ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Male and Female Secondary School EFL Teachers' Code-Switching to L$_1$ in their Classes: their Attitudes, Reasons and Beliefs about the Functions of Code-Switching

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Abstract

This study explored male and female secondary school EFL teachers' attitudes, reasons and beliefs about the functions of code-switching to L$_1$ (Amharic) in their classes. The participants of the study were all the available (38 male and 19 female) English language teachers in seven secondary schools in Bahir Dar City and satellite towns. A questionnaire with 55 items was used to gather data. The results revealed that the majority of female and male EFL teachers claimed 90% use of English and 5-10% Amharic in their English classes. 73.68 % female and 10.53 % male teachers had positive attitudes towards L$_1$ use and their acknowledgement of its benefits also reflected their attitudes. Male teachers claimed that they frequented inter-sentential code-switching while female teachers did intra-sentential type. Teachers' reasons for code-switching include their poor English competence, students' poor English comprehension, and teachers' interest to communicate with students and students' anxiety reduction. The majority of male teachers preferred to use L$_1$ for 'secondary acquisition' and 'disciplinary functions, while the majority of female teachers preferred it for 'rapport building (socializing)' macro functions, and for defining new vocabulary and explaining grammar sub-functions. From the findings, it was concluded that English teachers use Amharic for different purposes. Male and female teachers, however, have why and when they use it. The disparity may suggest that there is dearth of pedagogical orientation and decision making concerning how they could use the L$_1$ judiciously.

Key words: *Code-switching, L$_1$, Macro-function, sub-function, attitude, reason, belief*

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INTRODUCTION

The place of the first language in the acquisition of the second or foreign language has been the subject of research. There have been shifts to and from the utilization of the first language over the past few decades, depending on the EFL teaching methods. For instance, the grammar translation method incorporates excessive amount of L_1 input, while many classrooms today discourage its over-use (Auerbach, 1993). Ellis (1984) and Turnbull (2001), for example, believe that L_2 teachers should maximize their use of the L_2 to increase input for learners. However, as experience tells us, this is not the truth about code switching or using students' mother tongue (in this case, Amharic) while teaching English as a Foreign Language. In support of this truth, Kenenisa (2003) as well as Jingxia (2010) state that code-switching is very common and inescapable in EFL classrooms of multi-lingual and multi-cultural countries.

Some current studies on the area (e.g. Cheng, 2013), despite the strong debate, seem to relegate the use of L_1 in EFL/ESL classrooms. Atkinson (1987) and Larsen-Freeman (1983) propose a judicious use of L_1 in L_2 classrooms. Ellis (1984) also vouches for limited use of L_1 so as to provide learners with more L_2 input. However, multifarious studies conducted on the issue have also shown that the advantages of L_1 use outweigh the disadvantages. Moreover, studies revealed that most teachers and learners were in favour of using L_1 and considered it as a learning strategy and a facilitator (e.g. Abiy and Mohamed, 2012; Jafari, 2013; Kenenisa, 2003; Samadi, 2001; Tafesse, 1988 and Taskin, 2011).

Several studies have demonstrated teachers' attitudes toward the use of L_1 in L_2 classes in different contexts. For example, Abiy and Mohamed (2012), Jafari

(2013), Jinxia (2010) and Samadi (2011) showed that the majority teachers and students viewed the use of L_1 in English classes positively and preferred to apply it for 5-10% of the period. Ching (2013), however, found that most EFL teachers had negative attitude towards using L_1 in their classroom. Gulzar's (2010) study showed that there was no significant difference between the attitudes of male and female L_2 teachers in the use of L_1.

The dominant pattern from inter-sentential, intra-sentential and tag switching used by the majority of L_2 teachers was inter-sentential (also called mechanical switching) code switching (Jingxia, 2010; Rahimi and Jafari, 2011), which was done at sentence boundaries (Bista, 2010). Inter-sentential code switching (code-mixing) occurs unconsciously. Contrary to this finding, Iqbal (2011) revealed that most teachers used intra-sentential code-switching (adding a word of L_1 in English utterance).

