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Abstract- The issue of whether the learners' mother tongue should be used in the classroom has always been a subject of current debate by many researchers. This paper attempts to investigate the perception of English in-service-trainees towards the use of students' mother tongue, Afan Oromo in this case, in EFL classes. The participants were 72English summer in-service trainees who came from West Arsi and Guji Zones of Oromiya region to pursue their degree program in 2016 summer program (for two months) at Hawassa University. Data were collected through a questionnaire and semi structure interview. The results indicated that EFL teachers have positive perception towards the use of Afan Oromo in their EFL classrooms. The study also confirms that the use of Afan Oromo language was to explain new vocabulary especially abstract items, to explain new concepts, to help students develop their confidence, to give instructions, to raise students' awareness of the differences and similarities between L1 and the target language, to help students to complete pair/ small-group works activities, to facilitate complicated English classroom tasks, to help students to express their feelings and ideas when they fail to do that in English, to build up a good rapport with students, to explain the English idioms and expressions, and to introduce new grammatical rules in order of importance.

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Perception of English in-Servicetrainees Towards the use of Students' Mother Tongue, Afan Oromo in this Case, in EFL Classes

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Abstract: The issue of whether the learners' mother tongue should be used in the classroom has always been a subject of current debate by many researchers. This paper attempts to investigate the perception of English in-service-trainees towards the use of students' mother tongue, Afan Oromo in this case, in EFL classes. The participants were 72English summer in-service trainees who came from West Arsi and Guji Zones of Oromiya region to pursue their degree program in 2016 summer program (for two months) at Hawassa University. Data were collected through a questionnaire and semi structure interview. The results indicated that EFL teachers have positive perception towards the use of Afan Oromo in their EFL classrooms. The study also confirms that the use of Afan Oromo language was to explain new vocabulary especially abstract items, to explain new concepts, to help students develop their confidence, to give instructions, to raise students' awareness of the differences and similarities between L1 and the target language, to help students to complete pair/ small-group works activities, to facilitate complicated English classroom tasks, to help students to express their feelings and ideas when they fail to do that in English, to build up a good rapport with students, to explain the English idioms and expressions, and to introduce new grammatical rules in order of importance.

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I. Background of the Study

The issue of whether or not to use L1 in the EFL classroom has been a controversial issue in English language teaching for many years. According to Brown (2007), two approaches have appeared with regard to using the L1 in EFL teaching. The first one is the monolingual approach which favours sole use of the target language. On the other hand, the second one is the bilingual approach which sees learners' mother tongue (MT) as a beneficial tool that may facilitate and contribute to learning the target language. These controversies between the two approaches attract arious scholars in the area to conduct research at different times. According to (Ellis 1984; Krashen 1982), the monolingual approach calls for a complete banishment of L1 from L2 classrooms, as this is significantly important to maximize the use of the target language.

On the other hand, these scholars indicated that, the bilingual approach assumes that L1 may be used in almost every classroom occasion; banishing L1 from L2 classrooms means to reject learners' prior knowledge.

In this area, various researches have been conducted, but no clear consensus exists on whether students' mother tongue should be or should not be used in the EFL classrooms.

It is from this perspective that the researcher of this study is enthusiastic to investigate the perception of in-service trainees towards the use of students L1 (Afan Oromo Language) in EFL classrooms.

a) Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate the perception of in-service trainees towards the use of L1, of Afan Oromo in this case, in EFL classes

Specifically the study tries to answer the following two research questions

1. What is the perception of in-service trainees towards the use of Afan Oromo Language in EFL classes?
2. For what purpose do in-service trainees use Afan Oromo Language in their classes?

II. Review of Related Literature

Various researchers indicated that the use of L1 in the EFL classrooms becomes a controversial issue. In one hand, some researchers claimed that English should be learned only in English. On the other hand, other scholars suggested that using L1 in EFL classrooms facilitates English learning.

With regard to the first claim, researchers like Prodromou (2001; Cook 2002; Auerbach 1993; Franenber-Garcia 200; Buckmaster 2002) forwarded that L1 has been treated as a taboo subject, source of guilt and a hint for teachers' weakness to teach properly. Moreover, (Belz, 2003), added that L1 use is, a taboo because it is thought to impede the learners' linear and incremental progress toward the rule-governed attainment of the idealized L2 norm". This indicated that only English is highly favored. Advocates of only English scholars have supported their ideas with various

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reasons. As to (Butzkamm, 2003) since L1 is available all the time, it is easier for teachers and learners to avoid using L2 and this results in too much reliance on L1 limiting the exposure to L2. MacDonald (1993) also proposes that when teachers rely too much on L1, it may lead to demotivation on the part of the learners since interaction in the target language is hindered.

