

## **Code Switching in Ethiopian Primary and Secondary EFL Classrooms: A Comparison of its Extent and Types**

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**Abstract:** This study explores the practice of Code Switching (CS) in Ethiopian EFL classrooms. To this end, two EFL teachers were observed and audio-recorded for 6 sessions (3 sessions for each). Responding to the extent and types of CS used in the EFL classrooms, the analysis of the classroom interaction transcripts revealed that the use of CS was prevalent, and it was recognized that the participant EFL teachers practiced CS based on the learners' grade levels. Regarding the extent of L1 use in EFL classes, word count was used as a unit of analysis, and from the total teachers' language use, the average percentage of L1 use at the elementary school level was 31.9%; on the other hand, there was 17% L1 use at secondary school level. Similarly, four patterns or types of CS were used during the observation in both grade levels: Intra-sentential, inter-sentential, extra-sentential (tag) and intra word CS. Among these, intra-sentential CS was used more frequently (53%) from the total CS patterns at the elementary schools (grade 7) level; in contrast, inter-sentential CS was the main (38.6%) type of CS practiced at the secondary school (grade 9) level. Therefore, with the avoidance of intra-word code switching, it would be appropriate to acknowledge other types of CS as a strategy for teaching English in the EFL classroom discourse like Ethiopia, but its frequency should keep in view of the grade levels of the students.

**Key words:** Code Switching, L1, extent, types.

### **Introduction**

The use of the students' first language (L1) in the instructed second/foreign language learning classroom by both language instructors and learners has always been a problematic question of much debate, controversy, discussion and dispute among linguists, methodologists, language teachers, and learners (Ayaz, 2017; Dailey-O'Cain & Liebscher, 2015; Hall & Cook, 2012). The utilization of learners' L1 in the L2 classroom which is also called Code-switching (CS) has been defined and

studied from different approaches. Among these, the most common are the sociolinguistic approach (Gumperz, 1982), the grammatical approach (Arthur, 1998; Poplack, 1980), the psycholinguistic approach (Giles & Bayren, 1982), or the pragmatic approach. However, all seem to agree that it is the utilization of more than one linguistic code in one conversation or in the same utterance. This study focuses on classroom CS, which is defined as language alternation—the alternating use of more than one linguistic code in the classroom by any of the classroom participants (in this case, EFL teachers) (Lin, 2013). Therefore, this study compares the extent (amount) and types of CS (L1) used in sample elementary and secondary schools in Bahir Dar town, Ethiopia.

In relation to the places where switches occur within sentences in the L2 teachers talk in ESL/EFL classrooms, Poplack (1980) has successfully classified CS into three types. These are inter-sentential code-switching, intra-sentential code-switching and extra sentential / tag code-switching. In addition, Arthur (1998) has the same types of CS types above by Poplack, and he adds one more type of CS i.e. called Intra-word switching in which a change occurs within a word boundary. Thus, these four types of CS (Inter-sentential, Intra-sentential, extra-sentential and intra-word) are adopted in this study by making an utterance (clause) as well as a word of EFL teachers' talk as the basic unit of analysis.

In some empirical studies concerning the type of CS used in L2 classrooms, the dominant pattern from the above four types CS by the majority of L<sub>2</sub> teachers is inter-sentential (also called mechanical) CS (Jingxia, 2010), which is done at sentence boundaries. Intra-sentential CS (code-mixing), on the other hand, occurs unconsciously as a habit of teachers or students. Contrary to this finding, Iqbal (2011) reveals that most teachers use intra-sentential CS (adding a word of L<sub>1</sub> in English utterance). Therefore, this study compares the types of CS practiced by the participant elementary and secondary school teachers' in their EFL classrooms.

Regarding the amount of L1 use or CS which is enough in the L2 classroom, there were different recommendations and findings by various researchers. Although it is difficult to decide the threshold level of L1 use (extent) in L2 classroom for all contexts, Atkinson (1987) recommends 5% L1 for elementary level learners. Similarly, Shampson et al (1987) suggests 25% L1 use as an acceptable amount for elementary level French learners in Canada (cited in Turnbull, 2001). Various empirical studies which are conducted in various contexts also try to quantify the amount of L1 or TL use in the teachers' talk. Among these, Duff & Polio (1990) find out 67% to 9% TL (or 91%-33% L1) use in the classrooms which is similar with studies by Turnbull (2001) in Canada with 9%-89% TL (or 11%-91% L1) , and 7% to 70% TL (30%-93% L1) use by a Spanish teacher in a US university (Edstrom, 2006). Among local researchers, Tafesse (1998) discovers EFL teachers' 29% L1 (Amharic) use from the total discourse in English classroom in grade five at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Rolin-Ianziti & Brownlie (2002) also find evidence of the L1 use with a range of 0%-18.2% which seems similar to Macaro's (2001) study on six student teachers, which ranged from 4-12% L1 in L2 classrooms. Concerning comparative studies on the amount of L1 in different levels of L2 classrooms, researchers like Blackman (2013) , Calman & Daniel (1998), Grim's (2010), Mahil(2014), Parker & Karagaac (2015), Quadumi (2007) as well as Qiang (2010) reveal that the amount of L1 use by TL teachers increases when the learners level of proficiency decreases. For instance in Grim's (2010) comparative study, between high school teachers and college L2 instructors, and their use of L1 ranged between 0.1% - 24.96 % , and he concludes that L2 teachers naturally incline towards the use of more TL regardless of the academic levels they teach. Likewise, Calman & Daniel (1998) explore the elementary and secondary school teachers' L2 use in Canada, where 95% L2 use is expected by the school. However, the results of the study reveal that only 42% of elementary and 17% of secondary school L2 teachers fulfilled the school rule. Indirectly, the majority of both levels of teachers use L1 more than 5% in their classrooms, but it is found that teachers' dependence on learners' L1 decreases when

