

# Frequency and Purpose of Teachers' L1 Use in EFL Classroom: A Case of Boditti Preparatory School with Particular Reference to Wolaitigna (Wolaita Language)

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## Abstract

The question whether or not the mother tongue (L1) should be used in the EFL classroom has been an important issue for a long time. However, there seems to be no consensus on the issue as yet. Supporters of the Monolingual Approach claim that L2 can be learnt only through L2, whereas the proponents of the Bilingual Approach believe that L1 has a facilitating role in many aspects of language instruction. Thus, a revival of interest to use a mother tongue frequently in EFL classroom is stipulated by the necessity to improve learners' understanding of certain issues, teacher-students classroom interactions and minimizing the communication barrier occurred between teacher and students. This study aims at examining frequency and purpose of teachers' L1 use in EFL classrooms. The researcher employed both qualitative and quantitative data in order to enrich the objective of the study. 75 students and 12 teachers of the preparatory school involved in the study to gather the appropriate data. Data were gathered through classroom observations, questionnaires, and interview. The data gathered through the questionnaire and the observations were analyzed using frequency and percentage, while those collected through interview and open-ended questions were analyzed in integration with others. The study showed that majority of both the teachers and students reflected positively on the judicious use of mother tongue in EFL classrooms. It also indicated that 6 teachers (50%) and 25 students (33.3%) chose to use Wolaitigna ("Sometimes"). At the end, it was recommended limited use of L1 to explain vocabularies, grammar items, and difficult concepts when necessary in EFL classrooms.

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## 1. Background of the study

Based on the history of the development of English language teaching methods and the idea of using L1 in the L2 classroom was a view during the era of the Grammar Translation Method (Howatt 1984). On the other hand, historically the use of students' L1 has been looked upon negatively or even somewhat frowned upon due to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) or even the Audio-Lingual Method (Stern, 1991). In addition, the role and use of mother tongue in a foreign language-learning classroom and its use by both language teachers and learners have always been a vexed question of much debate among linguists, methodologists, language teachers, and learners (Kafes 2001). In short, everyone concerned with language teaching engrossed by the argument. Thus, a number of studies which either support or oppose the use of L1 in EFL classrooms have been conducted. Basically, the studies focused on two approaches of ELT methods like monolingual and bilingual approaches of English language teaching.

Using L1 in English language classrooms is discouraged by advocates of target language only position. According to Krashen (1982), students must be exposed to a significant amount of target language input to help them develop better target language proficiency, so using L1 in the classroom deprives students of that valuable input. Cook (2001) points out three grounds to be used the only target language in the language classrooms;

- Learning of L2 should model the learning of an L1 (through maximum exposure to L2)
- Successful learning involves the separation and distinction of L1 and L2.
- Students should be shown the importance of L2 through its continual use.

Therefore, the supporters of monolingual approach believe that the use of the L1 in language teaching is that students will become dependent on it. In addition, they do not even try to understand meaning from context and explanation, or express what they want to say within their limited command of the target language (L2). Chaudron (1988) states that: "... in the typical foreign language classroom, the common belief is that the fullest competence in the TL (target language) is achieved by means of the teacher providing a rich TL environment, in which not only instruction and drills are executed in the TL, but also disciplinary and management operations." (p.1)

As can be deduced from the ideas mentioned above, the main purpose of reducing or even abolishing the use of the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom is to maximize the amount of time spent using the target language to help the language learner to learn the target language efficiently and effectively. In

emphasizing, the significance of input for language learners, Cross (1995) states that the amount of linguistic input the learners have is closely related to the richness of the linguistic environment, the classroom where the learners dwell in. As such, given the limited chances, especially monolingual foreign language learners have as their sole source of input is, the classroom itself. Hence, the importance given to make use of every possible opportunity in the class to use the target language may be understood better.

However, the monolingual approach has been questioned and reexamined, in consideration of the fact that it is more based on political grounds than on methodological ones (Auerbach, 1993; Cole, 1998; Lucas & Kintz, 1994). Macaro (2005) argues that avoidance of mother tongue results in increased usage of input modification (e.g. repetition, speaking more slowly, substituting basic words for more complex ones, simplifying syntax, etc. ...). This in turn might bring about negative effects in any interaction, making the discourse less realistic, reducing the lexical diversity, and eliminating exposure to complex syntax.

The mother tongue should be used for three reasons; it is learners' preferred strategy, humanistic approach, and an efficient use of time (Harbord 1992). Furthermore, Auerbach (1993) for example, does not only acknowledge the positive role of the mother tongue in the classroom, but also identifies the following uses for it: classroom management, language analysis, presenting rules that govern grammar, discussing cross-cultural issues, giving instructions or prompts, explaining errors, and checking for comprehension. In addition, Humanistic views of teaching have speculated that students should be allowed to express themselves, and while they are still learning a language, it is only natural that they will periodically slip back into their mother tongue, which is more comfortable for them Auerbach (1993). They will also naturally equate what they are learning with their L1, so trying to eliminate this process will only have negative consequences and impede learning.

