Teachers’ Beliefs and Purposes of L1 Use and Its Effects on Students’ Oral English Improvement in Selected Primary Schools

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Abstract
The concern of this descriptive survey research was to exploratory Teachers’ Beliefs and purposes of L1 use and Its Effects on Students’ Oral English Improvement in Selected Primary Schools. To collect the data, classroom observation and interview were used. The classroom observation data were collected through checklist and the results were counted and recorded as Afan Oromo (L1) and English utterances of teachers and then changed into frequency and percentages. Similarly, the interview was presented to eight teachers and the data were recorded, transcribed, and then thematically analyzed. The findings revealed that the participant EFL teachers have favorable beliefs about use of L1 in EFL classes. However, they used more L1 utterances than English utterances. For example, they made 1152 utterances among which 564/1152=49% were L1 and 588/1152=51% were English utterances. That means participant teachers used almost the same amount of L1 and English which implies that teachers over used L1 which has a negative effect on students’ oral English improvement. Therefore, teachers are recommended to be good models for their students by practicing more TL than L1 to improve their students’ oral English.

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Introduction

There are two opposite perspectives in using L1 in EFL context. On one hand, 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 hand, 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 Suggestopedia and others support the inclusion of L1 in L2 classes (Rommel, 2017).

The advocates of the English-Only-Policy argue that L1 use is a facilitative tool in FL learning and teaching claiming that it does not hinder the learning process. They argue for the exclusive use of the target language and the complete banishment of L1 from FL classrooms (Bozorgian & Fallahpour, 2015). 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 viewpoints of L2 input and habit formation (Turnbull, 2002).

Theorists favoring the use of L1 in FL classes context argue that the systematic use of the first language would yield a positive result (Timor, 2012). For them, convincingly, the role of L1 in L2 contexts may have sociological, psychological, pedagogic and linguistic merits (Kayaoglu, 2012). However, a good deal of care has been drawn from the amount of L1 in the TL classrooms. In allowing users to use L1, researchers, hand in hand, warn both teachers and students not to overuse L1 because of its side effect of limiting learners’ target language. In other words, L1 can be a danger if not applied systematically in FL classrooms.

In the Ethiopian case, English is the most preferred language to keep the nation in touch with the rest of the world. That is why the document of the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2007) puts English as a corner stone in the development of Ethiopia’s education, communication system, technology and commerce. These ongoing desires force teachers to find out some helpful methods and techniques for improving the use of EFL in oral communication though so many factors have been found to have serious effects on EFL pedagogy and one of them is overuse of L1 in the EFL classes.

Local researchers claim that the improvement of teachers’ use of the target language is still under question. The problem seems prevalent in primary schools as content area teachers claim that let alone content area teachers, English language teachers themselves teach English using students’ L1 (Tamiru, 2013). Thus, the researcher wanted to approve or disprove what the subject area teachers responded in his previous study.

To this effect, the researcher informally observed the nearby primary schools during his
community service fieldwork and noted that teachers are not concerned with their students’ use of the target language as such nor do they try to be models for their students in using it. Rather they, very frequently, adhere to using L1 maybe for fear that the students cannot understand the English lesson they learn unless it is translated into mother tongue or otherwise.

As far as the researcher’s knowledge goes, there were a few related studies on the issue. For example, Abdulkadir (2012) explored teachers’ use of L1 at college level. Yigzaw and Beshir (2011) also studied the frequency, purpose, and application of using Amharic (L1) in teaching English. However, both researchers did not consider teachers’ beliefs and the effect of overuse of L1 on students’ English oral practices, which is the objective of this study.

The Research Questions
1. What are grade 8 teachers beliefs about L1 use in English classes?
2. For what purposes do grade 8 teachers’ use L1 in English classes?
3. What are the effects of teachers’ beliefs and excessive use of L1 on students’ oral English improvement?

Review of Related Literature

Teachers’ beliefs
By definition, teachers’ beliefs are ideas and theories that teachers hold about themselves, teaching, language, learning and their students (Richards & Schmidt, 2013, p.586). Teachers’ beliefs play an important role in shaping their pedagogical choices in the classroom, and research into teachers’ beliefs helps advance our understandings about their classroom behaviors (Borg, 2017).