the students' level increases. On the contrary, recent studies like Sailu (2017) and Krulatz et al (2016) reveal that there is no significant difference among EFL teachers on the use of CS although they had different educational levels.

Edstrom (2006) highlights, although the quantity of the L1 or CS varies considerably within classrooms, the reasons for its use are quite common across various contexts. Studies by several scholars have provided well-considered rationales for why teachers should use the L1 in the foreign language classroom. Accordingly, teachers related factors that may affect the extent of using L1(CS) in TL classrooms are like teachers' length of teaching experience (Blackman, 2013; Mahil, 2014), teacher's educational level (Blackman, 2013; Qadumi, 2007), teachers' gender (Dereje & Abiy, 2015; Samadi, 2011), teachers' own belief or attitude on teaching/ learning a foreign language (Blackman, 2013; Jingxia, 2010), teacher's formal teacher training (Blackman, 2013; Duff & Polio, 1990), teachers' own proficiency level (Hall & Cook, 2012), the course content (Paker & Karaagac, 2015) and students' educational level (Atkinson, 1987; Blackman, 2013; Grim, 2010; Qiang, 2010). Moreover, some researchers relate the amount of L1 that L2 teachers use with students' low proficiency (Bateman, 2008; Gregori & Gil, 2007). Even though there are various factors that may increase or decrease the amount of CS in the L2 classroom, this study focuses on participant English teachers' educational level and the students' grade level as a reason for comparison.

### **The Problem**

The use of CS in the ELT classrooms has been one of the main controversial academic issues for many years. This debates lead to the development of dichotomous views (i.e., monolingual and bilingual approach) in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories, in different language teaching approaches / methods, in English curricula and in EFL/ESL teachers' and students' perceptions and practices. Among the theorists of SLA, Krashen (1981) is the supporter of the monolingual

approach. Since Krashen's theory of second language learning, gives strong attention for maximum exposure to the target language in the L2 classroom for SLA, any form of reduction to the TL would then be seen as a wasted opportunity for valuable input (Dailey-O'Cain & Liebscher, 2015). In other words, Krashen believes that learners acquire the TL following the same path they acquire their L1; therefore, the use of learners' L1 or CS in the L2 learning process should be minimized. Here, Krashen is not alone in his call for TL only instruction, and researchers like Brown (2001), Ellis (1984), Lado (1957) and Swain's (1985) 'comprehensive output' hypothesis support the monolingual approach, and they claim that successful language acquisition can take place if learners exposed a lot to L2 or if they do not depend on their L1. Similarly, ELT methods such as the direct method, audiolingualism, communicative language teaching, and task-based language teaching (Howatt, 1984) advocate the monolingual approach or discourage the use of learners' L1 or CS through one of three approaches: banning the use of L1 in the classroom, minimizing the use of L1 in the classroom, or maximizing use of the target language (L2) in the classroom (Cook, 2001).

On the other hand, there are some theories of SLA which give reasons for the positive effects of using the bilingual approach. In the first place, Vygotsky's Socio Cultural Theory (SCT) (1978) draws attention to the inner voice and private speech, and it claims that these activities are often performed in learners' L1. SCT argues that the L1 can be employed effectively to help L2 learners understand and accomplish L2 tasks and improve their collaboration in L2 (Swain & Lapkin, 2000). According to SCT, learning is mediated by cultural artefacts such as language, and the natural approach by Krashen which focuses on maximum exposure is not enough since the inputs need to be negotiated through interaction to be comprehensible for the learners. According to Liu et al (2004) in this negotiation stage, learners' L1 can be used as a facilitative tool among the students and the teacher. In addition, SCT believes that learners' L1 has a crucial role in the cognitive development during