Different researchers have identified almost similar reasons that influence EFL/ESL teachers to use L_1 in their classrooms. For instance, some researchers relate it with students' low proficiency (Macaro, 2000; Samadi, 2011), teachers' proficiency (Chiang, 2013), the context L_2 is used (Jingxia, 2010), teachers' attitudes (Jingxia, 2010), and curriculum- and methodology-related factors (Auerbach, 1993). Teachers employ the L_1 in their L_2 classes for different purposes. To list some of its purposes, teachers use it for defining new vocabulary, explaining grammar rules, checking for comprehension (Abiy and Mohammed, 2012; Atkinson, 1987; Auerbach, 1993; Jan et al, 2014), clarifying difficult concepts (Jan et al, 2014; Schweers, 2003). Auerbach (1993), and Polio and Duff, cited in Taskin (2011), have also listed other functions that incorporate record keeping, classroom management and scene setting.

Although different studies have shown L_2 teachers' attitudes, their reasons for using the L_1 (code-switching), the amount and types of switching, a comparative study between male and female teachers on these and related issues, to the knowledge of the researchers, was not studied or at least it was limited. Samadi (2001), of course, found that male EFL teachers used L_1 more frequently than female EFL teachers; and Gulzar (2010), as stated above, has studied male and female EFL teachers' attitudes towards using L_1 in their classes. However, Samadi's and Gulzar's studies did not incorporate different variables in their studies; the focuses were limited. There were also only few or no comparative studies conducted regarding the views, attitudes and practices of male and female EFL teachers on L_1 use in EFL classes in Ethiopia. From the varied findings and assumptions on the issue, we feel that the issue is still controversial. So, there is a felt-need to see further regarding male and female secondary school EFL teachers' attitudes, their beliefs and reasons on the functions/roles of code-switching to L_1 in their classrooms. Accordingly, the emphasis of the present study was to compare male and female English language teachers' attitudes, reasons and beliefs on the functions of code-switching or using students' L_1 (Amharic, in this case) in their classes in three secondary schools at Bahir Dar town.

Therefore, this study aimed at answering the following research questions.

1. How often do female and male teachers use Amharic in their English classes?
2. What are the attitudes of female and male teachers towards switching to Amharic in English classes?
3. What are the patterns of female and male teachers' switching to Amharic?
4. What are the factors/reasons influencing female and male teachers'

to switch to Amharic in English classes?
5. For what functions/ roles do male and female teachers prefer to use Amharic in their EFL classes?

METHODOLOGY

This study explored the difference between male and female English teachers' attitudes, reasons and beliefs in the functions of utilizing L_1 (in this case, Amharic) in teaching English in Bahir Dar. We used a descriptive survey design, and data were collected using a questionnaire, and were analyzed using percentage and t-test.

Participants of the study and sampling techniques

Data were gathered from EFL teachers who were teaching in secondary schools at Bahir Dar City and satellite towns. There were 7 public secondary schools (namely Fasilo, Gheon, Tana Haik, Bahir Dar Zurya, Zeghie, Tisa Abay and Ethio-Japan); Since their number were small , all the 57 (38 male and 19 female) English language teachers in the schools participated in the study. All the participants were BA degree holders, and the majority (n=31, 22 male and 9 female) had over 10 years of experiences. The rest, however, had teaching experiences of between 6 and10 years.

Instruments of the study

The survey was conducted using a questionnaire, which was designed on the basis of Jinxia's (2010) study and the Teacher Talk Survey adapted from Warford and Rose (2003). The questionnaire has two parts. Part I (3 items) requires background information about the participants of the study; while Part II constitutes parts A &B. Some definitions were also added to avoid conceptual barrier and misunderstanding. Part 'A' (7 items)

was used to examine the frequency of L_1 (Amharic) use in English classes, teachers' attitude towards code switching to L_1, their views on the main patterns and factors that influence teachers' code-switching to Amharic in practice. Part 'B' focused on the functions of L_1 in EFL classes based on forty-five areas of foreign language teachers' talk (micro functions of L1 use) under six major categories (macro-functions) of L_1 use in EFL classes: procedural, instructional, feedback, secondary acquisition, rapport building /socializing and management/ and disciplining. Under each macro-function, there are several sub-functions to search more extensively into the areas of teachers' L_1 use in the classroom for different purposes.