Researchers seem to view teachers’ beliefs differently in different literature. Even so, they all agree on a general view where beliefs are regarded as a mental state that can be held consciously or unconsciously (Schussler et al., 2016). They also agree that beliefs play an important role in informing teacher’s practices (Scott, 2016; Xu, 2012; Zohar & Alboher, 2018).

Teachers’ beliefs about L1 Use in EFL classes
Teaching is a uniquely personal activity and teachers’ own approaches develop with experience and are influenced by individual beliefs of what constitutes effective teaching on the one hand and the demands they encounter in different classroom situations on the other (Richards & Lockhart, 2011). In this sense, teachers’ beliefs play a crucial role in determining if teachers will use L1 and how they will use it. For example, two research studies pinpointed
that the majority of teachers believe in the maximization of L2 use in the classroom (Bruhlmann, 2012). By holding such beliefs, teachers are going to consciously or unconsciously try to reflect that into their practice and limit the use of L1 as much as possible.

**Purposes of teachers’ use of L1 in EFL classes**

Teachers use L1 for the fact that it clarifies purposes. Hall & Cook (2013) suggest that teachers might resort to L1 when the cost of the TL is too great, when it would be too difficult or too time-consuming to compensate for pupils’ language difficulties or ability, lack of motivation and/or lack of discipline.

More specifically, Wilkerson (2008) found that teachers use L1 to save time, to demonstrate authority and to facilitate understanding, often having these three motives co-occur. Teachers need to use L1 where teaching difficulties arise in learning vocabulary and comprehension of difficult concepts. Helland (2016) reports that L1 is used in L2 for classroom management, language analysis, presenting rules that govern grammar, discussing cross cultural issues, giving instructions or prompts, and checking for comprehension in order to prevent the misunderstanding of the meaning of the new word. Thus, convincingly, the use of L1 in foreign language teaching is unavoidable.

Others contend that teachers’ use L1 because it reduces students’ anxiety, enhances the affective environment for learning, takes into account socio-cultural factors, and facilitates incorporation of learners’ life experiences. Thus, in most cases, there is a common theme that L1 provides a familiar and effective way of quickly getting to grips with the meaning and content of what needs to be used in the target language. He (2012) also argues that using mother tongue can help learners with the words and expressions they really want and need in oral skills. However, it should be noted that speaking activities give students an opportunity to advance their speaking skills; therefore, they would aid learning more if they are carried out in the target language.

**Effects of teachers’ overuse of L1 on students’ oral English improvement**

The presence of L1 in EFL classes is worrying and more detrimental than beneficial. For example, Sánchez (2020) reports that overuse of L1 restricts students’ exposure to the target language. She (ibid) adds that if teachers overuse L1 in EFL classes, students may keep silent unless it is translated into their L1 and teachers or students feel that the language items will not be understood. Teacher and/or students fail to observe distinctions between equivalence of form, semantic equivalence, and pragmatic features, and thus oversimplify to the point of using crude
and inaccurate translation. This argument seems to agree with Voicu (2012) who warns L1 users about the adverse consequences of over-reliance on L1 in EFL classrooms.

Materials and Methods

Exploratory research design was used by mixing qualitative and quantitative research methods because mixing the two methods has a complementary function that enables to look into not only overlapping but also different aspects of a phenomenon from different perspectives. As Lub (2015) notes it, the purpose of utilizing mixed-methods serves the purpose of maximizing the validity of the results through methods triangulation, i.e., validation-through-convergence.

Selection of Participants

The participants of the study were grade eight EFL teachers found in East and West Wollega zones. The rationale for selecting the Zones was that the researcher informally observed some primary school students and teachers while using L1 excessively in English classes. For this purpose, two English language teachers of grade eight were selected from each school (i.e., 2x8=16) by using purposive sampling techniques. Grade 8 was chosen because it was where the participants are about to make a shift of medium of instruction from L1 to English. Thus, it was believed to be where teachers’ beliefs and purposes of the use of L1 in EFL classes and its effects on students’ oral English improvement have to be studied.

Instruments of data collection

The data collection instruments of this study were classroom observation and teachers’ interview.