Similarly, Atkinson (1987) proposes some uses of mother tongue, such as eliciting language (all levels), checking comprehension (all levels), and building and/or maintaining cooperation among learners, discussing classroom methodology (early levels), presenting and reinforcing language (mainly early levels), checking for sense, and testing. Moreover, Harbord (1992) categorizes the purposes for which the mother tongue can be used in to three: facilitating communication, facilitating teacher-students relationship and facilitating the learning of L2 (English). Consequently, researchers have shifted their attention toward the extent of teachers' frequency of using mother tongue for certain purposes in EFL classrooms. Using L1 in English classroom instructions has become common thing in the process of teaching and learning English. Vygotsky (1986) states that "L1 would quite naturally serve as a tool to help students think about and make sense of (i.e. mediate their thinking about) the structures, content, and meaning of the L2 texts they read"

In the English language classrooms, L1 has been frequently used for various purposes or reasons. Atkinson (1987), and Dellor and Rinvoluceri (2007) reported the use of L1 in checking comprehension, checking for sense and explaining grammar. Other studies pointed out the use of L1 in establishing good rapport with the students (Cook, 2001b; Harbord, 1992). Auerbach (1993) indicates that: "its [L1] use reduces anxiety and enhances the effective environment for learning, take into account socio-cultural factors, facilitates incorporation of learners life experiences, and allows for learner-centered curriculum development." (p.2)

However, these justifications of using L1 in the language classroom do not suggest that the target language should be used in little proportion in the classroom. But most of the literature on this, advice limited and controlled use of mother tongue to achieve effective and efficient English language teaching and learning (Atkinson, 1993; Cook, 2001b; Harbord, 1992). Moreover, Atkinson (1993) cautions the danger of the overuse of the mother tongue in the classroom. He suggests that the mother tongue should be used to make meaningful communication and should be used as a technique to encourage the learners to be able to find a way of expressing their meaning in the target language.

Even though there are many research works which support L1 use in EFL classroom, it is still unclear how much L1 can be used or for what purposes and how often should mother tongue allowed in the language classroom in order to draw the line between the use and overuse of the mother tongue. This study, therefore, intended to explore on the frequency and purpose of teachers' L1 (Wolaitigna) use in EFL classrooms: in case of Boditti preparatory school.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

As stated in the background of the study, the use of mother tongue and the target language inside the EFL classrooms is a widely talked about and debatable issue in the history of SL/FL (second/foreign language) teaching. There have always been advocates of a focus on meaning, as opposed to form, and of developing learners' ability to actually use the target language for communication in real-life situations. Since the emergence of the age-old grammar translation method for the teaching of second/foreign languages, there prevails a debate over the issue of the extent of mother tongue and the target language to be used inside the EFL classroom.

Moreover, frequency and purpose of teachers' L1 use (mother tongue) in EFL classroom is one of the leading predictor either success or failure on overall students' language learning. As a result, teachers and

educators need to take frequency and purpose of teachers' L1 use factors in to consideration when designing English language training and instruction. However, the issue of whether to use frequently or not to use L1 frequently; the purposes and the extent to which should L1 be used in English classroom has been contentious in EFL classroom. For this, it is possible to mention two contrary approaches of ELT methods in EFL classroom instructions. These are monolingual approach and the bilingual approach.

The monolingual approach has been questioned and reexamined, in the consideration of the fact that it is more based on political grounds than on methodological ones (Auerbach, 1993; Cole, 1998). Since then there has been a movement of promoting the use of the mother tongue in the language classroom. Therefore, scholars have voiced several justifications. Harbord (1992) points out that many English language teachers have tried to create English-only classrooms, but they have found that they have failed to get the meaning across, leading students' incomprehension and resentment. Contrary to what many teachers or researchers think regarding using L1 that hinders students' learning of an L2, has been demonstrated that students feel more confident when they use their mother tongue.

In addition, using L1 in the classroom helps students to improve the speaking area (Miles, 2004 in Khati, 2011). Other researchers (Schweers, 1999; Tang, 2002; Jabak, 2012), in different contexts, agree that using L1 is important in order to explain new vocabulary, give instruction, and talk about tests, check for understanding and grammar instruction. They also claim that students appreciate their teacher's explanations in their mother tongue as well as they feel more confident and more motivated to learn a foreign language when they use their mother tongue. Therefore, "using L1 can be considered as a teaching strategy" (Hung, 2012).

On the other hand, the banishing of mother tongue increases the effectiveness of learning the target language. Krashen and Terrell (1983), states that learners acquire foreign language in the same path that they acquire L1. Mother tongue use compensates teachers' weaknesses in using L2 (Miles, 2004). Nonetheless, the aforementioned justifications of scholars on using L1 in the language classroom do not suggest on extreme point that the frequency and purpose of teachers' L1 use in teaching English.

In Ethiopian context in general, Wolaita in particular, the issue of using mother tongue in a general English classrooms still has been a big source of contradiction among the English teachers. Some of them are the supporters of monolingual approach so that they state mother tongue should be banished from the target language classrooms. However, the others say, L1 must be taken as a preferred learning strategy in the English classrooms.

Furthermore, the preceding research findings did not reach a concluding statement that puts clear-cut on that of for extent, purpose and its problem on students' over all language learning proficiency at preparatory school level. Pennington cited in Garcia (2006), also examined the L1 use of eight teachers. The findings show that teachers use of L1 to help learners with low language ability, low motivation, and poor discipline. Cianflone (2009), in his research on L1 use in English courses at the university of Messina in Italy, finds that the interviewed students and teachers seem favorable to L1 use in terms of explanation of grammar, vocabulary items, difficult concepts and for general comprehension. He concludes that students seem to prefer L1 use and teachers subscribe to use L1 judiciously. Such use, being at the university level may save time and increase students motivation.