The questionnaire was piloted for reliability of the items, and the Cronbach Alpha indicated results between 74.6 and 84.7 for the different parts of the questionnaire items. For the purpose of validity, the questionnaire was checked by two colleagues as suggested by Dörnyei (2003). Furthermore, an expert checked the items regarding the clarity and comprehensibility of the language. Based on the feedbacks provided, from 56 items drafted for the questionnaire, 3 of them were improved; while 2 others were added and 3 items were deleted. Thus, a questionnaire that has 55 refined items was used for the study.

Data collection and analysis procedure
The data were gathered through distributing the revised questionnaires among 57 (19 female and 38 male) EFL teachers. The data collected were analyzed by using percentage and t-test. Finally, the difference between male and female EFL teachers' responses were analyzed, compared, and interpreted.

RESULTS

In this study, participant teachers' data were analyzed to examine their belief on the extent, attitudes, patterns, reasons and functions of using Amharic in their EFL classes.

Teachers' opinions on the extent of using L_1 in EFL classes
As illustrated in Table 1 (Item, 1) below, the majority of both male and female teachers reported that they used the target language (English) more than they did L_1 (Amharic). In other words, the majority of female (73.68%) and male teachers (89.47%) reported that Amharic should cover only 5-10% of the total utterance in English class. The rest 4 (10.53%) male and 5 (26.32%) female teachers believed that L_1 should take 10-20% of the total English class. However, none of the teachers rebutted the use of L_1. Therefore, we can deduce that there was no much difference between male and female teachers' preferences on the extent that L_1 should be used in their classroom.

Table 1: The extent of L_1 use by gender

Items	Gender	Respondents	Frequency of use of L_1				
			5-10%	10-20%	20-30%	30-40%	>40%
Belief on frequency of L_1 utterance	Male	38	34 (89.47%)	4 (10.53%)	-	-	-
	Female	19	14(73.68%)	5 (26.32%)	-	-	-
Frequency of use of L_1	**Frequency Gender**	**Respondents**	**Always**	**Sometimes**	**Occasionally**	**Never**	
	Male	38	-	5 (13.16%)	33(86.84%)	-	
	Female	19	-	10 (52. 63%)	9 (47.37%)	-	

As indicated in the Table above, both male and female EFL teachers use L_1 (Amharic) in their classes. Therefore, 13.16% of male teacher participants and more than half (52. 63%) of female EFL teachers used L_1 'sometimes'. It is also depicted that 47.37% female and 86.84% male teacher participants thought that they use L_1 'occasionally' in their EFL classes. From this data, it is possible to infer that both male and female teachers highlighted the importance of limited use of students' L_1 in their English classes. However, seen comparatively, female teachers seem to use Amharic more frequently than their male counterparts.

EFL teachers' attitudes towards the use of L_1 in their classes

Table 2: Teacher's attitude towards using L_1 and its benefit for EFL classes (N=57; M, 38; F, 19)

Items	Gender	Level of Agreement			
		Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Do not care**	**Disagree**
Attitude towards the use of L_1	Male	-	4 (10.53%)	4 (10.53%)	30(78.95%)
	Female	-	14 (73.68%)	-	5 (26.32%)
		Significance of code switching			
	Gender	**greatly beneficial**	**Beneficial**	**no benefits**	**Harmful**
Benefits of code switching to L_1	Male	6 (15.79%)	1 (2.63%)	25 (65.79%)	6 (15.79%)
	Female	7(36.84%)	7(36.84%)	5 (26.32%)	-

The first item in Table 2 above displays that the majority (78.95%) of male teachers in this study seem to have negative attitude towards using L_1 in their English classes, while the majority (73.68%) of female EFL teachers had positive attitude. In the same vein, the finding revealed that the majority (65.79%) male teachers believe that L_1 had 'no benefits' for EFL teachers and students, and 15.79% of them replied that it is 'harmful'. In contrast, 73.68 % of female English teachers perceived that using L_1 in EFL classes is beneficial for both teachers and students. In short, from the participants' responses, we can infer that female EFL teachers had positive attitude towards using students' mother tongue in their English classes.