learning a language, or transformation of elementary mental process in to the higher order (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003), and it plays a great role in lowering the affective filter which is quite significant for effective learning in the Natural Approach of Krashen (Ayaz, 2017). Moreover, when teachers allow L1 use, students can work more effectively in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) or at a higher cognitive level by using their L1 to express their ideas and may negotiate meaning more fully than if they were only able to communicate in the L2 (Anton & DiCamilla, 1999; Cook, 2001; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003). In the same way, humanistic approaches, such as the Silent Way and Suggestopedia as well as Community Language Teaching and Total Physical Response methods, and the recent approaches like the New Concurrent Method and Dodson's bilingual method are less strict in the use of learners' L1 use (Cook, 2001), and principled use of L1 is advocated in these approaches of ELT. However, there is still disagreement on how much and when to use L1 and this controversy is the other rationale that motivates the researcher to do this study in Ethiopian context.

Third, unlike the curricula of other countries, where policy makers often suggest the maximal use of the TL, the Ethiopian curriculum for the subject of English do not contain any direct statements prescribing English as the sole language of instruction, and if EFL teachers want to use learners' L1, how much, when and why are still unanswered questions . According to Macaro (2001), countries like England and France, for instance, have clearly stated whether to use or not to use learners' L1 in their national curriculum in teaching and learning a foreign language. The national curriculum in England, for instance, claims that learners' L1 should be avoided so that the Target Language (TL) is the only language recommended to be used in the foreign language classrooms. France, on the other hand, recommends that students should learn the TL by gradually limiting the use of French in the classroom, or the extent to learners' MT in a foreign language classroom will decrease when the students' level increases. Similarly, very recently, as Berning (2016) states, in USA,

the American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) recommends 90% L2 use in the foreign language classrooms, so at all levels of learning a foreign language, 10% of learners' MT is acceptable for different purposes. However, as it is mentioned above, the Ethiopian national curriculums, either in the primary or secondary school level, do not give any clear indications to whether use or not use learners' MT in EFL classrooms. As a result, English teachers are free to make decisions on which language/s they use in their classrooms by their own, and in most local researches, participant EFL teachers are even found to use learners' MT excessively (Abiy & Mohamed, 2012; Nigatu, 2013; Tafesse, 1998) in their classrooms, and this could lead learners to lack the appropriate exposure to the TL. Whether this has something to do with English teachers' CS or not is worth investigating, and it is the core problem which motivates the researcher to explore and compare the extent, reasons and functions of using L1 (Amharic in this case) by EFL teachers who taught students at different grade levels.

Forth, from the researcher's experiences in teaching English at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, CS is very common in English classrooms, especially if the teacher and the students share the same L1. This is also true in other EFL contexts (Amorim , 2012; Horasan , 2013 ; Sert , 2005 ; Wongrak ,2017), and some even claim that the exclusion of learners' L1 or CS in EFL classroom is inappropriate and even impossible in many situations (Al-Nofaie, 2010; Cook, 2001). However, as Elmetawly (2012) indicates, educational policy-makers in a lot of countries seem to have adopted the monolingual approach, and the students' L1 is not welcomed in EFL/ESL classrooms. This can be easily seen even in EFL textbooks which are prepared for different grade levels of students in Ethiopia, and they do not have any guide on using learners' L1 in the teaching- learning process for some purposes. In contrast, according to empirical studies in Ethiopia, most EFL teachers and students have positive attitudes on the use of CS/learners' L1 in their classrooms, and CS is a common occurrence in public schools and colleges (Dereje & Abiy , 2015 ; Tafesse

,1998 and so on). However, most of these studies are questionnaire based, and they may not reflect what happen in the EFL classrooms in practice. From the researcher's reading, there were no or little comparative studies which were taken into account the relationship between the EFL teachers' educational levels with their code-switching practices in their classrooms, especially in Ethiopia. Therefore, the main objective of the present study is to bring new empirical evidence to the extent and types CS or L1 use in Ethiopian primary and secondary school EFL classes, and the study aims at answering the following research questions:

1. How often do grade 7 and grade 9 EFL teachers use Amharic in their classrooms?
2. Is there any difference on the extent of L1 (Amharic) use between grade 7 and grade 9 EFL teachers?
3. What patterns/types of CS used by grade 7 and grade 9 EFL teachers in their classrooms?
4. Are there any differences on the types of CS they used between grade 7 and grade 9 EFL teachers?

### **Methodology**

This study is qualitative in its nature, and it adopts case study as a research approach. A case study approach provides holistic understanding of a particular phenomenon with real life contexts from the perspective of those who are involved (Lin, 2013). Such kind of study is advantageous due to its richness of the data gathered as it provides an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation ( Creswel, 2013; Dornyei, 2007). All the questions were answered using observation accompanied by audio record and note taking to yield a more detailed account of the extent/amount and patterns of CS, and to see the differences (if any) on each issue between grade 7 and grade 9 EFL teachers' practices in their classrooms.