In Ethiopian context, Kenenisa (2003) exclaimed that based on class recordings and observation, the ratio between English words and the Oromo language was about 1:77. That showed teachers and students in the EFL classroom at this college used certain amount of Oromo language is found to be less than what both students and teachers ought to have in the 50 minutes English lessons. According to their views, 6-10% of the 50 minutes class time for Oromo language use was deemed acceptable. On the other hand, Abiy and Mohammed (2011) a study conducted at primary schools, state both English teachers and students of Bahir Dar primary schools were in favor of using Amharic in EFL classroom for various purposes. Besides, the researcher of the current study did not get a chance to read any research works on frequency and purpose of teachers' L1 use (Wolaitigna) in teaching English in the context of Wolaita.

In Wolaita zone schools, English is taught as a foreign language. Being a foreign language is the only place learners are expected to have access to English in the classroom. Thus, the students in Boditti like in the other schools in Wolaita come to school with the interest of learning English by frequent use of mother tongue (Wolaitigna) in different occasions for different purposes in the EFL classrooms.

Similarly, in Boditti high school, the researcher observed some teachers who are admired by their students because of frequent use of mother tongue in teaching English for different purposes. In addition, from the current researcher's teaching experience, he has noticed that when students are not allowed to express their opinion in Wolaitigna, they might experience fear, insecurity, and low self-esteem. Therefore, the current study could give update picture on this controversial issue. Based on the facts that are discussed in the background and the problems that are stated above, therefore, prompted the researcher to embark study on frequency and purpose of teachers' L1 use (Wolaitigna) in EFL classrooms at preparatory school level.

To achieve the objective of the study, the following major research question is raised:

- To what extent and for what purpose do teachers' use L1 in EFL classroom?  
Based on the major research question, specific questions are stated below:
  - How often do preparatory school teachers use wolaitigna in EFL classroom?
  - What makes teachers employ wolaitigna in their English classroom instructions?
  - For what purposes do teachers utilize wolaitigna in EFL classroom?
  - What are the constraints of frequency of teachers' use of wolaitigna for certain functions on students' language learning proficiency?

### **3.Objective of the Study**

The main objective of the study was to examine the frequency and purpose of teachers' L1 use in EFL classroom.

## **4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The objective of this study is to explore on the frequency and purpose of teachers' L1 use (wolaitigna) in EFL classroom, Particularly in Boditti preparatory school. The study, therefore, employed both qualitative and quantitative data with an aim to enhance the richness of the study.

### **4.1 Study Participants**

The participants of this study were grade 11 and 12 teachers and students of Boditti Preparatory school. Of the total 18 preparatory school sections, two sections from grade 11 and two from grade 12 were selected as samples by a lottery method.

In each of the four sections, the number students were 63, 67, 64, and 60, with the total sum of 240 students. From the 240 students, 30% of students were selected by using systematic random sampling to fill out the questionnaire. Every third student was selected from the total list of students of four sections. Therefore, 75 students responded to the questionnaire. On the other hand, 12 teachers were selected by simple random sampling to fill out the questionnaire. From the 12 teachers, five teachers were interviewed, six teachers were also observed. Here the researcher employed purposive sampling, particularly snow ball method.

### **4.2 Data Collecting Instruments**

The study employed observation, questionnaire, and interview to collect the quantitative and qualitative data.

#### **4.2.1. Classroom Observation**

The classroom observation paid attention to frequency and purpose of mother tongue use during English lessons in EFL classroom. For this, the researcher used structured checklist to record what happened in the classroom. Thus, Flanders' Interaction Analysis categories (FIAC) of the seven teachers' talk categories, and classroom observation checklist used Abiy and Mohammed (2011) with the appropriate modification employed as classroom observation checklist for the current study. The researcher conducted six classroom observations to suit the purpose of the study. In addition, a seven-item checklist, which categorized into three stages, was used to record various purposes of using wolaitigna in teaching English. Teachers' words of wolaitigna and English counted to look the frequency of utterances.

#### **4.2.2. Questionnaire**

The aim of questionnaire was to discover the frequency and purpose of teachers' 'Wolaitigna' use in English classroom. Several parts of the questionnaire were slightly adapted from Levine's (2003) and Abiy and Mohamed (2011) research. Two different sets of questionnaires filled out by the teachers and students. The questionnaire distributed to 12 teachers and 75 students in Boditti preparatory school. For practical reasons, the students were given translated questionnaire using Wolaitigna, which included open-ended and close-ended questions.

#### **4.2.3. Interview**

The interview was conducted to find out specific information on the frequency and purpose of teachers' wolaitigna use in EFL classroom. The researcher used semi-structured interview to substantiate the data gathered through observation and questionnaire. The subjects were chosen by purposive sampling, especially snow ball. Five English teachers were selected and interviewed.

### **4.3 Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher adopted different steps in collecting the data for the study. First, relevant literature was reviewed to get adequate information for the enrichment of the study. Second, objectives and research questions were formulated to show the direction of the study. Third, the data gathered by conducting a classroom observation to find out the frequency and purpose of teachers' mother tongue (Wolaitigna) usage in EFL classroom.

The observation data was collected through structured checklist and recorded using tape recorder. The recordings were done to assess how often and for what purposes teachers use wolaitigna in the EFL classrooms. After the classroom observation data were accomplished, two sets of questionnaires were distributed to teachers

and students. Lastly, an interview session was conducted in order to find out frequency and purpose of teachers' L1 use in English classrooms. The interviews were audio taped and later transcribed to words for the analysis of the study.