Teachers' consciousness and patterns of code-switching (CS)

Table 3: Teachers' consciousness of use L$_1$ and their patterns of CS

Item	Types of code switching	Gender	Frequency&%
Pattern of code-switching (CS)	Intra-sentential CS	Male	9 (23.68%)
		Female	12 (63.16%)
	Inter-sentential CS	Male	26(68.42%)
		Female	2 (10.53%)
	Tag-switching	Male	3 (7.89%)
		Female	5 (26.32%)

Conscious of switching to Amharic	Gender	Level of consciousness (Frequency & %)			
		Always	**sometimes**	**occasionally**	**Never**
	Male	-	9 (23.68%)	29(76.32%)	-
	Female	7 (36.84%)	9 (47.37%)	3(15.79%)	-

As shown in Table 3 above, the majority (63.16%) female EFL teachers used intra-sentential CS, while 26.32% of them frequently used tag-switching. The majority (68.42%) male teachers preferred to use inter-sentential code-switching. The rest 23.68% and 7.89% of male teachers preferred intra-sentential and tag-switching types of code switching, respectively. The study has disclosed that there is a clear difference between male and female EFL teachers preference of employing CS; that is, the majority male teachers used inter-sentential CS, whereas most female teachers favoured intra-sentential CS. Consistently, 36.84% of female teachers claimed that they were 'always' conscious of using students' mother tongue; on the other hand, none of the male teachers reported that they were 'always' conscious. 23.68% of male participants and 47.37% of female teachers reported that they were 'sometimes' conscious in using L$_1$ in their classes. The figures above signify that female English teachers were more conscious than their male counterparts in using L$_1$ in their EFL classroom.

Reasons that influence teachers to use L_1 **in EFL classroom**

Table 4: Teachers' reasons for using L_1 (Amharic) in their classrooms (N=57)

Reasons	Gender & Frequency (%	
	Male (N=38)	Female (N=19)
to fill the gaps in speaking English	22 (57.89%)	18 (94.74%)
to help weak students' comprehension	31 (81.58%)	7 (36.84%)
to facilitate teacher-students interaction	16 (42.10%)	16 (84.21%)
to reduce students' language anxiety	15 (39.47%)	14 (73.68%)
to overcome misunderstanding	16 (42.10%)	7 (36.84%)
to save time	9 (23.68%)	7 (36.84%)
to help students express their feelings better	13 (34.21%)	5 (26.32%)
to add emphasis on some points	4 (10.53%)	5 (26.32%)
to increase students' comfort and confidence	6 (15.79%)	5 (26.32%)
students are dependent on L_1 in EFL classes	7 (18.42%)	3(15.79%)
It is more effective than using only English	2 (5.26%)	1 (5.26%)

Note: Participants chose more than one answer, so total add up can be more than 100%.

Teachers had various reasons for employing Amharic in their EFL classes. As shown in the Table 4, nearly all female (94.74%) and the majority (57.89%) of male EFL teachers use Amharic in their English classes because "it helps them to fill the gaps in speaking English." Therefore, teachers' lack of English word/s to fill the gaps while speaking was the most significant variable influencing code switching to Amharic. In addition, 81.58% of male and 36.84% of female EFL teachers claimed that they use Amharic in their classes since "it helps weak students' comprehension greatly." Moreover, 84.21 % of female and 42.1% of male English teachers obligingly code switch to L_1 because 'it facilitates teacher-students interaction.' The other important reason that the majority (73.68%) female and 39.47% of male English teachers attribute to using L_1 is "it reduces students' language anxiety." Other factors were also favoured at less but varying degrees by male and female teachers.

Functions of L_1 **(Amharic) in EFL classroom**

In order to obtain comprehensive data of the functions of using L_1 (Amharic) in EFL classes, this study also examined female and male teachers' perceptions on six macro roles/functions which L_1 can play in EFL classes. The macro-functions constitute Procedural, Instructional, Feedback, Secondary acquisition, Rapport-building /socializing, and Management/Discipline functions. Under each macro-function, there existed several sub-functions to search more extensively into the areas of teacher language use in the classroom.