### *Instruments*

The data were collected through a combination of observations and audio record which were supported by note taking. Regarding the observation, the data were gathered through audio recordings and participant English teachers were recorded for three sessions in the research setting. Moreover, notes were taken especially when L1 was used in the actual L2 classroom teaching/learning interactions during the teaching hours.

In order to collect the data accurately in my observation, two audio recorders were used. One of the recorder, which was a Sony IC recorder, put in the pocket of the participant EFL teachers, and the second recorder (my Samsung Galaxy phone recorder) was put at the back corner with the observer (me) in order to capture the entire classroom talk between EFL teachers and students. Then the audio recordings were transcribed and analyzed in order to identify precisely the ratio on the instances of Amharic and English words used in the EFL classrooms and the patterns (types) of CS practiced in the classrooms. Two classroom observations (one for grade 7 and one in grade 9) were conducted to pilot the instruments, and employed it after realizing that both suit the purpose. The participants' English and Amharic utterances were counted to see the frequency of use. In this study, the word teachers used was taken as a unit of analysis to identify the extent of language use. In addition, in order to see the types of CS used in the classroom, sentences having L1 and L2, as well as words with L1 and L2 were the focus as an utterance by excluding only L1 or only L2 explanations in the classroom. Therefore, each word in the participant teacher's talk was the unit of analysis to answer the first two questions whereas each sentence and word with a mix of L2 and L1 were the unit of analysis to answer the third question which was related with patterns of CS.

### *Participants & setting*

Since this study aimed to explore the extent and patterns of the L1 (Amharic) and L2 (English) use or CS in classes at different grade levels, two teachers who were teaching English to the students at two different grade levels ( grade 7 and grade 9) or 'proficiency' levels were selected. Moreover, these teachers had to be giving lessons at different times during a week, so that I could arrange observation hours with each of them. The two Ethiopian EFL teachers participating in this study were Gene and Alem (pseudonyms), and their ages were 47 and 49 respectively. Gene taught grade 7 students at Shimbit primary school, and Alem taught grade 9 students at Bahir Dar preparatory school in Bahir Dar town, Ethiopia. Gene had more than 24 years of experiences after she graduated from Gonder Teachers Training College with Diploma (12+2) in Ethiopia. In the same way, Alem had 21 years of experience after he graduated from Bahir Dar University (in Ethiopia) with BA Degree (12+4) in English language teaching.

### *Data Analysis*

Regarding the research questions, focusing on the extent or amounts of the L1 use or CS by teachers in the EFL classrooms, the audio recorded data were carefully listened, transcribed and read carefully for several times. Then, all instances of L1 (Amharic) and L2 use in the classrooms were coded according to the coding schemes suggested (Duff & Polio, 1990) to rearrange data into categories that facilitate comparison between data in the same categories. Responding to the first research question which was focusing on the amount of the L1 and L2 used by participant teachers in the observed classrooms, the word count processor was used for counting the total number of the words spoken during the 6 sessions (3 sessions for an Elementary teacher and another 3 sessions for secondary school teacher) and then the L1 utterances used in the whole sessions. After that, the numbers of the whole words uttered by the teachers in each session and following that, the numbers of L1 (Amharic) words used in each session were counted. Finally, after doing some

mathematical operations, the percentage of L1 used in each session as well as in the total sessions to specify the amount of L1 used was reported for both elementary and secondary schools, and compared to answer the second question. In order to answer the third question on the type/patterns of CS in the classrooms, each participant teacher's discourse was considered based on the four types of CS as indicated by Arthur (1998). Then the extent of L1 and the types of CS used by grade 7 and grade 9 EFL teachers were compared so as to answer the second and the fourth questions.

### **Findings & Discussion**

The results provided in this section are drawn from a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis of classroom audio recording transcriptions to respond to the research questions looking into the extent (amount) and the purposes of L1 used by teachers in the EFL classrooms.

#### ***RQ.1: How often do grade 7 and grade 9 EFL teachers use Amharic or CS in their classrooms?***

In the observed classes, participant teachers at both elementary (grade 7) and secondary (grade 9) levels were teaching either grammar, reading or speaking lessons. The data of classroom observation on the frequency of Amharic and English language use were summarized below. In this lesson, there were also limited words that were used by subjects, for example some words (like ' በgroupአቸው / means " in your group" or 'sentenceአቸው" means 'sentences') were coded as mixed words in the analysis. Table 1 below encapsulates the frequency of Amharic, English and mixed words use in the lessons taught by the observed teachers. From the same table, we can notice from the word count in the audio transcription that Gene, who was an elementary (grade 7) English teacher, used from 29.1% up to 36.2% of her total utterance in the classroom. The average percentage of Amharic use for elementary school levels is around 31.9%. Based on the recommendations given by Atkinson

(1987), the result was extremely high compared to the suggested 5% L1 for lower level learners.