#### 4.4 Data Analysis

Since qualitative and quantitative data collected, mixed approach was employed in the analysis process. The data collected through observations were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The data gathered through questionnaire were analyzed statistically by using frequency and percentage. On the other hand, the interview data were transcribed and analyzed with the integration to other data thematically. The data recorded during actual classroom observation were also transcribed. Then the number of words produced by the teachers were counted and divided into English and Wolaitigna words. Next, the percentage of both English and wolaitigna were calculated. Then the number of wolaitigna words used in each special event was expressed in percentage. Similarly, the teachers and students' questionnaires data were indicated in percentage.

### 5. Finding and discussion

#### 5.1 Findings from Classroom Observation

During the actual classroom observation, teachers were teaching speaking skills, vocabulary, grammar items, and reading skills. The classroom observation data which were collected in teaching macro and micro skills summarized using the following tables.

**Table 1: Categorizing the frequency of teachers' utterances into English and wolaitigna words.**

Teacher	Duration of recordings	Total n° of words produced	English		Wolaitigna	
			Words	Percent	Words	Percent
K	28'	1055	829	78.6	226	21.4
Y	22'	858	856	99.8	2	0.2
E	14'	546	226	41.3	320	58.7
D	23'	897	759	84.6	138	15.4
N	21'	819	444	54.2	375	45.8
A	14'	546	536	98.1	10	1.9
<b>Total</b>	122'	4721	3650	76.1	1071	23.9

**NB.** K, Y, E, D, N, AND A ARE OF TEACHERS' CODE.

As can be seen in the table 1, the frequency of teachers' wolaitigna use in the English lessons that were observed, wolaitigna words were used 1071(23.9) times in all observations. It is important to consider that there is no relationship between the time which is consumed to record and the words uttered by the teachers. For instance, T (E) who was recorded only 14 minutes uttered 320 words (58.7%) of wolaitigna. In contrary, T (k) was recorded for 28' minutes produced 226 words or (21.4%) from his total speech.

For more elaboration, it is essential to focus on individual basis. Wolaitigna was most frequently used by T (N) 375 words or (45.8%) of his total speech, but the least frequently used by teacher(Y) 2 words which was also 0.2% of his total utterances. Moreover, other teachers like K, E, D, and A used 21.4%, 58.7%, 15.4%, and 1.9% of Wolaitigna used in their total speech, respectively.

Despite the differences in frequency, it was possible to conclude that all the EFL teachers used their students' mother tongue in their English teaching. It seems important to see this result in relation to teachers' and students' questionnaire and teachers' interview responses. Among all EFL teachers, 3 or 25% of respondents stated they do not want to use Wolaitigna in English classrooms. (See table 3). However, the actual classroom reality was that every teacher used mother tongue though there was big difference in frequencies among teachers' utterances of L1.

On the other hand, different results were reached between observation, questionnaire, and interview. For questionnaire item number 5, 10(83.3%) teachers responded that wolaitigna should be used 5-10% of the total utterances. Nevertheless, 2(16.7%) other teachers responded 10-20% L1 needs to be used. In addition, teachers' interview for similar questions shows some teachers said wolaitigna needs to be used less than 10% of the total utterances. However, the others exclaimed that below 5% of L1 should be used in EFL classrooms.

However, the results of observation revealed that teachers used students' mother tongue with different frequencies. To illustrate, T(E) 58.7%, T(K) 21.4%, T(D) 15.4%, T(N) 45.8%, T(Y) 0.2% and T(A) 1.9%. These results indicated that the differences occurred between the classroom reality and teachers' thought reflected on questionnaire and interview responses.

In addition, in the interview response, teacher Y said "I never use wolaitigna when I teach English." However, in actual classroom observation, he used wolaitigna though he used very few words compared to other teachers.



**Table 2: Classification of teachers' L1 words at different stages of lessons into various purposes.**

Teachers	Duration	Total words	Different occasions in EFL classroom													
			In the beginning				During presentation						At the end			
			Giving instructions		Managing Classroom Discipline		Explaining difficult ideas		Explaining the meaning of words		To show acceptance or refusal		Checking for comprehension		Giving feedback	
			Words	%	Words	%	Words	%	Words	%	Words	%	Words	%	Words	%
K	28'	226	28	12.3	21	9.2	68	30.1	15	6.3	13	5.7	30	13.2	51	22.5
Y	22'	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
E	14'	320	26	8.1	25	7.8	123	38.4	23	7.2	19	5.9	47	14.7	57	17.8
D	23'	138	18	13.09	12	8.6	57	41.3	14	10.1	10	7.2	27	19.5	-	-
N	21'	375	20	5.3	20	5.5	147	39.2	29	7.7	18	4.8	26	6.9	115	30.7
A	14'	10	-	-	-	-	10	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	122	1071	92	9.7	78	7.7	395	37.3	81	33.3	62	5.7	140	30.7	223	23.7
Av. Frequency of L1 at d.ss			<u>8.7</u>				<u>25.34</u>						<u>27.2</u>			

NB: AVERAGE FREQUENCY OF L1 WORDS AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF LESSONS

Table 2 incorporates the different occasions of teachers' use of wolaitigna for various purposes in EFL classrooms. These occasions classified into three major categories, which have seven items such as giving instructions, managing discipline, and explaining difficult ideas. It also includes explaining meanings of new words, showing acceptance or refusal to students' responses, and checking for comprehension as well as giving feedback.

