

EFL Teachers' Perception and Practices of Code-Switching to Amharic

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Abstract

Code-switching is a prevailing fact in countries like Ethiopia where English is a foreign language and a medium of instruction. Because of this, teachers' perception and practices of code-switching appears to be worthy of consideration and should be taken into account in EFL research context. This study, therefore, investigated EFL teachers' perception and practices of code-switching between English and Amharic. A case study design was employed in which interview and observation were predominantly used for data collection process. Interview was meant to assess what teachers think about switching code to Amharic, where English is supposed to be the only medium of instruction in the classroom. Whereas, observation along with audio-recording was used for witnessing the alteration made between the aforementioned languages. The research participants were eight (8) English language teachers, who were conveniently sampled from Goro Secondary School, which is found in Ethiopia, Oromia region of Adama town.

The finding indicated that regardless of some facilitative role code-switching plays in English classroom, most teachers perceive code-switching negatively, as it retard students' English language acquisition. The interview report revealed that code-switching occurred because of students' incompetence of understanding lessons delivered through English as a medium of instruction. This in turn, forced teachers to make switching to Amharic in order to help students understand the lesson better. They said that students' English language incompetence was inherited mainly from lower grades, where mother tongue was used as a medium of instruction. The finding from observation also confirmed that code-switching to Amharic was substantially practiced, which aims to help students with poor English command, and make them understand the instruction better. Teachers' code-switching practice was implemented to facilitate the classroom functions like to give instruction and clarification of difficult concepts. And also, it is used to explain unclear grammar and vocabulary structures.

Keywords: code-switching, EFL teachers' perception, practice, Ethiopia, Amharic.

Introduction

Code-switching, the alteration of two or more languages in the same discourse, has been the focus of concern in respect to EFL learning and teaching process. The fact, however, is that there are different perceptions and classroom situations EFL teachers perceive and apply in their classroom setting. In Ethiopian EFL context, code-switching is made between the native languages and the foreign language, which is aimed to be acquired.

In order to acquire English as a foreign language, the significance of using English in EFL classroom is inculcated in the minds of most language teachers (Cook, 2001). However, relatively few studies have examined how English and native language can be used in these classes. Regarding to this, (Thompson, 2006) says, since the late 1800's, different teaching methods and approaches have advocated how L1 and TL are being used in the classroom e.g. Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Audio-lingualism, and Communicative Language Teaching Method.

During the era of Grammar Translation Method, L1 was considered as an essential tool for successful second language acquisition (Cook, 2001). L1 is also used by both teachers and students for translating the reading passages and exercises, giving instructions, grammar explanation and communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). As a response to the GTM, the Reform Movement came out in the 1920s and its endeavor was to develop other methods in language teaching, which came to be known as a Direct Method. It recommended that the target language should be learned in the same way as the mother tongue was naturally acquired. Direct Method asserted that students' native language was never been allowed, and linguists who supported the prevention of the MT, argue that translation will not give the exact meaning of the word (Ibid).

Audio-lingual method also prohibits the use of the learners' L1 during classroom instruction because it is believed to interfere with the development of target language forms. Yet, linguists and language teachers criticized ALM due to the lack of communication skills it offers (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). This changed the emphasis to seek a more communicative method such as the Communicative Language Teaching Method. The emphasis of CLT was on improving communicative skills as a reflection of real life communication. As to (Willis, 1996), in CLT, L1 is not banned; target language is the main language medium in the classroom and students are encouraged to use L1 in situations where it is necessary. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001) also noted that there seems to be very little space left for L1, though the goal of CLT is to

interact in the TL. There are also different studies indicating how code-switching used by teachers for different purposes in EFL classrooms.

Teachers' code-switching in EFL performs different functions. These functions are emerged from the questions like why speakers code-switch, how and when code-switching takes place is important in CS practice. Thus, different research findings showed that many reasons can be mentioned in various research setting. For example, Lin (1990) analyzed teachers' language choices in English language classes that the teachers who were observed applying the following CS functions when switching from TL (English) to L1 (Cantonese):

Teachers switched to L1:

- To give Instructions
- To give clarification
- To explain grammatical points
- To explain vocabulary and words

In EFL classroom, the TL (English) is always expected to be the main language in the classroom as the language of instruction. However, the switch from one language to the other is often seen in this classroom. This practice is inevitable in classroom where learners come from multi-lingual background having their L1 in mind. According to (Cook, 1999), code-switching is inevitable because TL learner have their first language background in their mind.