In addition to this, the data on Table 1 also revealed that teacher Gene used more Amharic (i.e., 36.2%) of her total utterances in the second session, and this happened while she was teaching grammar specifically on how to use 'too..to / not enough...to' in her classroom. This may imply that grammar lessons may cause the use of more Amharic in EFL classrooms at the elementary school level. The other type of words which were used less frequently by Gene in a unique way were mixed words, which will be later discussed as intra word code switching , and there were 57 words (1%) of her total utterances in the three observed sessions.

In line with this, as illustrated in Table 1, in grade 9 classes, Amharic (L1) was used less frequently by the EFL teacher (Alem). As you can observe from the same table below, from the total utterances (6469 words) in three sessions, Amharic was used from 13% (270 words) up to 20.3% (485 words) in the first and the third sessions in the classroom. Thus, the average percentage of L1 use in grade nine (in a secondary school) was 17% from the total utterances. This result is consistent with the findings of Duff & Polio (1990) study that EFL teachers were found to use the L1 ranging from 67% to 9% TL (or 91%-33% L1) use in the classrooms which is also similar with studies by Turnbull (2001) in Canada with 9%-89% TL ( or 11%-91% L1 ) for both participant teachers' L1 use in this study , and 7% to 70% TL (30%-93% L1) use by Spanish teacher in a US university by (Edstrom, 2006) study which is consistent with specifically for the results of elementary school teacher in this study.

**Table1.** The extent of Amharic in English classrooms at grade 7 and grade 9 level.

Teacher	No. of observation	Duration of recording (Minutes)	Total words	English word (%)	Amharic word (%)	Mixed word	Average use of L1 (%)
Gene (Grade 7)	1	33.50	1281	891 (69.6%)	373 (29.1%)	17 (1.3%)	31.9%
	2	38.11	2154	1351 (62.7%)	779 (36.2%)	24 (1.1%)	
	3	41.17	2239	1566 (70%)	657 (29.3%)	16 (0.7%)	
Total	Three sessions	112.78	5674	3808 (67.1%)	1809 (31.9%)	57 (1%)	
Alem (Grade 9)	1	38'	1986	1635 (82.3%)	348 (17.5%)	3 (0.2%)	17%
	2	42'	2096	1821 (86.8%)	270 (13%)	5 (0.2%)	
	3	42.33'	2387	1902 (79.7%)	485 (20.3%)	0	
Total	Three sessions	122.33	6469	5358 (82.8%)	1103 (17%)	8 (0.2%)	

**RQ.2:** *Is there any difference on the extent of L1 use between grade 7 and grade 9 EFL teachers?*

A close look in to the table above (Table 1) clearly revealed that each observed lessons involved some usage of Amharic (L1) at both elementary and secondary school levels. Often neglected in research is the articulation difference that may or may not exist between elementary and secondary education. The purpose of this second research question is to observe if L1 practices differ from an education level to another, in order to better understand students' transition from elementary to secondary level where English is used as a medium of instruction. To compare the quantity of L1 use at elementary and secondary instructional levels, a word count of both teachers' L1 and L2 episodes was conducted. From the results on Table 1 above,

we can notice that there was a considerable difference between the two EFL teachers, who had different educational levels and taught two different grade levels, language use in their classrooms. A close look into the word count revealed that at the elementary school (grade 7) level, the TL (English) was used from 62.7% to 70% of the classroom talk in grade seven, so the average mean count of the TL in her classroom was close to 67.1%. In line with that, the average extent of Amharic (L1) used by the grade 7 EFL teacher was 31.9% of the total utterance.

On the other hand, at the secondary school (grade 9) level, the TL was used from 79.7% up to 86.8% of the total classroom utterances of the EFL teacher, and the mean word count of the TL (English) at this grade level was found to be 82.8% of the total utterances at three sessions. As shown on the same table (Table 1), the average extent of Amharic words used by grade 9 EFL teacher was around 17% of the total utterances in the three classrooms.

Therefore, it is important to point out that a considerable difference can be noticed between the participant teachers on their general language use in general and on the frequency of Amharic (L1) use or code switching in their classrooms in particular. In other words, the comparison of the quantity of L1 use or code switching between the elementary school teacher and the secondary school teacher show that there were great individual differences between the teachers, and on individual basis , Amharic was most frequently used by Gene( grade 7 teacher) than by Alem (grade 9 teacher). Thus, the frequency of words in the participant teachers' language use shows that teachers, regardless of their academic levels as well as the grade levels of their students, they were naturally lean towards the TL (English) more, and switch to the learners' L1 for occasional instances. That means when the teachers' educational levels and the grade level they were teaching increases, the amount of L1 used in the EFL class decreases and the extent of the TL increases. This comparative result is typically consistent with Blackman's (2013) study that elementary school teachers

use L1 between 20% to 33% of the lesson, and secondary school teachers used the L1 less frequently which equates about 10% to 22% of the lesson. In addition, results of the study by Calman & Daniel (1998), Grim (2010), Mahil (2014), Parker & Karagaac (2015), Quadumi (2007) as well as Qiang (2011) are consistent with this case study that the amount of learners' mother tongue use by TL teachers increases when the learners' level of proficiency or the students' grade level decreases. However, it is not congruent with the findings of Krulatz et al (2016) and Sailu (2017) that teachers' educational levels do not affect the extent of TL or L1 use in the EFL classrooms.