Secondary acquisition functions of L_1 in EFL classes

Table 5: 'Secondary Acquisition Functions' of L_1 by Gender

Secondary acquisition Roles of L_1	Gender	Level of agreement (f req. & %)				
		Str.Agr	Agree	No opinion	Disagr.	Str.Dis.
for facilitating class discussions.	Male(N=38)	20 (52.63%)	17 (44.74%)	1 (2.63%)	0 -	0 -
	Female(N=19)	0 -	11 (57.89%)	4 (21.05%)	2 (10.53%)	2 (10.53%)
for incidental anecdote (story)	Male(N=38)	6 (15.79%)	26 (68.42%)	-	6 (15.79%)	-
	Female(N=19)	0 -	9 (47.37%)	0 -	5 (26.32%)	5 (26.32%)
for incidental cultural note(s)	Male(N=38)	11 (28.95%)	27 (71.05%)	-	-	-
	Female(N=19)	5 (26.32%	10 (52.63%)	-	3 (15.79%)	2 (10.53%)

Among the six macro functions of L_1 in EFL classroom, L_1 for 'secondary acquisition functions' was accepted by more male EFL teachers than their female counterparts. As can be observed from Table 5 above, 97.37% male EFL teachers agreed that L_1 should be used for facilitating group discussion, and 84.21% of them believed that Amharic should be used for incidental anecdote (story). All male participants agreed that L_1 be used for incidental cultural notes. Therefore, on average 93.86% of male participant teachers acknowledged that Amharic should be used for the secondary acquisition functions. A close scrutiny on female participants further show that more than half (57.89%) agreed that Amharic should be used for facilitating class discussion, 47.37% of them supported the idea that L_1 should be used for incidental anecdotes, and the majority (78.95%) agreed that L_1 should be used for incidental cultural notes. From this result, we can conjecture that 61.49% of the female participants acknowledged the 'secondary acquisition' functions of L_1 in their EFL classes.

Rapport-building (socializing) functions of Amharic in EFL classroom

Table 6: Rapport-building (socializing) Functions of L_1 by Gender

I believe L1 should be used	Gender	Level of agreement				
		Str. Agr	Agree	No opinion	Disagr.	Str. Dis.
for spontaneous conversation (beyond simple question & Answer).	Male(N=38)	-	4 (10.53%)	5 (13.16%)	25 (65.79%)	4 (10.53%)
	Female(N=19)	3 (15.79%)	16 (84.21%)	-	-	-
for expressing sympathy/concern (Are you feeling well now? Etc	Male(N=38)	-	5 (13.16%)	5 (13.16%)	28 (73.68%)	-
	Female(N=19)	5 (26.32%)	14 (73.68%)	-	-	-
for expressing humour (cracking jokes).	Male(N=38)	-	13 (34.21%)	1 (2.63%)	24 (63.16%)	-
	Female(N=19)	5 (26.32%)	13 (68.42%)	1 (5.26%)	-	-
for facilitating group and peer discussions	Male(N=38)	-	11 (28.95%)	2 (5.26%)	18 (47.37%)	7 (18.42%)
	Female(N=19)	-	14 (73.68%)	1 (5.26%)	4 (21.05%)	-

The findings on male and female EFL teachers' beliefs on the 'rapport building/ socializing' functions of L_1 in EFL classroom indicate (Table 6) that more females teachers frequently agreed on the socializing roles of Amharic in their English class than male teachers. A collective quantitative look on the four items/sub functions responses in rapport-building/socializing reveals that the majority of female EFL teachers (92.11%) believe that Amharic plays an important role for spontaneous conversation beyond simple questions, expressing sympathy, cracking jokes and facilitating group discussions in their English classes. However, it was only 21.71% of male EFL teachers who agreed with the above collective socializing functions of students' L_1 use in their English classes.

Classroom Management (Discipline) functions of Amharic in EFL classes

Table 7: 'Classroom Management Functions' Based on Gender of EFL Teachers

I believe that L1 should be used for:	Gender	Level of agreement (f & %)				
		Str. Agr	Agree	No opinion	Disagr.	Str. Dis
disciplining /reprimanding/scolding	Male(N=38)	15 (39.47%)	22 (57.89%)	1 (2.63%)	-	-
	Female(N=19)	-	10 (52.63%)	3 (15.79%)	6 (31.58%)	-
encouraging on-task behaviour	Male(N=38)	6 (15.79%)	27 (71.05%)	1 (2.63%)	4 (10.53%)	-
	Female(N=19)	-	10 (52.63%)	3 (15.79%)	5 (26.32%)	1 (5.26%)
reminding of rules of the school/class	Male(N=38)	16 (42.11%)	17 (44.74%)	4 (10.53%)	1 (2.63%)	-
	Female(N=19)	-	6 (31.58%)	-	12 (63.16%)	1 (5.26%)