“Target language learners have L1 permanently present in their minds. Every activity the students carries out visibly in the target language also involves the invisible L1 From a multi- competence perspective, all teaching activities are cross- lingual ... the difference among activities is whether the L1 is visible or invisible, not whether it is present or altogether absent”

In Ethiopian context, since the 1950s, English has been used as the medium of instruction in Ethiopian schools at least starting from junior high school onwards (Tekeste, 2006). However, different governments in Ethiopia amended the policy realizing the role played by the mother tongue in teaching and learning. According to the 1994 policy, indigenous languages such as Amharic, Afan Oromo, Tigrigna, Somali, Afar and Guragna were to be used as media for instruction up to grade eight in areas where they are commonly spoken and understood. However, when students are promoted to high school, where English is a medium of instruction, that is where the tendency of switching between English and the indigenous languages come. Teachers, as a main classroom actor, play a vital role to manage the classroom situation in which the code-switching happened.

The researcher has also noticed the practice of CS in EFL classroom with deficits in systematic use. It seems that teachers have no clear understanding of the pedagogical values and guideline on how L1 can be used in English classes. In the context of this study, code-switching, the alternation between L1 (Amharic) and TL (English) is common practice in different grade level. Particularly, this practice is occurred in grade nine where a transition is made from mother tongue instruction to English instruction. However, little information is known about code-switching in the Ethiopian EFL context. A clear understanding of what teachers perceive and practice of code-switching has not yet been given sufficient consideration in research domain, this study tried to investigate what perception teachers have about CS, and what classroom function it does.

The Research Questions

1. What do teachers' perceive of code-switching between English and Amharic?
2. What do teachers' practices of code-switching between English and Amharic?

Material and Methods

Research Design

A descriptive case study design was used in this study as (Gall & Borg, 2003) describe case study design as the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context, and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon (p. 436). Case study design is a design of inquiry found in many fields in which the researcher develops detail analysis of a case, a program, an event, activity, process, or individuals. Cases are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect comprehensive information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Yin, 2009).

This study followed a qualitative research approach, which is used for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups attribute to a social or human problem. This research approach is mainly concerned with stories and accounts including subjective understandings, feelings, opinions and beliefs. Qualitative approach involves data collection procedures that result primarily in open ended, non-numerical data that is then analyzed by non-statistical methods Dornyei (2007). Typical example qualitative data: observation, interview and transcribed recordings.

Setting and Participants

This study was conducted in Goro Secondary School found in Adama town of Ethiopia, particularly grade nine. The reason for selecting this grade was that it was a transitional level where students came from mother tongue instruction to English instruction. During this change of the medium of instruction, the practice of code-switching becomes one classroom phenomena, which in turn teachers' perception and practice toward it should be studied.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

For this case study, eight (8) English teachers were conveniently sampled because some teachers might have been unwilling to be observed and interviewed, only to select the willing ones to participate in this study. According to (Dornyei, 2007), there are some practical criteria to use convenient sampling, such as such as willingness, easily accessibility, proximity, and availability at a certain time.

Instrument of Data Collection

This study used observation and interview to collect the required data. This study employed semi-structured interview where a common set of topics and questions were used for all teachers' participants. It was chosen because they focus on obtaining answers for main themes and questions, and it allows room for flexibility in the forms and sequences of questions (Kvale, 2008). Not only that, it also provides opportunity to the interviewer to add questions that may occur during the interview (Perry, 2011). Lastly, it gives freedom to explore certain issues within the context of the study and provides in-depth and rich information. The purpose of interview was to gather data on teachers' perception of code-switching from English to Amharic.

Non-participant observation was applied because the observer observes as a detached representative without any attempt on his/her part to experience through participation what others feel. In non-participant observation, the observer is observing in such a manner that his presence may (Tracy, 2012). The purpose of this observation was to observe the situations and function in which switching to Amharic was used.

Method of Data Analysis

As observation and interviews were the dominant source of data, qualitative way of data analysis was employed in which the data from their interview was qualitatively described by words. The aim of interview data was to study teachers' perception of code-switching, whereas the aim of observation was to identify the classroom practice of code-switching. The data from the interview and observation will be triangulated in the discussion part.