Teachers used wolaitigna 395 times to explain difficult ideas in EFL classroom. In contrary, teachers also utilized wolaitigna words 62 times to show their acceptance or refusal to their learners' responses.

The table also displays that teachers used L1 in varied frequencies for various purposes. Thus, the data were analyzed more over on individual basis. Teacher E used 226(58.7%) words in actual classroom observation as it is shown in table one. In this observation, teacher D used the highest frequency of wolaitigna that is 41.3% in order to explain difficult concepts. In this regard, observation and interview of this particular teacher lies differently. During interview, he explained "I rarely use L1 when I perceive students are in difficulty to understand certain issue." In spite of his claim, teacher D used wolaitigna more frequently than other EFL teachers.

Teacher N used 39.2% of wolaitigna utterances to explain difficult concepts. This evidence matches with teachers' responses to item 3. Among 12 teachers, 10 (83.3%) responded that they used wolaitigna to explain difficult concepts. On the other hand, students also indicated that 54.7% want their teachers use wolaitigna to explain difficult concepts. (See table 7)

In addition, as it was shown in table 2, teacher N used 115 wolaitigna words to give feedback. But the other teachers did not use such amount of words to it. Teacher E used 57 words, and teacher K 51 words of wolaitigna to give feedback on students' activities.

Teacher E was the second highest user of wolaitigna in EFL classroom. He used L1 123 times (38.4%) of his total speech to explain difficult concepts. In the item 3 of questionnaire, the highest quantity of wolaitigna words used to explain difficult concepts among teachers.

Similarly, teachers K, E, and N expressed in their interview that they use wolaitigna to create understanding on difficult concepts in EFL classroom.

Teacher E used the highest amount of wolaitigna to manage the classroom discipline compared to other teachers. During the actual classroom observation, the researcher could perceive students disruptive behavior so that the teacher was expressing his emotion by the help of L1. Teacher D 57 words (41.3%) of wolaitigna from his total utterances for checking students' comprehension; this can be taken as the highest use of wolaitigna compared to other teachers who used for similar purposes. It is this teacher that who used 7.2% wolaitigna from his total speech to show his agreement or refusal to students' responses. However, teacher Y used only 2 words (0.2%) to show his acceptance or refusal to students' responses. This makes teacher Y a unique teacher when compared to other EFL teachers. On the other hand, teacher A is also the other exceptional teacher who uttered only 10 words in all classroom instructions. He used those words to explain difficult ideas.

In addition, table 2 also shows that teachers' frequency of using L1 at different stages of lessons in EFL classroom instructions for certain functions. As can be seen in the above table, 8.7% in the beginning of the lessons, 25.43% during presentation of the lessons, 27.2% when ending the lessons used L1, respectively. Thus,

it is possible to conclude that teachers used L1 with the highest frequency (27.2%) at ending stage of presentation of the lessons compared to other stages of lessons in EFL classroom.

Based on the overall analysis made above, it is possible to deduce that teachers used their students' mother tongue for different reasons and purpose at varying level of frequencies.

### 5.2 Findings from Teachers' Questionnaire.

This part left for the analysis of teachers' questionnaire on frequency and purpose of L1 use in EFL classroom. The results are summarized in tables 3, 4, 5 and 6.

**Table3: Teachers' reasons for using wolaitigna frequently in the EFL classroom.**

N <sup>o</sup>	Items and options	Number of respondent	Percent
1	Do you often use wolaitigna in your English classroom instructions?		
	a) Yes	9	75
	b) No	3	25
2	If 'yes' Why do you often use wolaitigna in EFL classroom? (You can choose more than one option)		
	a) It aids comprehension.	3	25
	b) It is more effective than, using only English	4	33.33
	c) It is less time consuming than explaining only in English	3	25
	d) It helps students become more comfortable and confident	4	33.33
	e) It facilitates teacher-students interaction	6	50%
	f) It reduces students language learning anxiety	5	41.7
	g) It enables overcome communication barrier between teacher and his students	7	58.33

NB: Respondents chose more than one option in the second question.

Table 3 shows, 9 teachers (75%) who participated in responding the questionnaire, exclaimed that they use wolaitigna frequently in their English classroom. Nevertheless, the other three teachers said they do not use wolaitigna frequently in EFL classroom. Furthermore, those 50% of the respondents said that wolaitigna is important because it facilitates interaction between teacher and students, and 58.3% used because it enables to over-come communication barrier occurs between teacher and his/her students. These subjects explained the reasons why they used wolaitigna in EFL classrooms. 33.3% of the respondents used wolaitigna for its effectiveness of using only English, 25% of the participants used because wolaitigna is less time consuming than explaining only in English.

In addition, 41.7% of respondents said 'it reduces students language learning anxiety, 25% of the participants exclaimed that they used wolaitigna because it aids learners' comprehension, and 33.3% of respondents stated it is used 'to help learners become more comfortable and confident'

The frequency of teachers' usage of mother tongue in EFL classroom was also further elaborated in; the interview session. When asked about their use of mother tongue in EFL classroom, an exceptional respondent expressed that he did not want to use it frequently. However, the other participant teachers said wolaitigna support is still important in the English classroom, but a very little amount. This idea was well presented by teacher k; "More or less, I use wolaitigna when it seems necessary to explain the meaning of new words, and students unable to understand the difficult concepts." Therefore, he said "I use wolaitigna as a final solution for students' difficulty." It is also good to see similar ideas from the observation results (Table 2.)

