

English in Ethiopia

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Abstract

This paper outlines the dimensions of English in Ethiopia. Ethiopia has a special history, varied cultural traditions and independent development free from colonial setbacks. The observational survey mainly focuses on the historical background, linguistic and sociolinguistic profile of the users of English in the country. It also discusses with appropriate illustrations and examples certain marked features of English in Ethiopia. The purpose of this paper is to present before the casual reader and the specialized researchers the claim of Ethiopian English for getting recognition among the Expanding Circle countries. Very shortly, English in Ethiopia is going to be "Ethiopian English" and a part of the World Englishes paradigm, a shift from the monolingual paradigms to paradigms relevant and appropriate to multilingual, multi-ethnic and multicultural Ethiopian society. Then the findings of this paper will be seminal in its own way.

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INTRODUCTION

In the long tradition of African multilingualism, English has a promising future in the area, and the knowledge and appreciation, of national and regional features will develop and make the diversity of East African Englishes interesting for casual and specialized researchers alike. (Schmied, 2006)

The aim of the present paper is to underline the importance of an expanding circle country namely the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. The users of English in Ethiopia have been nurtured and nourished by the users of the English language belonging to other two circles. The Expanding Circle users have a daunting task of balancing between the so-called standards of the norm –providing/norm-developing countries and regional, cultural, and sociolinguistic compulsions of their own. There is little academic research available on the nature of local variations in English syntax and its use. There is hardly any serious study conducted in and about Ethiopia and the term 'Ethiopian English' is not even considered worth mentioning. Though I am

not in a position to provide a comprehensive analysis of English in Ethiopia, I shall try to provide a partial portrait of the fascinating language use in parts of Ethiopia for your perusal and further detailed study.

Josef Schmied has been surveying East African Englishes for more than two decades. The survey conducted and published in "The Handbook of World Englishes" (2006) focused only on Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania because according to him " the neighbouring countries in the North - Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia – have also experienced some English influences, but they have had their own special histories as well as linguistic and cultural traditions, especially a much more independent development and in large parts –a more dominant Arabic influence, so that they are usually not considered ESL nations in Kachru's sense (ch. Schmied, 2006)". I would like to take the hint provided by Schmied's seminal work in this regard and highlight the fact that this part of Africa is shaping very fast and the day is not far off when the claim of this part of East Africa will be accepted and acknowledged. I

shall treat the following statement of Schmied (2006) as the take-off point. As the systematic study of Ethiopian English has not been started in right earnest and only a brief mention such as above is discussed and debated among 'casual and specialized researchers', I would depend on my observations (*based on authentic data from the region, exemplary quotations from individual recorded utterances, and qualified search using Internet search engine namely Google*) to provide examples and illustrations.

A realistic description can only be based on authentic data from the regions, exemplary quotations from individual recorded utterances, a quantified and stratified pattern retrieved from the relevant sections of the International Corpus of English or a qualified search using internet search engine (Schmied, 2005, cited in Schmied, 2006).

The Review of the Literature

There is a paucity of research work about and in this area. I could not find any noteworthy study conducted on and about Ethiopian English or English in Ethiopia. Scholars have been busy in looking at East Africa in general but when they do so, they concentrate on Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania "the core of East Africa" and touch the southern "Anglophone" neighbours Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe considered as "Central Africa" or even part of "Southern Africa" (ch. Schmied, 1996). As far as the northern part of East Africa is concerned where the three important countries - Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan are situated there is no scholarly discussion. "They have also experienced some English influences" (cf. Schmied, 2006) and "have had their own special histories as well as linguistic and cultural traditions" (188). Of course, East Africa as a composite entity is not completely left behind and isolated. There are some scholarly discussions and surveys of English in Africa. For example, in the late 1960s and early 1970s the Ford Foundation funded a survey of language in East Africa but the survey concentrated on the indigenous languages more and the discussion about the role and position of English is cursory and sketchy. One can see other remarkable surveys of English (Hancock and Angogo in Bailey and Gorlach, 1982; Abdulaziz in Cheshire, 1991; Schmied in Kortmann *et al.*, 2004; & contributions in Kachru 1992, 2006) in Africa to get certain common grounds. The work of some scholars in the broad areas of language policy, linguistic landscape, multilingualism etc. also touch the position, and role of English in Ethiopia (ch. Jarvis, 1969; Getachew and Derib, 2006; Hywel,

