the sample because they believe that they warrant inclusion. The total numbers of the target area population of teachers were 11 English teachers. Among them there were 10 male English teachers and one female English teacher. The researcher used all the populations in the study area because of small in number so as to manage.

Therefore, all the teachers who taught English language at the selected high schools were taken as respondents for the study. To select them as respondents, researcher used availability or comprehensive sampling techniques.

As stated by Walliman (2011) and Kothari and Garg (2014), the simple random selection procedure should aim to guarantee that each element (person, group, class, type etc.) has an equal chance of being selected. From the total number of students in one schools, the researcher took 144 students by using simple random sampling techniques and also the researcher took 119, so that the total sample size from the two schools were 263 students from the selected high schools in South and North Ari Wereda by 95% confidence interval within 5% of margin error.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The researcher employed three data gathering tools to get data from the respondents. The tools that the researcher mainly preferred to use are questionnaire, interviews and classroom observation. These instruments are preferable to use for the descriptive research method.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The concentration of this study is based on what are the attitudes forward and practice of using L1 (Aaraph language) in EFL classroom (hereafter, L1) in an EFL classroom. The following table presents the main outcomes emerging from the data obtained in this study according to the statements in the questionnaire. Data were analyzed by calculating the number of respondents who agreed or disagreed to different degrees with the different aspect specified by each statement included in the survey.

Table 1. Respondents Who Agreed or Disagreed to Different Degrees

Statement	SD %	D %	N %	A %	SA %
Using of Aaraph in the classroom has negative effects on the progress of the learners English language profieciency.	18.1	27.3	0	27.3	27.3
Teachers should only use the target language( the language that is being taught in the classroom).	18	18	18.5	28	17.5
As long as the teachers speak only English, students will be demotivated.	18.2	54.5	0	18.2	9.1
If the teachers does not use Aaraph in EFL classes, students will feel that their social identity is not respected.	27.3	45.4	0	9.1	18.2
Using only the target language widens the gap between the learner and the teachers.	27.3	27.3	0	45.4	0
Using only English helps students learn the language.	9.05		9.05	45	36.9
The course books/teacher's books you are using to teach English at present encourage any use of students' first language	9.1	0	45.5	27.3	18.2
As long as the teachers use Aaraph language in the classroom,the students have a doubt about the teachers language proficiency.	18.2	18.2	36.4	18.2	36.4
Using L1( switching) is a natural part of a conversation that always takes place in a multilingual context, so it is very normal to use L1 or switch from English to Aaraph in the classroom.	0	9.1	27.2	45.5	18.2
As long as the teachers use both Aaraph and English for giving instruction, students will wait for the Aaraph translation and do not pay attention to English.	45.5	18.2	9.1	27.3	0
Using only target language( English language) is challenging to students in learning	0	9.3	27.4	18.3	45
Teachers use Aaraph (L1) so as to facilitate complicated English classroom tasks.	9.1	9.1	9.1	36.35	36.35
Students' English proficiency is the factor that use Aaraph in EFL classes.	9.1	0	18.2	54.5	18.2
I feel more comfortable when I talk to my students in Aaraph.	9.1	-	27.3	36.3	27.3
Aaraph can help me to express my feeling and ideas that I cannot explain in English.	9.1	9.1	27.3	27.3	27.3
Teachers use L1 ( Aaraph) to explain the English idioms and expressions	9.1	9.1	9.1	36.35	36.35
Teachers use Aaraph when the students do in pairs/group works and I walk around them.	18.2	0	9.1	27.3	45.4

I allow my students to use L1 in my EFL classrooms.	9.1	0	27.3	36.4	27.3
I teach English to my student through translation of some concepts in to L1 (Aaraph).	9.1	18.17	9.1	36.33	27.3
Teachers use L1( Aaraph) when the students ask a questions in their native language.	18.2	9.1	9.1	27.3	36.3

The results for the first research question indicated that EFL teachers in Aaraph mostly have negative points of view in terms of using L1 in language classrooms. Consequently, most of the teachers supported the use of L1, the results indicated that they mostly agree rather than strongly agree that L1 can be used in language classrooms.

Questions 2, 8, &11 in the above inquired about teachers' attitudes towards the use of L1 in general sense of the EFL classroom. According to the data, mostly the teachers seem to have negative attitudes towards the use of L1. However, the distribution of the responses to these statements shows that the percentages of the maximal position (Agree that TL should be used) are much higher than the more virtual position (Strongly agree that TL should be used) (Macaro, 2009).