***RQ.3: What patterns/types of CS used by grade 7 and grade 9 EFL teachers in their classrooms?***

In the present study, in order to study English and Amharic code switching in EFL classrooms, Arthur's (1998) division of CS, Inter-sentential, Intra-sentential, Extra-sentential (Tag) and Intra-word switching, is adopted. Table 3 below portrays that, although there were differences in frequencies, all the four types of CS were applied in both grade 7 and grade 9 EFL classrooms.

**Table 2:** Types of CS practiced at grade 7 and grade 9 levels

Grade Level	Patterns / Types of CS				Total (%)
	Inter-sentential CS	Intra-sentential CS	Extra-sentential (Tag) CS	Intra-word CS	
Gene ( Grade 7)	62(25.5%)	129(53%)	15(6.1%)	57(23.4%)	243 (100%)
Alem ( Grade 9)	63(38.6%)	52(31.9%)	20(12.3%)	15(9.2%)	163(100%)

***I. Inter-sentential CS***

Based on Arthur's (1998) definitions, inter-sentential CS occurs at a clause or sentence boundary, where each clause or sentence is in one language or another. In this study, a close analysis of the extracts revealed that most of the inter-sentential switches had an explanatory nature by asking questions, giving definition to a word

or sentences, giving instructions and giving explanation. As Table 3 above shows, within three sessions of classroom audio record, the frequency of inter-sentential CS seem to be almost equal for grade 7 ( 62 instances) and for grade 9 ( 63 instances). However, from the total CS patterns at each grade level, inter-sentential CS was more practiced at grade 9 level, and from the total 163 CS patterns, 63( 38.6%) of CS pattern was inter-sentential CS. On the other hand, from the total 243 CS patterns at grade 7 EFL classrooms, a quarter 62(25.5%) of the CS pattern was inter-sentential. Look at the inter-sentential CS extracts taken from both grade 7 and grade 9 EFL teachers who participated in this study. (The sentence/clause in italic bold is the translation of the Amharic word/clause /sentence in the examples).

Example1. Giving explanation/example about the use of the word 'slip' by asking question ( Alem , Grade 9)

A. Slip of the tongue. በአማርኛ ምን ይባላል ? (Slip of the tongue.*What does it mean in Amharic?*)

Example 2. Asking whether the students had question or not for students who had presented a lesson ( Gene, Grade 7)

B.ጥያቄ አላችሁ ለነዚህ ልጆች ? Do you have questions? (*Do you have question to these students?* Do you have question?)

Example 3. Giving definition to a word in a reading text (Gene, grade 7)

C. The third one is 'fantastic'. አስደናቂ ማለት ነው። ( The third one is 'fantastic' . *It means 'fantastic'.*)

Example 4. Giving instruction to students ( Alem, Grade 9)

D. You don't need to write the whole thing. ሆኖም ነገር መገልበጥ አያስፈልግም። ( You don't need to write the whole thing. *There is no need to copy the whole thing.*)

Example 5. Giving explanation on the overlapping meaning between opinion and fact (Alem, grade 9)

E. They don't have clear demarcation. የተወሰነ ገደብ የላቸውም። (They don't have clear demarcation. *They don't have limited demarcation.*)



From the above examples, the teachers switched from Amharic to English or from English to Amharic clause/sentence in the EFL classrooms when they felt that the concept they were explaining was a bit difficult and needed a clear explanation for the learners by asking questions. Another function of these inter-sentential switches appeared to be as an attention focusing device. In most cases, it was observed that when the teachers were explaining difficult concepts or sentences and wanted to get their students' attention, they moved from low tone to high tone, along with the change of code which served dual purposes: simplifying the explanation and making students attentive. The analysis of these switches also clearly indicated that these switches had pure educational effects, with the main goal to facilitate student learning.