On the other hand, some scholars oppose the above ideas and favor L1 use in EFL classrooms. To support this, Bolitho (1983) in Nigatu (2013) contends that L2 learners do not come to the class with their blank mind. They use their mother tongue experiences to cope with the new challenge (i.e. L2 learning). This tells us that teachers need to be familiar with their students' L1. Similarly, Stern (1992), believes that L2 learners always make reference to the language they already know. In addition to this (Auerbach, 1933) indicated that Learners use their first language as a strategy of studying their target language even outside the classroom since translation is a natural phenomenon and an inevitable part of second language acquisition even where formal classroom learning does not occur. Atkinson's (1987) and Auerbach's (1993) writings encouraged a considerable number of professionals and researchers to re-examine their teaching practices and beliefs, and reconsider the role L1 might play and the potential benefits it might bring into L2 English classroom as a facilitating tool.

Therefore, using L1 as a resource instead of considering it as an obstacle to the target language learning will help to enhance more authentic users (Cook, 2001). To support this, (Stern,1992), added that whether we like it or not the new language is learned on the basis of the previously acquired language. Cook (1999), also added that using L1 in EFL classroom, has the potential as a pedagogical classroom resource to create authentic and relevant learning opportunities in the target language. Moreover, Auerbach (1993, p. 20) argues that L1"allows for language to be used as a meaning-making tool and for language learning to become a means of communicating ideas rather than an end in itself". These arguments indicate that using L1 in EFL classes has a positive effect.

Purposes of using L1

Scholars in the area have mentioned certain reasons why students' L1is used in EFL classes. Atkinson (1987) suggests that students' mother tongue can be used in EFL classes in: eliciting language, checking comprehension, giving complex instructions to basic levels, co-operating in groups, explaining classroom methodology at basic levels, using translation to highlight a recently taught language item, checking for sense, translation items in testing, developing circumlocution strategies such as when students have no idea about how to say something in L2, having them think of some other ways to say the same thing in L1 which might be easier to translate. To support this idea, Swain and Lapkin (2000) recommend three occasions where L1 is used in the classroom: to move a task along and manage it, to focus on vocabulary and grammatical items and to enhance the interpersonal interaction between the learners while carrying out a task. This tells us that using students' mother tongue in EFL classrooms has a positive effect. Moreover, Piaseeka (19888) in Auerbach (1993:9), mentioned ten purposes of using L1 in EFL classrooms. These are negotiation of the syllabus and the lesson, record keeping, classroom management, scene setting, language analysis, presentation of rules governing grammar, phonology, morphology and spelling, discussion of cross- cultural issues; instructions of prompts, explanation of errors and assessment of comprehension.

From this we can deduce that using students' mother tongue in EFL classrooms has a motivating impact on students learning. Though using L1 in EFL classes has a facilitating impact, teachers should be aware the amount and purposes of using L1 in their EFL classrooms. The reason is that in countries like Ethiopia the only place for students to practice the target language is in the EFL classroom. Thus if teachers dominantly relay on L1 in their EFL classes, they will minimize students' opportunities of practicing the target language. With this regard, Atkinson (1987; Cianfl one 2009) added that Exposure to the target language is essential in the process of learning an L2, and the over reliance on L1 minimizes the learners' opportunities to practice the target language. To strengthen this, Turnbull (2001) added that teachers' awareness on the amount and purposes of using students' L1 is crucial in an EFL context where the learners do not have much contact with the target language in the outside world.

III. Research Design and Methodology

a) Research Design

Considering the main purpose of the study, a survey design was used. A survey design is used when "investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the population" (Creswell, 2012, p. 376). A survey was the tool used to collect the data from English teachers. This design was preferred because the study is focused on English teachers' opinions – their perceptions.

b) Sampling size and technique

The subjects of the study are first year Hawassa University in-service English language trainees who have been teaching English in second Cycle primary Schools (grade 5-8)in West Arsi and Guji Zones, in Oromiya Region. With regard to the sample size, of the 207 in-service trainees from different Zones of Oromiya

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Region assigned at Hawassa University in 2016 summer, 72(62 male and 10 female) trainees were selected from two zones (Guji and West Arsi) using purposive sampling technique. The reason was that larger numbers of trainees were assigned from West Arsi and Guji zones.

c) Instruments of data collection

Questionnaire: The main type data collection instrument used in this study was questionnaire. For data collection, the researcher employed questionnaire as a major tool. According to (Brown 2001; Denscombe 2007) the responses obtained from questionnaire, have a high degree of standardization and consistency, as every respondent sees the same questions and responds to the same items.