Teachers' Perception of Code-Switching

Teachers' perception on code-switching practice

Teachers had different views on code-switching, but most of them admitted they switched their code from English to Amharic in English classroom despite their belief English should be the dominant language. Most of them also have the same stand to minimize the extent of the CS practice. For instance, T7 interview report showed that code-switching is occurred in the classroom to help weak students though he knows it hampers students English so that students should stop using it.

“In my opinion using first language in English classroom is not good, and it is also the sign of students’ weakness in English language. If students only use English in classroom, they will improve their English skills, but now the reality is students are weak so that a teachers use their language (Amharic) to help them. It is better to stop using it in English classroom.”

T5 also concerned with the negative side of switching to mother tongue in English classroom, and yet it may have some role to help students understand the lesson. He said as much as possible, it should better be avoid because if teachers use it, students will imitate or do what their teacher does as good thing. On the same notion, T3 asserted that code-switching is not allowed pedagogically, but she used it to make students understand the lesson because English is challenging for them.

“Pedagogy doesn’t allow the use of mother tongue in English classroom because in English classroom students should use English to improve it. But, here we have different situation that some students can’t listen, they can’t speak and they can’t even understand English properly. For that reason, I switch to their mother tongue. But according to my opinion, I don’t think it is important to use mother tongue in English classroom.”

Likewise, two teachers, T6 and T8, affirmed that the practice of code-switching is primarily aimed to tackle students’ challenge to understand the lesson. Specifically, T6 concerned that students don’t want to use the opportunity given to speak English in group works. Rather, students use frequently switches to their mother tongues than using English. Not only these, according to T6, students are afraid or shy to speak English that they rush to switch to their mother tongue. Only two respondents, T1 and T2 somehow showed a support to code-switching by saying that it should be used where it is needed to enhance students’ level of understanding the lesson.

Teachers’ perception on supporting or opposing code-switching practice

Their response indicated that teachers had slightly different view. For example, T1 and T2 hesitate to decide to support or oppose. Their views presented respectively as follow.

“...I have no such idea of whether supporting or not, but it has its own time to use okay. I am in between okay. Where necessary I use it, where not necessary I should have to use the target language; that is it.”

“...I didn’t totally oppose and also support. To some extent I support the use of mother tongue in English classroom. In some cases, I think it is very important for students, if I use their mother tongue or other than the target language. Therefore, it is very important to use to some extent or I mean sometimes.”

The teacher like T5 and T6 believe that there are mandatory situations in which they must use Amharic to support students understands the lesson. T5 supported his argument with his pedagogy training by saying if students' facial expression shows they don't understand the lesson, better to support them with L1 which oppose to the idea of T3 previously acknowledged pedagogy never support this practice.

“I think totally rejecting is not good, in our college training, it says, if the students' facial expression shows that they don't clearly understand the lesson; it is preferable to use L1. But, totally using L1 in English classroom is not good ok.”

Supporting the above notion, T8 stated that entirely avoiding L1 from English classroom is not recommendable rather the concern should be the extent of the practice.

“I don't agree with the ideas of totally opposing and rejecting using students' mother tongue in English classroom. Rather, my concern should be the extent to which mother is used in English classroom. I support if it is used in small amount only in a situation where students face difficulty. Otherwise, I oppose if it is used frequently because it will make students depend on their mother tongue that may again affect their English language development.”

Contrary to that, T7 sees no benefit of using L1 for students' future English development. He said there is no benefit in the long term academic life of students rather it may make them dependent on their mother tongue. He further commented that, to be successful in English, students must face the challenges, but he admitted the reality is the opposite.

Teachers' perception on code-switching and the level of students

During the interviews, the teacher participants were requested to provide their opinions about their code switching practice and the level of their students. Most teachers believe that the use of code-switching is strongly related to students' English level. For example T1 said:

“Some students at high school level could not read, they could not speak, communication was very difficult, and I used more Amharic than I ever thought I would use at high school level. The major factor is students' lack of adequate English language communicative skill”

Furthermore, T2, T4, and T6 reflected that using L1 depends basically on the level of the students, accordingly, T6 said that

“Normally, the English level of students is going down and down from time to time. They are not able to understand very simple English, if they don’t even understand plain English, then you are going to use their mother tongue.”

Similarly, T3 and T8 asserted that as there is strong relation between students’ English language ability and teachers’ use of code switching. He insisted that students may ask the teacher a thing they don’t understand, and you have to clarify it by explaining in their language, otherwise they don’t be happy.” Supporting his argument T8 suggested that:

“...most of the time, weak student has low level of understanding English language. When you teach something, you can simply observe from their face that they do not understand you. But, when you say something in Amharic they will react and show some sort of motivation. So, whenever I observe they don’t understand me, I may use their language to help them.