## *II. Intra-sentential CS*

According to Arthur (1998), intra-sentential code switching is the second type of switching that occurs within a clause or sentence boundary. In this study, most of the intra-sentential CS sentences base themselves on Amharic language rather than English. In other words, most of the words in the intra-sentential CS were Amharic and an English word/phrase was inserted. As we can see from Table 3 above, intra-sentential CS was more frequently used (129 instances/ 53%) at grade 7 EFL classroom than at grade 9 (52 instances/31.9%). Therefore, from the total 243 instances of CS patterns at grade 7 level, more than half (53%) of it were intra-sentential. Participants of this study used intra-sentential CS for pedagogical purposes in general that includes to give definitions and to explain concepts etc. Look at the examples below:

Example 1. To give the definition of 'fact' ( Alem, Grade 9)

A. እውነት ወይም ውሸት መሆኑን ማረጋገጥ የሚቻል ከሆነ fact ይባላል። (*if we prove it true or false called fact.*)

Example 2. Asserting the similarity of sentences with 'too...to' and 'not enough.. to' (Gene, Grade 7)

B. ስለዚህ the same እኮ ነው።( *So, it is* the same)

Example 3. Give explanation on synonyms of the word 'cry' ( Alem, Grade 9)

C. የማልቀስ አንድ አይነት formula አለው ?( *Is crying has the same* formula? )

Example 4. Talking about characteristics of 'Zebra' from the reading passage (Gene, Grade 7)

D. ጥሩ eyesight አላት።( *she has good* eyesight.)

### III. Extra-sentential (Tag) CS

Extra-sentential (Tag) switching means inserting a tag in one language to an utterance that is otherwise in another language. In the classrooms this means that while speaking English the teacher can insert Amharic tag to the utterance, or vice versa. Close observation of all the extracts by the two EFL teachers revealed that the most commonly used Amharic tags were ( 'እሽ' ፣ 'አዎ' ፣ 'አይደለ?' / አይደለም እንዴ ?' ፣ 'ስለዚህ' ፣ 'አስኪ' ፣ 'እረ' ፣ 'ከዛ' ), and these Amharic words are equivalent to the following English words ( 'ok', 'yes', 'yes?' , 'isn't it?', 'so', 'ok', ' please/no', 'then' ) . Moreover, participant teachers in this study also used common English tags ( like 'ok', 'yea', and 'look') with Amharic utterances. All these tags had almost the same purposes which were to express their concerns for the students' discipline and to ask them to answer questions and to ask when the learners' had any difficulty in understanding the concepts being discussed. Furthermore, some tags such as 'እሽ' /'ok' and አይደለም እንዴ ?"/'isn't it' were just habits exhibited by teachers.

In relation to the frequency of CS patterns in general, a close observations of extracts and the data on Table 3 above revealed that extra- sentential ( tag) switching was the list frequently used pattern of CS at grade 7 level since it was used only 15 times(6.1%) of the total CS occurrences in Gene's EFL classroom. However, it was used 20 times (12.3%) of the total CS practices at grade 9 EFL classroom to express

his concern for learners' understanding and discipline. Look at the extracts taken from both teachers on how 'tag' switching used.

Example 1. Please, take out your chewing gum from your mouth አሽ. (Please take out your chewing gum from your mouth, *ok*) ( Alem, grade 9)

Example 2. The first one, combine or join sentences, አይደለ? (The first one, combine or join sentences, *yes?*) ( Gene, grade 7)

Example 3. They are clever አይደለም እንዴ ? ( They are clever, *isn't it ?*) ( Alem, grade 9)

Example 4. እረ raise your hand . ( *Please*, raise your hand ) ( Gene, Grade 7)

Example 5. በአንድ ቀን ሁሉንም አናነብም ok. ( *We don't read all today*, ok) ( Alem , Grade 9)

Example 6. ዛሬ ምንድን ነው የሚጨመረው look. ( *Today , what will be added*, look) ( Gene, Grade 7)

#### **IV. Intra -word CS**

Intra-word code switching, in which a change occurs within a word boundary, is not a common type of CS in empirical researches. According to Arthur (1998), it is one type of CS which is common in a few EFL contexts. Arthur tries to show plural ending (by the end of an English word) and to add preposition/s as a prefix of an English word in Punjabi language in India. Similarly, in the current study, intra-word CS refers to the addition of Amharic sounds at the beginning or at the end of an English word. Intra-word CS was common among both grade 7 and grade 9 EFL teachers in this study to show plural ending, prepositions, ownership and definite article. For example in order to show plural ending, Gene( Grade 7 EFL teacher ) used intra-word CS like groupአች (groups), leaderአች (leaders), sentenceአች (sentences) etc . Similarly, Alem (grade 9 EFL teacher) used vowelአች (Vowels), dictionaryወች ( *dictionar*ies) as intra word CS to show plural endings. In addition,