**Table 4: The teachers' major pedagogical purposes of using L1 in EFL classroom instructions**

N <sup>o</sup>	Items and options	N <sup>o</sup> of respondents	Percent
3	For what purpose wolaitigna is often necessary in EFL classroom? (You can choose more than one option)		
	a) To clarify instructions.	4	33.33
	b) To explain difficult concepts	10	83.33
	c) To check for comprehension.	2	16.7
	d) To explain difficult grammar items	6	50%
	e) To define new vocabulary	5	41.7
	f) To maintain disciplinary problems.	2	16.7
	g) To show acceptance	0	0
	h) To give feedback	2	16

NB. Respondents chose more than one option in the third option.

Based on the data in table 4, it is possible to see the differences on the purposes of using wolaitigna in EFL

classroom. There is still possibility to assure teachers choices of pedagogic functions of mother tongue in EFL classroom.

To show in individual basis, 10 teachers (83.33%) responded that wolaitigna often needs to be used to explain difficult concepts, 50% of respondents employed to explain difficult grammar items. In addition, 41.7% of the subjects believed that wolaitigna should be used to define new vocabulary, 33.3% exclaimed L1 needs to be used to clarify instructions, 16.7% of the participant teachers said L1 should be used to check for comprehension, 16.7% as the respondents believed that wolaitigna must be used to maintain students disciplinary problems and 16.0% of the participant teachers exclaimed they want to use L1 to give feedback on students classroom activities. What unique thing happened was, there were no teachers used wolaitigna to show acceptance to students' responses. This result has clear disparity with the results on observation. (See the observation result on table 2)

**Table 5: Teachers' frequency and amount of using of wolaitigna words in the EFL classrooms.**

N <sup>o</sup>	Items and options	N <sup>o</sup> of respondents	Percent
4	How often should wolaitigna be used in EFL classroom?		
	a) Frequently	0	0
	b) Sometimes	6	50
	c) Very rarely	6	50
	d) Never	0	0
5	What percent of wolaitigna should be used from that of total utterance in EFL classrooms?		
	a) 5-10%	10	83.3
	b) 10-20%	2	16.7
	c) 20-30%	0	0
	d) 30-40%	0	0
	e) 50%	0	0

In the item 4, 6 respondents (50%) believe that wolaitigna should be used "Sometimes" in EFL classrooms. Similarly, majority of the respondents during the interview said that wolaitigna needs to be used 'Some times' in EFL classroom (Table 7). On the other hand, 6 teachers (50%) of the participants preferred 'Very rare' use of mother tongue. In the same way, 29.3% of the participant students also chose 'Very rare' their teachers' use of wolaitigna in EFL classrooms.

In repose to items 5, respondents clearly stated about the amount of wolaitigna, which needs to be used in the English teaching as foreign language classroom. It is in the same item that 10 teachers (83.3%) chose 5-10% of wolaitigna use in a single EFL classroom instruction. In contrary, 2 respondents (16.7%) of the total teachers exclaimed that 10-20% wolaitigna should be used in English teaching.

**Table 6: Teachers' Views on whether or not the use of wolaitigna has any limitation in the EFL teaching - learning process.**

N <sup>o</sup>	Items and options	N <sup>o</sup> of respondents	Percent
6	Do you think of any limitation of using wolaitigna frequently in EFL classroom?		
	a) Yes	4	33.3
	b) No	8	66.7
7	If your answer is 'Yes' to question '6' Please write here what the limitations are: ----- -----		

Table 6 summarizes teachers' view on limitations of wolaitigna use in EFL classroom. 66.7% of the respondents believe that the use of wolaitigna might not have as such serious problems if teachers use it judiciously when only its application is necessary.

On the other hand, very few number of respondents i.e. 33.3% said wolaitigna use has limitations, In the open-ended item, these teachers stated that frequent use of mother tongue can hinder students language learning , makes learners to be dependent on it; and does not enable them up-grade their overall language skills. Similarly, in students' response, 40% of respondents said their teachers' over-use of wolaitigna in English classroom has its own limitations on their overall language learning ability. In addition, in the open-ended question, students share similar idea with their teachers' ideas.

Furthermore, the respondents especially in their interview sessions exclaimed the over-use of L1 has limitations. To illustrate, teacher k said "I rarely use wolaitigna in case students are unable to understand certain concepts; and when I feel I could not express it only in English".



**Table 7: Students' responses to questionnaire items**

N <sup>o</sup>	Items and options	N <sup>o</sup> of respondents	Percent
1	Do you often want your English teacher to use wolaitigna in EFL classroom?		
	a) Yes, I do	53	70.7
	b) No, I don't	22	29.3
2	If your response is 'Yes' to the above question, how often do you think it should be used?		
	a) Frequently	6	8
	b) Sometimes	25	33.3
	c) Rarely	22	29.3
3	Why do you think is appropriate to use wolaitigna in EFL classroom? (You can choose more than one option)		
	a) To explain complex grammar	22	29.3
	b) To define new words.	30	41
	c) To explain difficult concepts	41	54.7
	d) To clarify instructions	8	10.7
	e) Other -----	-	-
4	Do you think frequent use of wolaitigna in English class has problems?		
	a) Yes	30	40
	b) No	45	60
5	If your answer to the above question is 'Yes' What do you think are the problems? -----		

### 5.3. Findings from Students' Questionnaire.

**Table 7** summarizes the students' preference of their teachers' utilizations of mother tongue in EFL classroom. In the responses of item 1, 70.7% of the respondents wanted their teachers' use of wolaitigna in English classroom. However, the other 29.3% of respondents exclaimed that they do not want their teachers' use of wolaitigna in EFL classroom.