Teachers’ perception on pedagogical training about code-switching

Regarding pedagogical training about CS, teachers’ reflection is different. Most teachers are not pretty sure whether they have taken pedagogical training about code switching. T1 interview report indicated that no training has been offered on how to handle the practice of code switching in English classroom.

“I have not seen or heard anything about the practice of code switching in English classroom. I know that Amharic is a medium of instructions at different places of Oromia region. At the same time, English is also working as a medium of instruction at high school. Besides that, I didn’t remember I learnt anything about code switching.”

Furthermore, T2 insisted that there is no written document about the use of mother tongue in English classroom, but there is common understanding that English is the dominant language where being used as a medium of instruction. Thus, encourage English and discourage mother tongue is what should be in English classroom. On her part, T3 assumed that pedagogy never allow the use of mother tongue in English classroom.

Two teachers T6 and T8 forwarded their own opinion by saying that they are not quite sure if code switching is included in Ethiopian curriculum. They said they are new for the word code switching, but they know about mother tongue use in English classroom. On the same essence, T7 commented the following:

“Even though no one told me or train me about using/avoiding L1 in English classroom, but my mind knows that I must not use and not expected from me to always use Amharic in English classroom.”

Teachers’ perception on the effect of code-switching on students’ learning

The result of teachers’ interview report revealed that the practice of code switching has more negative effect on students’ English language learning even though it provides students some way out in case of difficult to understand lessons. For example, T1 sees the practice of code-switching in English classroom as minimizing opportunity to practice English. According to him, classroom is the only place for students to practice English in which mother tongue use will decrease this opportunity. Another teacher (T2) explained the way L1 use negatively affects students’ language learning. He said that when mother tongue is allowed in English classroom, there could be high tendency to depend on that. From his teaching experience, when he uses Amharic in English classroom, students demand more.

According to T3, learning is daily practice and developing habit; hence, if students use mother tongue in English classroom, they may develop the habit of using MT all the time that will affect their English learning. Similarly, T7 is more concerned about the extent of students’ practice of code switching that create tendency to depend on mother tongue. The result of T4 interview report revealed that the practice of code switching has both positive and negative effect on students’ English language learning.

“As what I can observe, code-switching has both positive and negative effect when it comes to learning English. It serves as an instrument that helps them easily understand the lesson but then again because of code-switching the students will not be able to improve or enhance their proficiency in English language.”

In supporting the above argument, balanced explanation was given by T8. He said that if Amharic is used frequently in English classroom, no doubt it affects students’ English language ability badly. As students came from elementary schools where mother tongue is used as a medium of instruction, they may face challenge to deal with English at high school. Therefore, his suggestion is that mother tongue should not be used frequently. Furthermore, T6 also commented the following.

“Of course, if the teacher always does code-switching, the students will just rely and be dependent on their first language. Also, it will not make the learners to be fluent in English language. But still code-switching is important; in English language learning, first language is sometimes needed.”

Teachers' perception on factors for code-switching practice

In response to this question, teachers raised different factors related to the practice of code-switching. The first teacher (T1) elaborated what he believes are factors. According to him, poor background of students and teachers as one factor. He stated that they have poor English command that is why we need the support of our mother tongue in English classroom. Especially, students always wait for translation in order to understand the content. Likewise, T2 mentioned, difficulty to understand new words, reading text, and listening text, as a deriving factor for switching from English. His response focused on students' inability to understand the lesson in English. On the same item, T8 suggested the following:

“In my view, there are different factors related to the use of Amharic in English classroom. According to my experience, the first factor is related to competency, especially students' ability to deal with English as a medium of instruction at high school level. That means, they have low English competency in their elementary grades, and when they came to high school, they tend to depend on their mother tongue. The other reason could be that some teachers themselves are not competent enough to help students to develop their English. But the student-related problem overtakes their main problem.”

Other teachers also said it is student-related factors that encourage switching between languages. T4 identified students' poor English competence, which resulted from their poor English background, was the prominent factor. He said starting from grade one in lower grades, they have the problem of speaking English language and now it is difficult to learn at this stage. Instead they prefer to use their local languages. T7 was also reflected the same to raise students' poor English ability as the main factor.