Observation

The classroom observation paid attention to frequency and purpose of mother tongue use during English lessons in EFL classroom. For this, the researcher used structured own prepared observation checklist by reading relevant literature. The researcher conducted three classroom observations each in the eight randomly selected primary schools to suit the purpose of the study. However, the first observation of each class was not recorded because it was used to familiarize the researcher with the participants so that alteration of behavior might be minimized during the two recording sessions of each class. Therefore, 16 observations were recorded in the checklist. Besides, there was a 12-item checklist, which was used to record various purposes of using Afan Oromo in EFL classes. To this effect, teachers’ utterances of Afan Oromo and English were counted and then changed into frequency and percentage.
Interview

Interview is the most widely used research method in qualitative research. Its main function is to provide a framework in which respondents can express their own thoughts in their own words taking the form of conversation between two people (Leonard, 2003). Accordingly, semi-structured interview questions, which were assumed to provide the researcher with in-depth information, were prepared for the participant teachers to corroborate the data collected through classroom observation. The researcher prepared a six-item interview guide for the eight teachers and interviewed them individually to get data related to their use of L1 in EFL classes.

Methods and procedures of data analysis

From the 16 classroom observations conducted, 12 of them were recorded and analyzed. The work of the researcher during the observations was ticking in the grids against each item to see how frequently and for what purposes the teachers used Afan Oromo in their classes. A period covered 40 minutes though a little recording time ranged from 30-34 minutes because the recording was interrupted when there was silence. The data obtained through observations were analyzed quantitatively. The total number of words produced by teachers was counted and categorized into Afan Oromo and English. Then, the percentage share of both languages was calculated. Furthermore, the total number of Afan Oromo utterances were subdivided into different events of using Afan Oromo. Then, the amount of Afan Oromo used in each special event was expressed in percentage. The collected data from the sixteen recorded lessons were, thus, categorized in such a way that they coincide with the research questions.

The teachers’ beliefs and purposes of use of L1 in EFL classes were elicited through a semi-structured interview. The interview data were coded according to Miles and Huberman’s (2014) qualitative data analysis scheme – data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The researcher first categorized the interview items and the participants’ responses into the relevant research questions and then read the answers repeatedly. From the extensive reading of the responses, he identified the common patterns and themes as to the nature of the responses. Based on the preliminary coding analysis, he summarized the teachers’ beliefs about use of L1 in EFL classes. The effects of teachers’ beliefs and use of L1 on students’ oral English improvement were also obtained from the interview data.

The Findings

First, the data which are related to teachers’ beliefs about use of L1 in EFL classes were presented. Second, teachers’ purposes of L1 use in English classes were analyzed. Last, the
effects of overuse of L1 in EFL classes on students’ oral English improvement were focused.

**Teachers’ beliefs about L1 use in EFL classes**

This section aimed to gain understanding of the targeted teachers’ beliefs concerning the use of L1 in EFL classes. To this effect, the researcher presented six interview guide questions to the interviewees and then interpreted them thematically as follows:

**a. Teachers’ beliefs about Students’ Learning English Using L1**

In Item I of the interview guide, the researcher asked the respondents to explain their beliefs whether students should use L1 in the process of learning English or not. Many of them, (T1, T2, T4, T5, T6, and T8), suggested that students should learn English using Afan Oromo. For instance, T6 stated, ‘Yes, it is my belief that students should use L1, who can avoid it?’ However, he added, ‘what I suggest is that they should try to speak English all the time even though it is difficult.’ What T1 suggested gives more emphasis to the use of L1 in English classes. To quote, ‘Yes, they should use Afan Oromo because our students cannot speak English and it is impossible to avoid mother tongue from FL classes.’ Others (T8 and T2) also believed that if Afan Oromo is used in teaching English, it makes learning of the TL very easy.

**b. Teachers’ Beliefs about Their Own Use of L1 in English classes**

The interviewees were required to tell, with justification, whether themselves should use L1 in English classes or not (Item 2). Each teacher showed their belief by using different justifications. For instance, T1 attached his use of L1 in English classes to students’ inability to use the target language. To put in his words, ‘Unless I use it, how can I teach students? They cannot understand anything except in Afan Oromo. Therefore, I am obliged to use Afan Oromo.’ T7 agrees with T1 saying, ‘It is not a matter of belief. These days’ grade eight students cannot communicate in English. As a result, we are obliged to speak in L1….’. T4 also believes in his use of Afan Oromo as students do not have exposure to English. He also contended that teachers themselves sometimes face problems in speaking English.