According to their responses to item 2, 33.3% of the respondents said that they are happy if their teachers use wolaitigna 'Sometimes', 8% of respondents thought they want their teachers use it 'frequently', 29.3% of the participant students believed that wolaitigna should be used 'rarely'

In response to item 3, 29.3% of the respondents said wolaitigna should be used to explain difficult grammar items, 40% of the respondents believed that mother tongue is essential to define new words, 54.7% of the subjects also said wolaitigna needs to be used to explain difficult concepts. Similarly, 10.7% of respondents assumed that wolaitigna is important to give instructions.

In item number 4, 40% of the respondents said that using wolaitigna has problems in learning English. On the other hand, 60% of the participant students expressed teachers' mother tongue usage in EFL classroom has no problems. For this, they stated that if teachers' use the language for little amount, it does not create serious problems rather it supports English learning.

### 5.4 Discussion

The study shows that teachers seem to be familiar with the various advantages' of mother tongue in English classroom instructions. In the current study, majority of the respondent teachers and students showed positive stance to mother tongue (Wolaitigna) use in EFL classroom.

The results of the study also indicates the extent to which wolaitigna was used in EFL classroom instructions. As it was put clearly in the table 1, teachers used L1 in different frequencies even in similar purposes. To illustrate, teachers E, K, N, D, A, and Y used 58.7% ,21.4%,45.8%,15.4%,1.9% and 0.2% used wolaitigna , respectively. All participant teachers usage of mother tongue can be tolerated except teachers E and A. Atkinson (1987), recommends the use of 5% native language and 95% target language use at early levels to enhance students' language learning. But, what the current results of the study illustrate differently as the study conducted at preparatory level than that of Atkinson expressed, except for teachers A and Y. These respondents used less than 5% of L1 in their English classroom.

In addition, this study indicates the reasons why teachers were using wolaitigna frequently in EFL classrooms. They use it because it aids learners' comprehension, it is more effective than using only English, it facilitates teacher-students interactions, and it enables overcome communication barrier which occurs between

teacher and their students. The respondents also reasoned out that mother tongue is less time consuming than explaining only in English, it helps student become more comfortable and confident, and it reduces students' language learning anxiety. Similarly, the actual classroom observation shows teachers used wolaitigna for the same purposes. (See table 2).

The results of this study on frequency and purpose of mother tongue usage in EFL classroom has a little similarities with the study conducted by Abiy & Mohammed (2011) in Bahir Dar Primary Schools. The frequencies of teachers' use of mother tongue decreased to some extent compared to the findings on the research of Abiy and Mohammed (2011) since the study focused on preparatory school. From this point of view, it is possible to deduce that mother tongue usage decreases when the level of education increases. Based on the observation results, two teachers over-used wolaitigna in their EFL classroom. For this, Grains and Redman (1986:76) in Abiy and Mohammed (2011) also stated the problem of over use of L1 as; "if teachers rely too heavily on the use of translation .... their students are quickly losing sense of essential spirit and atmosphere of being in a language classroom.". Thus, mother tongue can enhance language learning if it is used judiciously and only sometimes. Tang (2002) exclaims that "...That limited and judicious use of mother tongue in the English classroom does not reduce students' exposure to English, but rather can assist in the teaching and learning process" Therefore, the judicious (less frequent ) use of mother tongue has a positive impact on students target language learning.

On the other hand, the over-use of mother tongue in the EFL classroom is highly affects the development of students' language proficiency. As it was elaborated above, teacher E used with the highest frequency of wolaitigna utterances compared to other teachers. His use of wolaitigna seems to compensate his inefficient use of English. Regarding this, Pennington in Garcia (2006) states, teachers' over use of students' L1 is, to redress their deficiency in the L2 and knowledge of the subject matter. Therefore, it affects the students' progress of language learning abilities.

The other thing was related to the purpose for which teachers used wolaitigna in EFL classroom instructions. Thus, majority of participant teachers, who were observed, used wolaitigna judiciously for different purposes. But teachers E and N over-used wolaitigna so as to make students understand difficult concepts, to define new words, and to teach grammar items. What interesting thing happened was that teachers used wolaitigna after trying to express the ideas in English. Consequently, the teachers' frequency of using mother tongue was, i.e. 23.9% of overall observations made in EFL classrooms.

In general, the result shows that teachers used wolaitigna for various purposes and reasons in English teaching. So the frequencies of wolaitigna used were not more than that of the researcher's expectation. This is not to mean that teachers were all proficient enough. However, there were teachers who need to improve their level of English language proficiency. There were also teachers who were struggling to use only English with their poor communications skills. Therefore, the findings shows that teachers already use wolaitigna as the mother tongue (L1) with an average to high frequency and for different purposes in the EFL classroom but do so with guilt of feelings of almost "cheating system".