Translation of new vocabulary, grammar and clarifying lessons are other factors for switching between L1 and TL according to T5 and T6 view. For example, T5 says when he teaches vocabulary, he translates to their L1, and even there is a shortage of English vocabulary from teacher in some cases. T6 added that he uses students' mother tongue to clarify the lesson, otherwise they become silent. He also sometimes says a word or a phrase in students' L to motivate them; otherwise they ignore you.

Teachers' Code-Switching Practice

The aim of observation is to observe and witness the turns (switches) made from target language (English) to first language (Amharic) and what classroom functions they serve. This observation was made based on Lin (1990) classification of teachers' language choices in English language classes.

- A) To give Instructions
- B) To give clarification
- C) To explain grammatical points
- D) To explain vocabulary and words

A) To give Instructions

Extract 1:

T2: The instruction says that Melesse’s cousin enjoyed his visit to Ethiopia. He kept a diary of his tours. Complete his diary entry by filling in the spaces with words from the box below. ክዚ በታች በሰጥን ውስጥ የተሰጡ ቃላት አሉ። እነዚን ቃላት በፖሴጁ ውስጥ ያሉ ክፍት ቦታዎች ላይ ትሞላላቸው። ፖሴጁ የሚያወራው ስለ መለሰ የአጎት ልጅ-ብኝት ሚያወራው። ታነቡና ካነበባቸው በኋላ ባለው ክፍት ቦታ ላይ የተሰጡ ቃላትን ትሞላላቸው ማለት ነው። የተሰጡ ቃላት እነማን ናቸው።

Extract 2:

T3: The instruction says read the passage and choose the correct word or phrase from the box to complete it. ክዚ በታች ያለውን ንባብ ካነበባቸው በኋላ የሚቀጥለውን አረፍተ ነገር ባዶ ቦታ በመሙላት ትሰራላቸው ማለት ነው። የተሰጠው ንባብ ስለ Bale Mountain and Awash National Park and the passage also talks about the Simien Maintains. ከተሰጠው ሁለት ቃል ውስጥ የትኛው ቃል በ passage መሰረት መልስ ይሆናል።

The above two extracts are presented one after the other because they have similar form of instruction which merely focus on how to fill the given blank space in the reading passage. The switch from English to Amharic was made to make the instruction clear for students. The following two extracts revealed that T1 was also observed using code-switching to give instruction.

Extract 3:

T4: Read this passage for the next time and do exercise on page twenty two. ሰማቹ ገፅ ሆያ አንድ ላይ ያለውን ታነባላቸው ካነበባቸው በኋላ ገፅ ሆያ አንድ ላይ ያለውን exercise ትሰራላቸው። ገፅ ሆያ አንድ passage እስከ ሆያ ሁለት አሉ። ከዛ ደም ሆያ ሁለት ላይ activity አሉ። እና ባነበባቸው መሰረት እነዚን አክቴሺቲቶች ትሰራላቸው ማለት ነው።

In the above extract, the switch was made from English to Amharic by T4. The instruction focused on what students should do next time at home. The switch was made by a teacher considering that Amharic instruction could give students addition input to understand the instruction. On the upcoming extract, T2 ordered his students to play a game by using adjectives.

Extract 4:

T2: Find adjectives to describe a cat. The students who describe a cat will compete to each other. ምን ታደርጋለህ መሰላቱ መጀመሪያ አንዳንድ አድጀክቲቮች ትመርጣለህ ካትን describe ለማድረግ ማለት ነው። መጀመሪያ ታስባለህ ከዛ ሁላቸውም ትነሳለህ describe ታደርጋለህ። describe ያደረጉ ይቆማሉ adjective describe ማድረግ ያልቻሉ ደግሞ ይቀመጣሉ ማለት ነው። በመጨረሻም የቆሙ አሁንም ሌላ ዙር ይወዳደራሉ or for another term compete ማለት ነው። በመጨረሻም ወይም እስከ መጨረሻ የቆመ winner ማለት ነው።

In the above extract, T2 was giving instruction on how a competition should take place between students to produce as many adjectives as possible to describe a cat. He switched code to Amharic to tell his students how this game is played between students. The teacher thinks that they better understand the procedure of the play if told in their mother tongue

B) To give clarification

During recording, teachers were also observed while switching their code from English to Amharic and Afan Oromo to give detail clarification of points they have been teaching. Thus, giving clarification appears to be another function that teachers employ mother tongue in English classroom. From the lesson transcript, different extracts were received that discussed how code-switching was used for clarification.