The other macro-function which was found to be more frequently supported by male EFL teachers than their female counterparts was classroom management /discipline functions of students' L_1 in English classrooms. As the shown in Table 7, 97.36% male participants and more than half (52.63%) of the female participants agreed that L_1 (Amharic) should be used for classroom management (discipline) purpose in their English classes. The majority (86.84%) of male and (52.63%) female participants also agreed on using students' L_1 (Amharic) for encouraging students on task behaviour and only 31.58% of female participants agreed that L_1 should be used for reminding them about rules of the school/class in their English classes. From the data obtained, it is possible to conclude that the majority (90.35%) of male EFL teachers claimed that they frequently use L_1 for classroom management or disciplining purposes, while only 45.50% of female EFL teachers agreed on this.

Gender differences in the functions of L_1 in EFL classes

The disparity in response regarding secondary acquisition functions of L_1 in L_2 classes between male and female English teachers was indicated above using percentage in each of the categories of the functions. A t-test was also employed to see for the significance in differences between the sexes in the categories. Table 8 below summarizes the results.

Table 8: Independent Samples t-test of the functions of L_1 by Gender of EFL Teachers

Variable	Gender	Number	Mean	Std	t	df	Fig.
Secondary Acquisition Functions	M	38	12.6053	1.48031	6.692	55	.000
	F	19	9.4211	2.06332			
Rapport-building/socializing Functions	M	38	10.1316	2.31530	-7.433	55	.000
	F	19	15.2632	2.72523			
Classroom Management Functions	M	38	11.4737	2.95678	3.611	55	.001
	F	19	8.8421	1.60773			
	P<0.05						

As shown in the table above, the means for male teachers' responses is greater than the means for females in secondary (12.6053 versus 9.4211) and classroom management (11.4737 versus 8.8421) functions of L_1. The mean for the female teachers' responses is greater only in rapport-building (socializing) (15.2632 versus 10.1316). All the differences between males' and females' responses are significant at p<0.05.

Sub-functions (roles) of L_1 supported by majority of male/female EFL teachers

In this study, unlike the macro functions stated above (secondary acquisition role, rapport building /socializing with students role and classroom management roles), the majority of male and female EFL teachers disagreed to use L_1 for the other macro functions/roles; i.e., for procedural, instructional, and feedback roles. However, both agreed that L_1 should be used only in one sub-functions of instructional role: for introducing vocabulary. The result indicated that, the

majority of female (90.9%) and male (57.9%) EFL teachers believed that '*Amharic should be used for introducing/defining new vocabulary*'. Therefore, it is possible to infer from this data that both female and male teachers appreciated the use of L_1 to define vocabulary, but it seems that female EFL teachers favour or use L_1(Amharic) more for this purpose in their English classes. The other sub-function of L_1's instructional role which was supported by the majority (63.6%) of female EFL teachers was that '*L_1 should be used for grammar explanation*'. In contrast, all (100%) male participants disagreed with the item.

DISCUSSION

This research aims at ferreting out English teachers' attitudes, reasons and beliefs on the roles /functions of using students' L_1 (Amharic) in EFL teaching in Bahir Dar City and satellite towns secondary schools, in Ethiopia. Although there is still controversy as to whether or not L_1 use should be allowed in foreign language classrooms, its pragmatic and practical benefits could not be overlooked. The exploration in this study also revealed that the majority of female and male EFL teachers claimed to use more than 90% English in their classes. The teachers explained that L_1 is commonly used in English lessons in a judicious way. This study also revealed female EFL teachers think that they use L_1 (Amharic) more frequently and consciously than their male counters in their English classes. This finding differs from Samadi's (2011) finding that male EFL teachers use L_1 more frequently than female English teachers.