2007; Bogale in Ege *et al.*, 2009; Amlaku, 2010 and Raga, 2012). A briefing paper (2012) brought out by Ambo University in collaboration with the Ministry of Education of the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and the Institute of International Education and a number of seminars/ symposiums/ panel discussion/ journals (for example, STAR journal from Wollega University)/ POD books/ seminar proceedings and reports underscore the concern for quality and ways and means to enhance the overall teaching learning scenario with regard to English language teaching. The output by way of research work conducted by Addis Ababa and other universities is also noteworthy and can be used as a dependable corpus to systematically study the English language in Ethiopia and Ethiopian English.

The Historical Background

Ethiopia had never been a colony of the British or any other English speaking country so English came late in the country. The English language entered the educational institutions as a medium of instruction. Long before the introduction of modern education at the beginning of the twentieth century, education was religion-based and there was no place for English in Ethiopia. Education in Ethiopia had been dominated by the Orthodox Church for many centuries until secular education was adopted in the early 1900s. There were hardly any native speakers of English present, so there was no need for learning English. Later when the modern education was introduced and the brief hiatus of the Italian occupation surrounded the lives of the people showed its colour, there was some possibility of learning French, Italian and English.

In a way the 1947/8 English curriculum can be called the first notable document to guide and persuade the then ELT professionals. Thus the progress and development of English in Ethiopia is marked by the pedagogical concerns of the learners. According to an IIE Briefing Paper (2012) curriculum records prior to the 1940s in Ethiopia are either "non-existent or they are difficult to access". But it is told that the study of the English language was introduced in the 1940s by Emperor Haile Selassie who came back after nearly 5 years of exile to the UK during the five years of Italian occupation. It was envisaged to modernize the country through transfer of science, technology and medicine. The British came with loads of methodology and skills to impart. They had plenty of books and tons of materials. Everyone was full of enthusiasm and the English language was seen as a mark of social prestige among the few elites who could

afford English Education. The opening statement of The 1947/8 English Curriculum contains the following rationale for teaching English in Ethiopia:

1. Foreign teachers all speak English.
2. Textbooks are available in all subjects in English.
3. The first step toward professions is to pass an examination. (*The examination referred to was probably that of the University of London (General Certificate of Education)*).
4. Further reading can be done in English (IIE Briefing Paper)

During those days there were many expatriate teachers from different countries who used to instruct the students in English and the students used to opt for this medium keeping in view the bright future ahead. These teachers were not trained or experienced and though English had the highest number of periods in the school curriculum, the time was not utilized in a fruitful manner. The 1958/9 curriculum marks the second development in English language education. The third English curriculum appeared in 1963-4. The 1967-8 curriculum is the last English curriculum before the imperial regime came into existence in Ethiopia. In other words we can say that English used to serve as a medium of instruction in the early years of the development of school curriculum in the country. After the influx of the Dergue regime to power in 1974, the then military government decided to close all educational institutions of higher learning to start a campaign "Development through Cooperation", education became a nonstarter for nearly two years. The study of English began to decline gradually due to the Dergue regime's emphasis on the mother tongue because English was considered the "language of capitalists." When the educational institutions reopened after two years in 1976 and government issued new guidelines, a series of English text books "*English for New Ethiopia*" replaced the earlier school textbooks. The books were written with a view to inculcating the Marxist Leninist ideology among the learners. Needless to say that the prescribed syllabus and books were not student-centered. It seems as if the aim of the compilers was not to teach English but the ideology. There was an attempt to replace English by Amharic at all levels through massive translation projects. But the project failed. The allegiance with the socialist block and cold war resulted into a shortage of supply of books and materials. The Native Speaker block gave little support. There was an acute shortage of trained and qualified teachers and novice students were recruited as "*Digoma*" teachers. In spite of all this commotion and