this type of CS was used to show prepositions. For example, Gene ( grade 7 ) uttered intra-word CS like ለpositive ( *for* positive), በmountains ( *in* mountains) , and Alem (grade 9 ) used ስለfact ( *about* fact) and ከhockey ( *from* hockey) and so on. Moreover, intra-word CS was also used by both participants to show a definite article 'the'. For instance, ideaጡ ( *the* idea) , leaderጠ ( *the* leader) and others were intra-word CS used by grade 7 EFL teacher ;in the same way, formኡ( *the* form) and photocopyጡ ( *the* photocopy) were used by Alem ( at grade 9 EFL classroom) . Furthermore, this type of CS was used by Gene for showing ownership. For example , Classኡገገ ( *our* class) , colourኡገጡ ( *their* colour), and appearanceጠ ( *her* appearance) were intra-word CS used at grade 7 EFL classroom, and all Amharic alphabets or sounds added to the English words 'class, colour ,appearance' showed possession . Therefore, as to the researcher's reading, compared to the previous empirical studies on the types of CS, intra-word CS was found to be more vivid in Ethiopian EFL classrooms than any other previous studies in the field. As anyone can see from Table 3, intra-word CS was found high(57 instances or 23.4% ) of the total CS patterns at the lower grade levels (grade 7 in this case) than at the high school ( grade 9 ) EFL classroom level which was ( 15 times or 9.2%) the lowest type of CS pattern used by Alem.

***RQ.4: Are there any differences on the type of CS they used between grade 7 and grade 9 EFL teachers?***

Excluding only L2 and L1 explanations in the classroom, a close analysis on the patterns of CS at different grade levels revealed that there were clear differences on the total frequency of CS patterns as well as the dominant type of CS in the two grade levels. As the data on Table 3 above shows, there were 243 instances of CS with different patterns in Gene's grade 7 EFL classrooms; on the other hand, Alem frequented different patterns of CS for about 163 instances at grade 9 EFL classrooms. As anyone can see from Table 3 above that at the lower grade level (grade 7 in this case), from the total 243 instances of CS patterns, more than half (129

or 53%) of CS utterances were under intra-sentential CS patterns. In contrast, Alem (at grade 9 level) frequently used inter-sentential CS, and from the total 163 instances, 63 (38.6%) of his CS utterances were under this pattern. In addition, intra word CS was used more frequently (for 57 instances) at grade 7 level than at grade 9 level since intra-word CS was used for only 15 instances or 9.2% of the total CS patterns at this level. In contrast, Extra sentential (Tag) CS was used more frequently at grade 9 level (20 times or 12.3%) than at grade 7 level (15 instances or 6.1%).

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The main purpose of this study was to explore the extent and patterns of L1 (Amharic) use or CS in elementary and secondary school EFL classrooms, and to show whether there were similarity or differences of its extent and patterns at grade 7 and grade 9 levels in one primary and one secondary school in Bahir Dar town, Ethiopia. The results of the study revealed that the teacher participants treated CS as a language teaching tool. Regarding the extent of CS/ L1 use in EFL classrooms, the current study revealed that although the L2 ( English in this case ) took the dominant part in the observed lessons, the higher the grade level of the students, more L2 was produced by EFL teachers in their classrooms. In other words, CS to Amharic or L1 was used more frequently at the lower grade level (grade 7 in this case) than the higher grade level (grade 9 in this case). Though the data may not be enough to conclude, this result could also be related with the participant teacher's educational level because Gene (grade 7 teacher ) had a Diploma (12+2) in teaching and CS was frequently happened in her classroom than at Alem's ( grade 9 teacher who had BA degree /12+4) EFL classrooms. This result is consistent with Thompson's (2006) study which revealed that the higher the grade level/ proficiency of the learners, the more L2 was produced by EFL teachers ; however, it is incongruent with Mahil's (2014) empirical research which revealed that the grade levels of the students did not affect EFL teacher's extent of L2 use.

Regarding the types of CS in the current study, the analysis of the recorded lessons illustrated that there were four types CS (Inter-sentential, intra-sentential, extra-sentential (tag), and intra-word) as mentioned by Arthur (1998) which were practiced at both grade 7 and grade 9 levels with different frequencies. In this study, therefore, the dominant pattern of CS at the elementary school level (grade 7 in this case) was intra-sentential CS, but in the secondary school level (grade 9 in this case) the overriding type of CS in the observed classrooms was inter-sentential CS. The other unique feature of this study result was the extent of intra-word CS which was used frequently in grade 7 EFL classrooms than in grade 9 classrooms. From the researchers' understanding, intra-word CS was used without any clear purpose or it had neither pedagogical nor social roles, and it was a bad habit of less proficient teachers that should be avoided in the classroom, or this can reflect what Hoff (2013) refers to as uncritical L1 use by the participant teachers.

Based on the findings and the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations were forwarded. First, the use of code-switching as a strategy should be introduced for teaching English in the EFL classroom discourse like Ethiopia but keeping in view the grade levels of the students. For this development, language policy along with other issues should take care of sensitive issue of percentage of L1 use or CS with reference to learners' grade levels. Second, educators could recognize that L1 has a role in the EFL classroom but should consider when, how, and to what degree they use it for different grade levels of students. Third, the Ministry of Education at the national level and the education bureau at the regional level should arrange workshops and seminars to teacher trainees and in-service teachers on how to decide on the proper use of L1 in their EFL classes.

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