Not more than of (45.5) of the teachers showed negative attitudes towards teachers' L1 use in their language classrooms, as supported by the distribution of responses to question 2. However,

This finding may be interpreted to mean that the EFL teachers are almost a positive about using primarily TL in language the classroom.

The aim of questions 3, 4, 5, &9 in the questionnaire was to reveal the participants' opinions about use of L1 for the humanistic needs of the students. In response to question 3, 72.7% of the teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed that switching to Aaraph has not a negative effect on learners in terms of motivation. These findings reveal that most of the teachers have students who have difficulty in, especially, doing oral communication in their classrooms. This may be one of the variables determining teachers' code-switching although they support the exclusive use of L1 in language education.

The researcher draws the conclusion that EFL teachers appeared to have negative opinions toward the usage of L1 in language classrooms based on the aforementioned table. The lack of an appropriate context for the learners to access Aaraph in TL rather than the language classroom may be the cause of their support for the exclusive use of TL. Consequently, even while teachers concur that L1 can serve as a tool for learning, using L1 as a tool for access by teachers may have a greater influence in the language learning classroom. The teachers' claims that they used L1 in their classes, particularly in lower skill level language classes, support these findings.

When the respondents' attitudes were studied, it was possible to suppose that there were additional causes, such as the students' apprehension about speaking in TL in front of others and the fact that code-switching is a common occurrence in conversations where both communicators speak the same L1 and

L2. Teachers agree that if a student truly needs to, they should be given the chance to express themselves in their first language. Teachers are in favor of utilizing L1 as a methodological tool even though they think L1 shouldn't be utilized as a communicative tool in the classroom. This might be brought on by the educational background and language skills of the teachers, the students' language competency, or the location of the students.

## DISCUSSION

Despite the fact that old textbooks have been replaced by new ones, students' English language proficiency appears very slow (Berhanu, 1999). According to reports, the New Framework recognizes a student-centered approach. Despite the seminars and workshops they have attended, teachers in our secondary schools continue to use the old conventional teacher-centered approach (Sisay, 1999 cited in Haregewein 2003). Besides which, English for Ethiopians in Grade 10 and 11 does not allow students to integrate the existing language skills

Machaal (2012) and Salaah & Farrah both endorsed these ideas (2012). According to Machaal (2012), the usage of the first language in foreign language categories is accepted as being in line with scholars' attitudes and beliefs. The results showed that most participants agreed with and supported the usage of L1 in L2 classrooms.

Although most teachers have stressed the significance of L1 in relation, they frequently clarify their response by pointing out that it should be employed with caution. The outcomes of the study confirm this view (Schweers, 2003; Tang, 2002; Jingxia, 2010; Alshammari, 2011, Kim & Petraki, 2009, Timor, 2012). Although teachers prefer to use TL only in their classrooms, statistics show that they do not believe that the use of L1 has a negative impact on students' language. These findings support both the validity of TL camps only and code-modification (e.g., Ellis, 1984; Krashen & Terrill, 1983; Polio & Duff, 1994; Turnbull, 2001), because most proponents of code-changing camp agree that Language input the target provided to the English class is of greater value (Auerbach, 1991) and should be maximized as much as possible (Turnbull, 2001).

## CONCLUSIONS

Teachers did not exhibit a substantial prejudice against the use of L1 according to the analysis of this portion of the data, which was a far more striking finding. Additionally, they concurred that when the interlocutors speak the same L1 and L2, the usage of L1 is a natural result. Teachers did not believe that the use of L1 had a negative impact on students' language, despite the fact that they supported only using the TL in their classes. This result contributes not only to the justifications of TL-only camp (e.g., Ellis, 1984; Krashen & Terrill, 1983; Polio & Duff, 1994; Turnbull, 2001) but also the code-switching camp since most proponents of the Code-switching camp agree on the idea that target language input as provided in language classrooms has great value (Auerbach, 1991), and it should be maximized as much as possible (Turnbull, 2001).

As a result, data analysis revealed that even though they do not think it is acceptable, teachers occasionally feel compelled to employ L1 in their

communication practices. Particularly in lower levels, teachers have a predisposition to use L1, and there is less of a tendency to do so in top levels.

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