disturbances, English continued to flourish in its own ways. The students continued using it as a Medium of Instruction from grade 7 to the university level. While surveying the influence of History on English Language Education in Ethiopia Dr. Tamene Kitila (2012) very adroitly presents the "picture of the quality of the English language skills that students could achieve at the time" and also gives us "useful insight into the following aspects of English language education in the past":

- Grammar-based teaching and the audio-lingual approach dominated the curriculum.
- The language teaching syllabus mainly consisted of word lists and grammar items graded across grade levels.
- Grammar was the starting point in planning language courses.
- The curriculum specified the grammar and vocabulary learners needed to master.
- Elementary school English teachers had limited English language competence.
- There was no specialized training to teach English at different levels of education.
- Almost all secondary school English teachers were expatriates from different countries.
- Many of the expatriate teachers did not have appropriate training to teach English.
- There were no teaching materials that reflected the local culture.
- Simplified Readers were recommended for use at different levels including the elementary level.
- English had the highest periods in the school curriculum.
- English used to serve as a medium of instruction in the early years of the development of school curriculum in the country.

When the Dergue was defeated in 1991 and the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) was established, the situation changed for the better. The new federal constitution and particularly the new Education and Training Policy (ETP) outlined the plan for future growth and development in the education sector.

In 1994, The Education and Training Policy of the Government of Ethiopia outlined the prescribed medium of instruction for primary, secondary, and tertiary education in Ethiopia. At the primary level (grade 1-8), the medium of instruction is the mother tongue with English being taught as a subject. At the secondary level, the medium of instruction shifts to English, which continues as the primary medium of instruction at

the tertiary levels. The Education and Training Policy, in accordance with the constitutional rights of the citizens, also envisaged the role of regional and local languages because of pedagogical advantages and to allow all nationalities to feel free in using and expressing their will in their own language:

- Languages and Education
- Cognizant of the pedagogical advantage of the child in learning in mother tongue and the rights of nationalities to promote the use of their languages, primary education will be given in nationality languages.
- Making the necessary preparation, nations and nationalities can either learn in their own language or can choose from among those selected on the basis of national and countrywide distribution.
- The language of teacher training for kindergarten and primary education will be the nationality language used in the area.
- Amharic shall be taught as a language of countrywide communication.
- English will be the medium of instruction for secondary and higher education.
- Students can choose and learn at least one nationality language and one foreign language for cultural and international relations.
- English will be taught as a subject starting from grade one.
- The necessary steps will be taken to strengthen language teaching at all levels.

FDRE (1994).

One can see the statements in bold (emphasis mine) that the policy document aims at directing the stakeholders in the educational field with regard to teaching learning of English as a medium of instruction and the purpose of studying English as a foreign language. There is no mention of the role and position of the English language in the present constitution. The Federal Constitution has been written in English and Amharic and it is stated that, "The Amharic version...shall have final legal authority" (Negarit Gazeta, 1995). It may be presumed that the policy makers wish to see the study of the English language for the sake of international communication and higher education and the development and use of the regional and local languages is their first priority. That is why English language teaching in Ethiopia is only a part of the bigger linguistic concerns and should be viewed as such only.