The questionnaire includes three parts: in the first part, it was aimed to know in-service trainees (Primary School English teachers) gender, their major and minor, and how long have they been working as a teacher. In the second part of the questionnaire, it was aimed to investigate the perceptions of in-service trainees (primary school English teachers) on using Afan Oromo in EFL classrooms and the third one is to investigate teachers' perception towards the purposes of using students' mother tongue.

d) Semi-structured Interview

The second type of data collecting instrument used in this study was semi-structured interview. Unlike questionnaires, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to probe for more information to obtain rich, spontaneous and truthful data (Brown 2001). The semi-structured interview was conducted with four in-service trainees (two from West Arsi and two from Guji Zones) who have been teaching English in the specified grade levels.

IV. Results and Discussions

In this section, teachers' background information, perceptions of teachers' use of L1 and reasons to use L1 in EFL classrooms were presented and the results were interpreted and discussed.

Table1: Demographics

Sex		Educational level			Major	Minor	Service				
M	F	12+2	10+3	Other	English	Afan Oromo	1-5	5-10	10-15	15-20	More than20
62	10	14	58	0	72	72	18	32	10	5	7

The study included 72 participants. From this number, 62 were male teachers, and 10 were female teachers. The majority of the participants came from West Arsi and the rest of them were from Guji Zones.With regard to their educational level 14 teachers are 12+2 and 58 are 10+3. All (72) of them are English majors with Afan Oromo minors. Of the total, 72 sample teachers, majority (32) of them have served 5-10 years, 18 of them 1-5 years, 10 of them 10-15 years, 5 of them 15-20 years and 7 of them have served more than 20 years.

Table 2: Teachers' perception towards the use of MT in EFL classes

No	Item	Respondents		Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Undecided (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	Total
1	L1 should be used in English classes		F	6	18	6	30	12	72
			%	8.3	25	8.3	41.7	16.7	100
2	Teachers should know their students' first language.		F	2	12	6	40	12	72
			%	2.8	16.7	8.3	55.6	16.7	100
3	Teachers should use their students' first language.		F	2	18	9	28	15	72
			%	2.8	25	12.5	38.9	20.5	100
4	Students' first language should be allowed during English lessons.		F	10	13	7	30	12	72
			%	13.9	18.1	9.7	41.7	16.7	100
5	Using L1 prevents students from learning English.		F	15	28	2	15	12	72
			%	20.5	38.9	2.8	20.5	16.7	100
6	Teachers should follow an English-only policy in the classroom.		F	15	22	6	15	16	72
			%	20.8	30.6	8.3	20.5	22.2	100
7	Bilingual dictionaries help students understand the new vocabulary.		F	2	14	4	28	24	72
			%	2.8	19.4	5.6	38.9	33.3	100
8	I do not feel comfortable when my students use their first language.		F	14	15	5	25	13	72
			%	19.4	20.5	6.9	34.7	18.1	100
			%	5.6	31.9	13.9	25	23.6	72

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The above table shows teachers' overall perception towards using Afan Oromo per item on the questionnaire (item 1-8). As can be seen from this table, EFL teachers respond positively on items one, three and four. More than 58% of the respondents indicated that students L1 should be used in EFL classes. Interviewed teachers added that L1 should be used to avoid students' anxiety. On the other hand, 72.3% of the surveyed teachers believe that EFL teachers should know their students' first language. The interview result also supports this belief. Only 19.5 % of them disagreed on this. Three teachers in their interview supported this idea. As it can be seen from item 5, more than 59% of the teachers do not agree that using students' L1 prevents students from learning English. Three of the interviewed teachers said that if L1 is used purposefully and with limited amount, it motivates students to learn English. However, one of the interviewed teachers did not agree with this belief. Only, 37.2% of them agree that using L1 prevents students from learning English. 51.4% of the teachers in item 6 above do not agree that on English-only policy in EFL classes as compared to 42.7%. Besides, majority of the respondents believe that bilingual dictionaries help students understand the new vocabulary. Only 39.9% of the surveyed teachers do not feel comfortable when their students using L1 in EFL classes, but 52.8% of teachers fell comfortable when their students' use L1 in English classrooms. The interview result supports the data gathered through questionnaire on items six, seven and eight.

Table 3: EFL teachers' perception about the use of different reasons for MT use in the EFL classrooms