Extract 1:

T1: When we describe places, most of the time we should have to know adjectives to describe different things. አንድን ቦታ describe ለማድረግ ወይም ለመግለጽ የምንጠቀምባቸው ቃላት ይኖራሉ። ስለዚህ መጀመሪያ ወርዶቹን ማወቅ አለብን። በተለይ adjective ማወቅ አለብን። Adjective በጣም ወሳኝ ነው። ይህ adjective በአማርኛ ቅጽፈ ወይም ገላጭ የሚባለው ማለት ነው። ገላጭ ማለት ምን ማለት ነው። አንድን ነገር ለመግለጽ የምንጠቀምበት ተቀጽ ቃል ማለት ነው። የኛ ጭንቅላት ውስጥ ስዕል ወይም ደግሞ የነገሩን ፒክቸሩን ወይም ደግሞ ማፑን ጥሎ የሚያልፍ ማለት ነው። For example, አንድ ሰማይ ጠቀስ ሰው ይህ እየመጣ ነው እንበል ጭንቅላታችን ውስጥ የሚሰለፈ ነገር ምንድን ነው፣ በጣም ረጅም ሰው ሰው እንደሆነ ጭንቅላታችን ውስጥ የሚሰለፈ ማለት ነው፣ በጣም ቦርጫም ሰው አየመጣ ነው እንበል፣ ጭንቅላታችን ውስጥ የሚሰለፈ ምንድን ነው በጣም ወፍራም ሰው እየመጣ እንደሆነ ነው። እንዲሁ በሀሊናቹ እንድትስሉት የሚረዳዎቹ ነገረ ማለት ነው። ግልጽ ነው አይደል።

In teaching adjective, T1 made a switch from English to Amharic to clarify the concept of adjective. The purpose of this switch was to give more clarification about the issue under

discussion. In this case, the researcher noticed how well students understood the Amharic clarification of adjective.

Extract 2:

T1: First of all we should have to categorize words. መጀመሪያ ወርዶችን categorize ማድረግ አለብን። categorize ማለት ምን ማለት ነዉ መመደብ ማለት ነዉ።አንድ ወርድ ከየትኛዉ ይመደባል ስም ነዉ ግስ ነዉ ወይም adjective ነዉ and so and so. After that we can learn other points.

The above extract is another example to show how T1 employs Amharic to clarify how words are categorized in different part of speech. The aim of using Amharic in this context could be providing clarification about the topic under discussion.

Extract 3:

T1: what you have to know here is that....እዚጋ ምንድነኑ ማወቅ ያለባቸ dictionary የራሱ ጥቅም እንዳለዉ ነዉ። Dictionary ዉስጥ የምናገኛቸዉ ቃላት head words ይባላሉ። ወርዱ አንዳለ ፎርም ሳይቀየር ምንም ሳይቀየር አንዳለ dictionary ዉስጥ የምናገኘዉ ምን ይባላል head word ይባላሉ። ምንም ፎርም ሳይቀየር ማለት ነዉ okay። ሌላዉ ደሞ እንዴት አንድ word ማንበብ እንችላለን ነዉ...Pronunciation እንዴት ነዉ። The other one is definition, የአንድ word ትርጉም ወደ ሌላ ስትወስዱ ምን ይመስላል። The other one is part of speech. ይህ ደሞ የንግግር ክፍሎች ማለት ነዉ። የንግግር ክፍሎች ምን ይመስላሉ። ለይተን የማናዉቅ ከሆን በጣም አስቸጋሪ ይሆናል ማለት ነዉ። ለምሳሌ ግስ አለ ስም አለ ቅፅል አለ ተወሳክ ግስ አለ መስተዋድድ አለ and so and so are what part of speech ናቸዉ። The other one is grammar, grammar ዉስጥ ደሞ ምን ይመስላሉ አነዚ ወርዶች። grammar ሲባል ምንድ ነዉ...የአንድ ቋንቋ ህግ ወይም ሰዋሰዉ ዉስጥ ምን ይመስላል። grammar ሲባል transitive or intransitive አይነት grammar አለ። ሌላ ደሞ countable and uncountable nouns ሊሆን ይችላል። ይህንን መጀመሪያ ቀድመን ማወቅ አለብን ማለት ነዉ።

In this Extract, T1 was frequently switching his code to Amharic to summarize what has been taught in that particular period. The aim of this switch to Amharic seems to summarize and to remind students which can be taken as clarification on how a given word in a dictionary can be seen in terms of pronunciation, definition, and grammar.