**Purpose of Teachers’ Use of L1 in EFL Classes**

Table 1 below summarizes purposes of EFL teachers’ use of L1 and English. To this effect, the researcher prepared twelve predetermined categories after reading the existing L1-use- literature and ticked during classroom observations based on the observants’ use of the utterances in each category.
Table 1: EFL Teachers’ Observed Use of L1 and English (L=16)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>A/Oromo</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>G/Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers: use L1/English to:</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>explain grammar and others</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>answer questions</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ask questions</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>check understanding</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>translate</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>give instructions</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>introduce new lesson</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>avoid waste of time</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>revise previous lesson</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>clarify lessons</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>decrease anxiety</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>repeat students’ L1 utterances</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total utterances</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>588</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*T1-T8= Teacher 1- Teacher 8  *L = Lesson

The data in Table 1 indicates that the teachers made 1152 total utterances among which 564 (49%) were Afan Oromo and 588 (51%) were English. The teachers made most of the utterances to explain grammar and others, to answer questions, to ask questions, to translate, and to check understanding of lessons. In the same manner, in the first six categories, the observed teachers relatively use many English utterances even though it less than half of the Afan Oromo utterances.

To critically see the situation of teachers’ utterances, the researcher divided the 12 categories into two bands (category 1-6 as band one and category 7-12 as band two) based on the frequency of teachers’ utterances. In the first band, the teachers uttered 371/564= 65.8% of the total Afan Oromo utterances in the 12 categories and in the second band they uttered 193/564=34.2% Afan Oromo. Likewise, in the first band, the teachers uttered 368/588= 62.6% of the total English utterances in the 12 categories and in the second band they uttered 220/588= 37.4% of English utterances in the 12 categories.

Data also shows that the observed teachers uttered less Afan Oromo than English in the second band to introduce the recent lesson, avoid waste of time, revise the previous lesson,
clarify lessons and decrease anxiety. It should be noted that teachers did not use ‘translate’, ‘avoid waste of time’ and ‘decrease anxiety’ as it is an EFL class.

More specifically, in Table 1 above, it was summarized that the observed teachers made different Afan Oromo and English utterances in the 16 classroom observations. When generally viewed, all teachers made almost equal utterances of Afan Oromo and English per category. However, for one who wants to see them critically, the teachers slightly made more Afan Oromo utterances than English except that the reverse is true in some cases.

Effects of teachers’ overuse of L1 on students’ English oral practices

The researcher prepared a-six-item questions and interviewed the eight teachers. He grouped the interview results thematically into negative and positive effects of use of Afan Oromo. He also coded the participant teachers as T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, and T8 and analyzed the results. Then, he categorized RQ3 into two: positive and negative effects of use of L1 in EFL classes.

a. Positive Effects of EFL Teachers’ Use of L1 in EFL Classes (N=8)

The teachers’ responses about the positive effects of use of L1 in the EFL classes was categorized into four: use of L1 facilitates English learning, use of L1 encourages greater participation, use of L1 saves time, and use of L1 reduces anxiety. The justifications of these categories are indicated below:

i. Use of Afan Oromo Facilitates English Learning

The interview participants reported that use of Afan Oromo creates an affective learning environment. Five of them responded that students simply turn off their ears if the whole lesson is conducted in English. For example, T8 said, “Yes, it is good if they use Afan Oromo because it makes learning easy.” T1 also argued that students should use Afan Oromo in EFL classes because they cannot speak English and it is impossible to avoid mother tongue from FL classes as it facilitates target language learning. T2 also repeated the same thing.