No	Item	Respondents		Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Undecided (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	Total
9	explain difficult concepts		F	2	7	6	35	22	72
			%	2.8	9.7	8.3	48.6	30.6	100
10	facilitate complicated English classroom tasks.		F	6	11	7	21	27	72
			%	8.3	15.3	9.7	29.2	37.5	100
11	introduce new grammatical rules.		F	3	20	8	25	16	72
			%	4.2	27.8	11.1	34.7	22.2	100
12	raise students' awareness of the differences and similarities between Afan-Oromo and English.		F	4	9	9	39	11	72
			%	5.6	12.5	12.5	54.2	15.3	100
13	explain new vocabulary especially abstract items.		F	3	7	4	32	26	72
			%	4.2	9.7	5.6	44.4	36.1	100
14	help students feel more comfortable/confident.		F	1	10	6	28	27	72
			%	1.4	13.9	8.3	38.9	37.5	100
15	give instructions.		F	5	12	4	27	24	72
			%	6.9	16.7	5.6	37.5	33.3	100
16	build up a good rapport with students		F	12	9	6	20	25	72
			%	16.7	12.5	8.3	27.8	34.7	100
17	express students' feelings and ideas when they fail to do that in English.		F	11	7	7	24	23	72
			%	15.3	9.7	9.7	33.3	31.9	100
18	explain the English idioms and expressions.		F	10	13	5	20	24	72
			%	13.9	18.1	6.9	27.8	33.3	100
19	complete pair/ small-group work activities.		F	12	8	3	26	23	72
			%	16.7	11.1	4.2	36.1	31.9	100

Table 3 above depicts in-service EFL teachers' perception about the use of different reasons for mother tongue in EFL classes. As items nine to nineteen indicate the surveyed teachers show positive perception on all items. Their positive perception ranges from 80.5% to 56.9%.

With this regard, 80.5 % of the teachers think that using Afan Oromo in EFL classes helps to explain new vocabulary especially abstract items. Nearly the same percentage (79.2%) of them believes that students' L1 uses to explain difficult concepts. More than 76% of them think that using Afan Oromo helps learners feel more comfortable or confident. In addition, more than 70% and 69% of them agreed that students' L1 is used to give instructions and to raise students' awareness of the differences and similarities between Afan-Oromo and English respectively. They also indicated that using Afan Oromo in EFL classes help students to complete pair/ small-group works activities. About 66.7 % of the teachers think that using Afan Oromo might facilitate complicated English classroom tasks. Finally 65.2, 62.5, 61.1 and 56.9 percent of the surveyed teachers believe that using Afan Oromo in English classrooms help students to express their feelings and ideas when they fail to do that in English, build up a good rapport with students, explain the

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English idioms and expressions ,and to introduce new grammatical rules respectfully.

As can be noted, majority of the in-service trainees (English teachers) have positive perception towards the use of students' mother tongue (Afan Oromo in this case) during English classes. Both the interview and questionnaire data confirms that using Afan Oromo in EFL classes is beneficial and should be used to explain new vocabulary items, to explain new concepts, help learners feel more comfortable/ confident, to give instructions and to raise students' awareness of the differences and similarities between Afan-Oromo and English, to complete pair/ small-group works activities, to facilitate complicated English classroom tasks, to help students express their feelings and ideas when they fail to do that in English, to build up a good rapport with students, to explain the English idioms and expressions ,and to introduce new grammatical rules.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Avoiding L1 in language classrooms is a „core belief" and it was „held in some form by the majority of the teaching profession" (Cook, 2002). However, it is a classroom reality that most teachers apply to L1 as a resource in their teaching practice. In order to have a full understanding of L1 use, revealing the perceptions of English teachers is essential. In this respect, this study investigated the English teachers' perceptions towards the use of L1, Afan Oromo in this case in EFL classrooms.

The participants of the present study confirmed the significance of L1 in EFL classes. Another vital finding of this investigation is that teachers believe that students can learn the target language easily if teachers can speak and use the students' first language. The present study findings also reveal that bilingual dictionaries help students understand new vocabularies. From the data collected through questionnaire and observation it is possible to deduce that the use of students' L1 Ethiopian EFL classrooms can basically be deemed as a motivation for students and its appropriate use not only motivates them to learn English language but also makes it a friendly venture. It can be recommended on the basis of the results of the present study that EFL teachers in West Arsi and Guji zones classrooms need to be made aware of the benefits and limitations of L1 usage in EFL classrooms because the unaware use of L1may have long-lasting and destructive effects on learners production of the target language.

The study also revealed that teachers believe in the various pedagogic uses of Afan Oromo in their EFL classes. The major ones are: to explain new vocabulary especially abstract items, to explain new concepts, to help students develop their confidence, to give instructions, to raise students' awareness of the differences and similarities between L1 and the target language, to help students to complete pair/ small-group works activities, to facilitate complicated English classroom tasks, to help students to express their feelings and ideas when they fail to do that in English, build up a good rapport with students, explain the English idioms and expressions, and to introduce new grammatical rules.

VI. Recommendations

On the basis of the findings, the following recommendations were forwarded:

- EFL teachers should be aware when, why and how much to use L1 in their EFL classrooms.
- EFL teachers should use English where possible and the L1 where necessary. That is, L1 should be a consciously chosen option with a supportive role since using it randomly likely impedes the target language learning.
- Continuous trainings should be given to teachers on when, why and how much to use students' mother tongue in EFL classrooms.

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