B) To explain grammatical points

Explaining grammatical points by teachers was observed as one situation where teachers made a switch to students' first language. One of the frequently observed classroom phenomena

in which teachers switch their code from English to Amharic and Afan Oromo was to explain the rule and structure of grammatical points. To start from T1, he switches to Amharic to explain about how *will* is used in English sentence.

Extract 1:

T1: We use *will* when we don't what...determine what we are going to do. We don't determine it okay but we do at that time of speaking. We do something spontaneously or suddenly. ይህ ዋል ምንድነው እሱ የተለያዩ ቴንሶች አሉ ከነዚህ ቴንሶች ውስጥ ወደ ሳናስብበት ወደፊት ምንጠቀምበት ማለት ነው። ዲሲሽን የለም ቀደም ብለን የወሰነው ነገር የለም። ስናወራ ወዲያው ዲሳይድ ያደረግነው ነገር ነው።

According to the above extract, a switch to Amharic was made by a teacher to elaborate the concept of *will*, which is one of grammatical structure. The teacher also tried to explain in what situation and time we use the word *will*. The switch between languages was needed to reach students understanding in their first language. Another example of code-switching use between English and Amharic in teaching grammar was given below.

Extract 2:

T5.I said before present perfect has different uses ok, for the past completed action but the result is observed to this moment or time ok. ልጄታ ጥቢል አሁን ሚታየውምን ሆኖ ነው ማለት ነው ንፁ ሆኖ ነው ሚታየው ማለት ነው already ሚለው ቅድመኑ አጥባለች ለማለት ነው። ok, አሁን ግን የሚታየ ነገር ምንድነው ከሁኑ ጋር የሚያዛምደው ነገር, the baby is clean.

The above extract was taken from T5 teaching present perfect tense. In doing so, the teacher tried to explain in which time context we use it in Amharic. He elaborated the given example in Amharic so that students could understand better. Hence, the teacher used code-switch between English and Amharic to explain grammatical point. T6 was switching code in the process of explaining relative clause as presented below.

Extract 3:

T6.ለምን እንጠቀምበታለን ይህን relative clause? ምንድነው አለማው። It is used to give additional information. በጣም ጥሩ አንብባቹ ነው የመጣቹት ማለት ነው። Relative clause የምንጠቀመው ተጨማሪ መረጃ ለመስጠት ነው። ለ Relative clause የምንጠቀማቸው ቃላት ደግሞ pronoun ይባላሉ።

Code-switching was used in the above extract to deal with the concept of relative clause. In doing so, T6 explain the use of relative clause by switching codes between the TL and L1. The teacher said in Amharic that relative clause helps to give additional information.

Extract 4:

T8.For example, the elephant has become extinct. (We don't know exactly when).
**ሄይ ምን ማለት ነው ዝሆኑ ጠፋ ይላል ግን exactly much እንደ ጠፋ ሚገልፀው ነገር
የለም...so present perfect tense በ past ተጀምሮ እስካሁን የቀጠለን action ያሳያል, ግን
መቻ እንደተጀመረ አይናገርም::**

Teacher eight (T8) was making switch from English to Amharic to explain present perfect tense, one of the tenses repeatedly discussed. It was seen different times that students understand more about grammar when told through their mother tongue. That is why I think, T8 was trying to switch from English to Amharic.

Extract 5:

T3: Is that clear students? Going to ምንጠቀመው መቻ ነው ማለት ነው፤ ወደፊት
ለማድረግ ያቀድነው ነገረ ካለ ነው:: ለምሳሌ አንደኛው ምሳሌ ምን ይላል ሚቀጥለው
ሳምንት እሁቴን የመጎብኘት እቅድ አለኝ እንደማለት ነው::

The switch from English to Amharic was again revealed in the above extract. After explaining the use of *going to* in English, the teacher switches the code to Amharic to explain the example in more elaborated way. As teachers use most of the time, they turn their medium to students' mother tongue because they knew students could not always understand English. Another example was given afterward the practice of cod-switching in grammar teaching.

D) To explain new vocabulary

As vocabulary appeared to be crucial in English language learning, translating, and giving the meaning of new words through L1 was observed as a result. Giving the meaning of new words in students' mother tongue (Amharic) was known to be one function of code switching. On their interview too, teachers indicated that they code switch to help students learn vocabulary better. The result of classroom observation report, which is used for vocabulary teaching, is presented as follow.