From this study, we can also see that both male and female teachers highlighted that they use students' mother tongue in their classes; however, their use of Amharic appeared to be limited as they were aware that the excessive use of L_1 may hinder learning English. In a similar vein, Ellis (1984) claims that too much use of L_1 should be avoided because it could "deprive the learners of valuable input in the L_2" (p. 133). The judicious use of L_1 could assist the learners in overcoming the problems, dilemmas, and confusions generated by the extensive use of L_2 (Mirza et al, 2012, cited in Jafari, 2013). The findings of this study, in the category of the extent to use L_1 in EFL classroom, are consistent with previous research works. Researchers like Abiy and Mohamed (2012), Ching (2013), Davoud and Molood (2013), Jafari (2013), and Jingxia (2010) reported that EFL teachers preferred to use the minimum percentage (5-10%) of L_1 in their classes. Atkinson (1987) states that a ratio of 5% native language and 95% of target language use may be more profitable; and the result of this study is consistent with his recommendation. However, the results of this study are inconsistent with Kaneko's (1992), cited in Jafari (2013), findings that teachers and students used L_1 51% to 74% in senior classes and 64% to 83% in junior classes. The discrepancy in results might be due to student or teacher factors such as proficiency and conceptions of teaching/learning. Besides, teachers who participated in Kaneko's study might also have different teaching methodology than those in the present study.

Concerning teachers' attitude towards using L_1 and their beliefs about its benefits, the study revealed that there were gender differences. Although the majority of both male and female EFL teachers claimed that they use Amharic 5-10%, male teachers had negative attitude towards using L_1 and they did not consider it as a beneficial tool in their English classes. In contrast, the majority of female EFL teachers had positive attitude towards using students' L_1

in their English classes, and considered it as a beneficial tool in EFL context. These results are inconsistent with the comparative study done by Gulzar (2010) and Qadumi (2007) which indicated that there was no significant difference between male and female EFL teachers' attitudes towards using L_1 in EFL classes. This difference might probably have occurred due to educational environment the researches were conducted. Male teachers' attitude towards using L_1 and their belief on its benefits in English classes are also different from the findings of other researchers such as Abiy and Mohamed (2012), Jafari (2013), and Jingxia (2010). These researchers have found that EFL teachers had positive attitude towards using students' L_1 and it was assumed as a beneficial tool in English language teaching and learning processes. However, the finding seems to be congruent with Taskin's (2011) findings that male teachers mostly had negative perceptions to the use of L_1 while teaching English, but because of the environment, they were obliged to use it for some concerns.

As the findings indicate, the majority of male EFL teachers used inter-sentential code switching, whereas the majority of female EFL teachers used intra-sentential code switching. According to Bista (2010), in inter-sentential code switching, the language switch is done at sentence boundaries. This is seen most often between fluent bilingual speakers, and it is also called mechanical switching; and it occurs unconsciously. This is so related with the findings of this study that the majority of male teachers reported that they were rarely and sometimes conscious in using L_1 in their English classes. Therefore, it might be because of this factor that male EFL teachers used inter-sentential code switching frequently. According to Lipski (1985), cited in Bista (2010), intra-sentential code switching which female

English teachers used in this study, is also called "code changing". It is like transferring focus from one language to another. It is motivated by situational and stylistic factors and the switch between two languages is conscious and intentional. This explanation also seems to fit with the findings of this study because female English teachers replied that they were more conscious in using L_1 (Amharic) than males were.

As the majority of male and female EFL teachers witnessed, the main factor that influences teachers to use Amharic in their classroom is their low competence in the English language or their inability to fill gaps of their speech in the target language. This finding is very inconsistent with the findings of Gulzar (2010) which reported that the cause is not related with teachers' linguistic competence. In his study, he found that only 39.9% agreed to this variable as a reason for code switching (CS), and it was the last on the list among the reasons for CS. However, it is consistent with the findings of Jinxia (2010) and Ching (2013) that stated teachers' linguistic competence influences code-switching in EFL classes. Cheng reported that more than 65% of the participant teachers placed teachers' foreign language proficiency as one of the most important factors for code switching.

The other reason stated for CS was the belief that 'Amharic helps weak students' comprehension greatly'. This finding is consistent with the findings of Al-Nofale (2010) and Franklin (1990) and Dickson (1996), cited in Al-Nofale (2010), Taskin (2011) and Ching (2013). These researchers found that lower level of students' proficiency was a crucial factor for teachers' increased use of L_1 in English classes. The other causes include maintaining of intimacy with students and reducing students' language learning

anxiety. This finding agrees with Samadi's (2011) findings that showed L_1 use strengthens teachers' relationship with students and helps students' anxiety reduction.