The data also shows that the interviewees need Afan Oromo not only because it facilitates learning for students but also teachers themselves feel comfort when they use Afan Oromo. For instance, T2 stated, “Yes, I believe because they do not have exposure to speak English. We ourselves sometimes face problem in speaking English.” What T2 uttered was short and precise: “Yes, I believe. I use it because I myself feel comfort when I use it.” Therefore, according to the respondents’ view, use of Afan Oromo in EFL classes has a facilitative role for both teachers and students.
ii. Use of Afan Oromo Encourages Greater Participation

The interviewees reported that their students are more willing to participate effectively and pay attention when Afan Oromo is used. T5 said, “Whether I believe or not, I use Afan Oromo to save time and to let students participate in classes. Unless and otherwise, we simply sit in classrooms. However, I wish that both of us spoke English at large.” T6 and T8 also gave similar responses. The researcher confirmed that during observations, students made hot discussions, questions, answers in Afan Oromo, and almost keep silent when the teacher shifts to English. This shows that encouraging the sole use of English in TL classes may not be suitable and conducive for the learning of every student.

iii. Use of Afan Oromo saves time

The interview respondents underlined that use of Afan Oromo in EFL classes saves time. For instance, T2 asserted that when teachers explain abstract concepts they need, much time to let students understand it, but when they use Afan Oromo for explanation purposes, students can understand the concepts in a short time. T4 confirmed that when students use mother tongue, they can easily understand what the teachers say and as a result, it saves time. During observation some teachers were heard saying, “Let’s do it quickly” and shift the language to students’ mother tongue.

iv. Use of Afan Oromo reduces anxiety

The respondents convincingly uttered that use of Afan Oromo in EFL classes reduces any sort of fear and makes students relaxed to participate. According to T3, when students communicate in Afan Oromo, they can comfortably speak without any worry, tension and anxiety about the content of the lesson. T4 also remarks:

I do not have any negative attitude against mother tongue use in EFL classes because it may help them understand the TL by reducing their stress or anxiety. However, my fear is that it also reduces their practice of speaking the target language. (T4)

In the quote, it could be clearly seen that T4 supports the use of mother tongue because it reduces students’ anxiety. However, what he could not hash up was its side effects in reducing the learners’ practice of the target language. A similar report was given by T8.

b. Negative Effects of EFL Teachers’ Overuse of L1 in EFL Classes

The teachers’ responses about the negative effects of overuse of L1 in the EFL classes were categorized into four: overuse of L1 hinders English learning, reduces exposure to English, makes students dependent on L1, and makes teachers and students forget that they are in EFL classes. The justifications of these categories are indicated below:
i. Overuse of Afan Oromo Hinders English Learning

In the interview, teacher respondents depicted that over dependence on Afan Oromo has a negative impact on students’ target language practices. For example, T2 replied, “I really hope that students should not deserve excuses to use Afan Oromo all the time. They should get every opportunity to use English. This is the best way to improve”. T4, T5, T7 and T8 also suggested that using Afan Oromo slows down or limits the development of students’ understanding and interpretation of FL.

ii. Overuse of Afan Oromo Reduces Exposure to English

Some of the respondent teachers believed that when more input is provided in English, students would get more exposure to it more easily. For example, (T3, T5, T1, T4, T7) stressed that excessive use of Afan Oromo reduces students’ exposure to English. Besides, they argued that students and teachers should use English in classes and even outside classes in order to provide an English-rich environment.

iii. Overuse of Afan Oromo makes students dependent on L1

Many of the respondents argued that use of Afan Oromo is inevitable; excessive use of it lets students to frequently use Afan Oromo. To paraphrase some, T3 and T4 contended that students become dependent only on their mother tongue and forget or ignore using English if overuse of Afan Oromo is allowed and this in turn reduces students’ exposure to English. T5 also strengthened what T2 and T4 said claiming that if students overuse Afan Oromo in English classes, they make a habit that teacher will translate and refrain from doing anything until he does so. Therefore, he suggests that teachers are required to limit use of Afan Oromo.

iv. Teachers and students might forget that they are in EFL classes

One of the respondents (T7) stressed that if students and teachers overuse Afan Oromo in EFL classes, they might totally forget whether they are in EFL classes or not.

The negative effect of use of Afan Oromo is on both teacher and students. If we always teach English using Afan Oromo, we turn ourselves to teachers of Afan Oromo. If students regularly use Afan Oromo, it limits the development of their understanding and interpretation of English. (T7)

As a result, T8 warns that What T8 Afan Oromo should be used in a limited amount.

Discussion

Most participant teachers had favorable beliefs about the use of L1 and English in EFL classes reasoning that it is very difficult to avoid L1 for it makes learning of the TL very easy.
They also hotly reported that since, sometimes, the teachers themselves do not have exposure to English, they face problems to use the target language. The argument is that language teachers should bear in mind the prerequisites cited by Brooks-Lewis (2009) about the use of the learners’ L1 and apply them with caution since what seems to be a facilitative tool for language learning can, when applied inaccurately and inappropriately, become a counterproductive factor, lead to the learners’ over-reliance on it.