Extract 1:

T1. Visit ማለት ቅርብ ቦታዎችን መጎብኘት ሲሆን Tour ማለት ደግሞ ሩቅ ቦታዎችን
መጎብኘት ማለት ነው::

In this case, T1 translates the two words (Visit and Tour) in Amharic to show students the difference.

Extract 2:

T1: What does it mean *Acacia trees*? Acacia **ሚባለው ግራረና ገራረ መሰል ዛፎችን ነው።**

In the above extract, T1 gave the meaning of the word *Acacia trees* in Amharic. The aim of translating this word could be to introduce the vocabulary for students.

Extract 3:

T2. Monastery **ማለት ገዳም ማለት ነው።**

In the above extract, the meaning of monastery was given as **ገዳም**, for those who don't know the meaning of this word before.

Extract 4:

T6.....The robber in the bank *grabbed* the money-----the cashier handed over to him. **እፍስ ማደረግ ማለት ነው.** grabbed.

Teacher 6 gave the meaning of the word *grabbed* in Amharic, saying *grabbed* means **እፍስ ማደረግ ማለት ነው።**

Extract 5:

T2. What we call Alphabetic order in Amharic...**የፊደል ገበታ**

T2 was giving the meaning of alphabetical order in Amharic as **...የፊደል ገበታ**

Extract 6:

T2.Rope **ማለት ገመድ ማለት ነው።...waist ማለት ወገብ ማለት ነው።**

T2 again offered the meaning of rope and waist in Amharic as given above.

Discussion of the Result

This part provides the discussion of the results in the light to answer the research question. It focuses on the interpretation of the main findings, taking into account how the findings answer the research question. First, it discusses the perception of teachers towards the practice of code-switching. Second, it discusses the actual use and of code-switching.

As evident from teachers' interview report, teachers had different views on the use of code-switching in English classroom. Most teachers perceive code-switching as inevitable classroom phenomenon because of students' incompetence to deal with English. Many teachers view their use of code-switching practice in English classroom is strongly related with students' English language incompetency. Teachers also expressed their concern on excessive use of code-switching in English classroom might have negative impact on students' English language development. However, teachers never ignore the fact that English should be the dominant language in the classroom, switching to mother tongue should be reduced to the level of only providing some facilitative role.

Different code-switching functions were mentioned by teacher respondents. Hence, because of students' incompetence and inability to understand lessons like grammar and vocabulary, teachers are forced to clarify the difficult concepts through students' mother tongue, Amharic in this context. According to their response, students have low English language competence because Amharic had been their medium of instruction in lower grades, and when they come to high school, where English is a medium of instruction, they tend to switch to their mother tongue whenever difficulty to understand English happened. Teachers also use code-switching in situations such as giving instruction and clarifying of difficult points

Macaro's (2000) study somehow concurs with this study by indicating in what situation teachers' code switching occurs. Thus, teachers frequently use L1 when (a) teaching grammar explicitly, (b) providing complex procedural instructions, (c) controlling students' behavior, and (d) checking for comprehension quickly when time pressures dictate. Code-switching becomes a useful communication strategy when the amount of input modification needed is too great for the time allocated to them. It was concluded that code-switching is beneficial when it improves the learning of the TL (Ibid).

Conclusion

The first objective of the research asks for what teachers' perceive about the use of code-switching between English and Amharic. The result of this study revealed that teachers' perception towards CS is more of negative. This is because teachers said they don't want to code-switch in classroom, but they do it as it appeared to be inevitable classroom phenomena where students with low English competence exist. According to their response, basically, code-switching occurred to compromise the incompetence in target language (English). Again, teachers repeatedly warn that the overuse of code-switching will not make students develop their English. However, as seen from their response, teachers admitted code-switching to have some facilitative role in the teaching and learning process. Most of the teachers perceive their own use of code-switching may affect students' English language learning despite it serves some

classroom functions. Based on the finding, therefore, it is concluded that the finding indicated that a negative perception of code-switching was found from teachers' interview response.

The second objective of this study is investigating teachers' code-switching practice in English classroom. The result shows that teachers code-switch to Amharic was made in response to different classroom factors like giving instruction, clarification of vocabulary and grammar points. Based on the finding, it is concluded that there different code-switching functions teachers reported they do, and their students wanted them to do, and teachers actually do in the classroom. These practices include giving instruction, clarification, explaining grammar and vocabulary.

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