An inquiry into EFL teachers' belief on the roles/functions of Amharic in EFL classes based on six macro and 45 micro functions showed that there were clear differences between female and male teachers' preferences on three L_1 macro roles in their classes. These macro functions of L_1 play secondary acquisition, rapport-building (socializing) and classroom management roles. The majority of male and a little more than half of female participants thought that L_1 can play secondary acquisition roles. The majority of female teachers said that L_1 could play a role in rapport building with students, whereas only 25% of male teachers accepted this role. In this study, the majority of male English teachers acknowledged that L_1 (Amharic) should be used for disciplining, encouraging and reminding of rules for students whereas majority of female EFL teachers did not recognize the classroom management functions of students L_1 in their English classroom. The t-test results showed the disparity in responses between the sexes was statistically significant at $p<0.05$ level. In line with male EFL teachers' responses of this study, similar findings were also documented by Yao (2011) that the majority of EFL teachers in his study supported that L_1 played a great role in disciplining students and get attention in the class. However, the result of male teachers on classroom management was not congruent with the findings of Ching (2013) and Jafari (2013) that the majority of teachers did not acknowledge the function of L_1 for classroom management functions.

The other important findings of this study on the functions of L_1 in English classroom were the two sub-functions under the instructional macro role of mother tongue in EFL classroom. L_1's use *for introducing/defining new vocabulary'* was supported by the majority of female and male EFL teachers in the study. This finding is consistent with different local and foreign scholars like Abiy and Mohammed (2012), Jiangxia (2010), Jan, Li and Lin (2014) and Samadi (2011) that the majority of teachers recognized that L_1 should be used to introduce new vocabulary. However, it was not congruent with the findings of Schewer (2003). The other sub-function which was found to be supported by the majority of female EFL teachers of this study but not recognized as a tool by male EFL teachers was the idea that 'L_1 *should be used for grammar explanation'.* Similar findings with this study, especially with the majority of female EFL teachers' responses, was also documented by Abiy and Mohamed (2012), Jiangxia (2010), and Jan, Li and Lin (2014) that the majority of EFL teachers believed that the use of L_1 is important to clarify instructions and complex grammar items.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The majority of male EFL teachers in this study had negative attitudes towards L_1 use and did not acknowledge its benefits much. In contrast, the majority of female teachers had positive attitudes towards its use and acknowledged its advantages. The majority of female EFL teachers claimed that they frequently applied intra-sentential type of code-switching consciously; while male teachers applied inter-sentential code-switching unconsciously. The causes that influenced the participant teachers to switch their code to L_1 (Amharic) include to fill their gaps in speaking English; that is, to fill the gap of their poor competence in English. They also believe that using L_1

helps weak students ameliorate their comprehension in English, build up teacher-students interaction and reduce students' language anxiety. Finally, the result on the functions of teachers' code-switching to L_1 in EFL classes disclosed that the majority of male EFL teachers preferred to use L_1 (Amharic) for 'secondary acquisition' and for 'classroom management' macro-functions; whereas, the majority of female teachers preferred to use L_1 (Amharic) for 'rapport building (socializing)' macro-function, and for defining new vocabulary and explaining grammar sub- functions in their classrooms.

From the findings, it is possible to conclude that English teachers in the research focus area use L_1 (Amharic) in their English classes for different purposes. Male and female teachers, however, have disparity why and when they use the L_1. The disparity suggests that there is a dearth of pedagogical orientation and decision-making concerning how teachers can use the L_1 in a controlled and judicious manner.

Based on the findings and the conclusions made, the following recommendations were forwarded. It may be advisable that L_1 be used in a limited manner at appropriate times in English classes. It should be a consciously chosen, judicious option of an auxiliary role decided on by teachers. The education bureaus and the Ministry of Education should organize workshops and seminars to in-service teachers to enable them to decide on the proper use of L_1 in EFL classes by themselves. We also recommend that further research be conducted on teachers' qualification and the use of L_1 in their English classes. Furthermore, we suggest a study be conducted on school management bodies' perceptions about the use of L_1 in L_2 classrooms as compared with teachers'

views at primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

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