Teachers’ observed use of Afan Oromo and English in EFL classes indicates that they used more Afan Oromo utterances to explain grammar and others, to ask and answer questions, to check understanding, to translate and give more instructions than English utterances in the same categories. This finding goes in line with Bozorgian and Fallahpour (2015) who reported that teachers use L1 for five primary purposes: to instruct, to translate and to check comprehension, to comment individual students, to give feedback and to maintain discipline in the classroom, and Mohebbi & Mohammad (2014) who claimed that teachers use L1 to save time, to demonstrate authority and to facilitate understanding.

It was also revealed that the observed teachers uttered less Afan Oromo than English to introduce the recent lesson, to avoid waste of time, to revise and clarify the previous lesson, to decrease anxiety and to repeat students’ L1 utterances and then resort to L1 considering that students get confused when they hear more English than L1. The results directly reiterate Lin’s (2013) claim which reports that the key with teachers’ use of L1 is for the fact that it clarifies purposes after so many attempts have been made to communicate ideas in FL, and students still appear to be confused. Hall & Cook (2013) also suggest that teachers resort to the L1 when the cost of the TL is too great, when it would be too difficult or too time-consuming to compensate for pupils’ language difficulties or ability in general, lack of motivation or discipline. However, the observed teachers were seen overusing Afan Oromo to the extent that they forget it is a target language period.

One may ask, ‘if teachers overuse Afan Oromo, without giving students chance to try the target language, when shall they let their students practice the target language? Here, a word of caution as suggested by Sánchez (2020), is particularly for teachers, because learners’ might be accustomed to always waiting for them until they translate it for them, which as a result may alarmingly, reduce students’ use of the target language.’ The results led the researcher to suggest that use of Afan Oromo by teachers must be limited to the clarifications/explanations, linguistic points like grammatical, lexical, instructions, and so on.

The participant teachers also emphasized the negative effects of overuse of Afan Oromo in the EFL classes by pointing out that overuse of L1 hinders English learning, reduces exposure
to English, makes students dependent on L1, and makes teachers and students forget that they are in EFL classes. These findings go in line with Shabir (2017) who argues that overuse of L1 reduces students’ exposure to L2 and lengthens delays in L2 learning in a classroom. The current researcher wants to reiterate that the use of Afan Oromo in EFL learning is unquestionably beneficial if used appropriately. Thus, it is noteworthy that overuse of the first language should be avoided because it highly restricts students’ exposure to the target language.

Conclusions

The results indicate that teachers have favorable beliefs about the use of L1 in EFL classes by citing different examples by opposing the ‘only English’ philosophy confirming that it is unavoidable to use L1 in EFL class, especially, in primary schools, where students have not developed exposure to the target language. This implies that L1 can be used ‘systematically, selectively and in judicious doses’ in EFL classes. The result also indicated that teachers use teachers use excessive L1, contrary to what they believed theoretically, in English classes. This implies that teachers need trainings how to use L1 in a balanced way following what was proposed in the literature and combine their beliefs with their actual practices by using the target language with a limited use of L1. Otherwise, telling the importance of the target language stays in vain if not translated into practice. Finally, as the result shows, there are many positive and negative effects of EFL teachers’ overuse of L1. This indicates, respecting the positive effects, it is mandatory to maximize the use of the TL to increase the students’ exposure to enhance oral English use.

Recommendations

So far, this study has touched upon EFL teachers’ beliefs about and purposes of L1 in EFL classes and the effects of their overuse of it on students’ oral English improvement. On the bases of the results, it was recommended that without forgetting the natural right they have and the potential benefits L1 has, it would be better if teachers give more attention to the target language use considering its global value. Besides, teachers are required to upgrade own and students’ awareness of the importance of use of English in EFL classes with a limited use of L1. Otherwise, the classes will remain L1 classes. Finally, teachers need to be aware of the demerits of overuse of L1 and be trained to know when, where and how to use it cautiously, and maximize the use of English to improve their students’ target language oral practices.
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