## 6. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

This study aimed at exploring the frequency and purpose of teachers' L1 use in EFL classroom a case of Boditti preparatory school with particular reference to Wolaitigna, by employing mixed methods design; and collecting data using observation, questionnaires, and interview. It came up with a number of insights presented, interpreted, and discussed in chapter five. This last chapter summarizes the major findings that emerged from the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data collected for the study. Finally, based on the findings, conclusions and recommendations were drawn.

### 6.1. Summary

The major objective of the study was to examine the frequency and purpose of mother tongue use in EFL classroom in case of Boditti Preparatory School with practical reference wolaitigna. To achieve the objective of the study, the researcher raised the following research questions;

- How often do preparatory school teachers use wolaitigna in EFL classroom?
- What makes teachers employ wolaitigna in their English classroom instructions?
- For what purpose do teachers use wolaitigna in EFL classroom?
- What are the constraints of frequency of teachers' wolaitigna use for certain purposes on students' language learning?

The participants of this study were teachers and students of Boditti Preparatory School. The teachers' participants were selected by using simple random sampling, but for the respondents of students, the researcher employed systematic random sampling. 12 teachers and 75 students participated in responding questionnaire. In addition the researcher also employed purposive sampling to select six teachers for observation, and five teachers for interview. With regard to data collecting instruments; observation, interview, and two sets of

questionnaires were employed.

The data analysis was made using frequency and percentage. Moreover, the results obtained from observation, interview, and questionnaire presented in tables and analyzed in relation to research questions and specific objectives of the study.

Finally, based on the on the discussion on the results; the following major findings are reached in order to make conclusion and recommendations.

First, the analysis of the data indicates that majority of the subjects reflected positively towards wolaitigna use in the EFL classroom. However, the reasons and purposes of teachers' use of mother tongue (Wolaitigna) were different from teachers to teachers. On the other hand, varied frequencies of teachers' L1 use occurred at different stages for different purposes in EFL classroom instructions. Thus, teachers used L1 with the highest frequency of (27.2%) at conclusion stage of lesson in EFL classrooms compared to introduction and presentation stages. Moreover, the highest percentage of teachers' reasons and purposes of using wolaitigna in EFL classroom indicated as follows.

1. Teachers frequently used wolaitigna because it helps to overcome communication barrier occurs between teacher and his students.
2. Teachers also used wolaitigna frequently because it reduces students' language learning anxiety.
3. Teachers often used wolaitigna to facilitate teacher-students' interactions.
4. Teachers' used wolaitigna to explain difficult concepts.
5. Teachers' used wolaitigna to discuss on difficult grammar items.
6. Teachers' also used wolaitigna to define new vocabulary.

Secondly, the analysis of data disclosed that the frequency of the observed teachers' use of wolaitigna was minimum i.e. 23.9% of the total utterances made. Majority of the participant teachers preferred to use wolaitigna "Sometimes". On the other hand, few respondents chose "rare" use of wolaitigna in EFL classroom instructions.

1. In the overall classroom observations, the teachers used wolaitigna 1071 words for different purposes in EFL classroom instructions at different stages of English lessons.
2. From the teachers' total utterances, an average frequency of 23.9% L1 words used in EFL classroom.
3. 83.3% respondents stated that 5-10% use of L1 in EFL classroom is natural.

Thirdly, the data analysis showed that the L1 use has its own limitations on over all students' language learning if it is not judiciously used in teaching- learning English. Moreover, the following specific points can be browsed from the data analysis.

1. Most respondents expressed the frequent use of mother tongue in EFL classroom can hinder learners' English language proficiency.
2. It was believed by the teachers that frequent use of L1 can make the students depend on it.
3. Teachers' frequent use of mother tongue does not create opportunities to students to upgrade their overall language skills.

## 6.2. Conclusion

Based on the findings on the study, the following conclusions were drawn;

1. L1 offers an updated picture of this controversial issue whether to use L1 frequently, or not to use it in EFL classroom frequently. The findings demonstrated a positive pedagogical stance teachers in wolaita take with regard to wolaitigna as mother tongue in EFL classes, and reveal that L1 is used for teaching topics in EFL classrooms like grammatical items, vocabulary, and reading lessons.
2. The study indicated that although the frequency, amount, purpose, and reason were different among the participant teachers, mother tongue was used in EFL classroom. The relationship between L1 use and teachers' frequency showed a tendency among language teachers'. The results also reflected that of the teachers and students about using wolaitigna were generally positive. The participants preferred to use wolaitigna in certain issues and for specific purposes. Teachers used L1 in different frequencies even in similar lessons.
3. Even though majority of the participant teachers used wolaitigna judiciously, two subjects of study over- used wolaitigna in teaching English.
4. In general, the results of the study show that both the teachers and students have positive reflections to judicious use with low frequency of L1 in EFL classrooms.
5. In teachers regard, they used wolaitigna with the average frequency level, 23.9% of the total utterances in EFL classrooms.

## 6.3. Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusions made, the researcher would like to forward the following recommendations for the improvements and regarding frequency and purpose of L1 use in EFL classroom instructions.

1. EFL teachers should have awareness of how often, to what extent, and why mother tongue needs to be used in EFL classroom instructions.
2. It is recommended that limited use of L1 in explaining vocabularies, grammar items, and difficult concepts when necessary in EFL classrooms.
3. Teachers should have opportunities to improve their language proficiencies through short trainings and workshops.
4. It is believed to be important for teacher trainers reconsider the purposes of mother tongue use in EFL classroom.
5. Syllabus designers and material writers, and language teaching methodology researchers should examine their views towards the students' mother tongue use in English.

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