The Sociolinguistic Profile

According to Ethnologue, there are about ninety individual languages spoken in Ethiopia. (The number of individual languages listed for Ethiopia is 89. Of these, 87 are living and 2 are extinct. Of the living languages, 30 are institutional, 12 are developing, 28 are vigorous, 12 are in trouble, and 5 are dying. Immigrant Languages are Kunama (7,430), Maay, Sudanese Spoken Arabic (ch. Bender, 1971, 1976, 1983, 1989; Dimmendaal and Voeltz, 2007). Most belong to the Afro-Asiatic language family, mainly of the Cushitic and Semitic branches. Languages from the Nilo-Saharan phylum are also spoken by the nation's Nilotic ethnic minorities. Most people in Ethiopia speak Afro-Asiatic languages, mainly of the Semitic or Cushitic branches. The former include Amharic, spoken by the Amhara people; and Tigrinya, spoken by the Tigray and Gurgiyana spoken by the Gurage people. The latter include Oromo, spoken by the Oromo people; and Somali, spoken by the Somali people. These five peoples make up about three-quarters of the population in Ethiopia. Nilo-Saharan-speaking Nilotic ethnic minorities also inhabit the southern regions of the country, particularly in areas bordering South Sudan. Among these are the Mursi and Anuak. According to the Ethiopian national census of 2007, the Oromo are the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, at 34.49% of the nation's population. The Amhara represent 26.89% of the country's inhabitants, while the Somali and Tigray represent 6.20% and 6.07% of the population, respectively. Other prominent ethnic groups are as follows: Sidama 4.01%, Gurage 2.53%, Wolayta 2.31%, Afar 1.73%, Hadiya 1.74%, Gamo 1.50%, Kefficho 1.18% and others 11%.

English is the most widely spoken foreign language and is one of the mediums of instruction in secondary schools. Though Amharic was the only language of primary school instruction once, yet it had been replaced in many areas by regional languages such as Somali, Oromifa and Tigrinya. English in Ethiopia is a reality and it is surprising that without any colonial tag English flourished and was accepted by all, though no one claims that it is used by them as a native language. Even highly educated people use English only when required and the type of English spoken by them depends on their education, social position and surroundings. This is also noteworthy that in multilingual Ethiopia, even educated elite hold contradictory views about English. They hate English to love it. They criticize the presence of English as a medium of instruction, and they aspire to master it. A Ugandan journalist Kalyegira (2001) commented

at the then spread of English in Ethiopia with the following tongue in cheek remark “Most Ethiopians speak English in the same way you would use a torch during an electric power blackout - a necessity that comes in handy during emergencies. Otherwise, they are glad to return to the only language on earth that makes sense to them, Amharic.” But the scholars watching the scene from inside has observed “an unprecedented aspiration towards English in both the representative regions in Ethiopia”:

English is highly prized as a language which may offer access to higher education and international opportunity; however, it is foreign to most, and is known and used only by a small minority of educated economic and/or political elite. The practical diffusion of English in Ethiopia is limited to fewer functional domains than in many other African countries where the language enjoys similarly high status, aspirational value and use (Bogale 2009).

Getachew and Derib (2006) say that Ethiopia should have no official language. There is another view (Patten, 2001, cited in Derib, 2006) that Ethiopia should show neutrality with regard to languages as is shown about religion. Fiseha Haftetsion Gebresilassie in an unpublished paper entitled “Choosing a Working Language in Multiethnic Nations: Rethinking Ethiopia’s Working Language Policy” (2012) (circulated only for comments and suggestions) proposes that Ethiopia should also adopt English as the sole official working language of the Federal Government with a slight difference of implementation in the area of education in the federal territories. Ghelawdewos Araia (2012) in a rejoinder “What Language Should Ethiopians Speak?” tries to take different stance that is according to him good for the multilingual country:

The Ethiopian policy spectrum that has already endorsed Amharic as a working language of Ethiopia and the use of nationality languages in the regional states and in national broadcasting should continue in deference to the Ethiopian constitution. Ethiopian officials, at this juncture, should not be tempted to accepting English in lieu of Amharic, as lingua franca of Ethiopia, for it would flagrantly contravene the Ethiopian interest and emasculate Ethiopian culture and identity.

While surfing the net, I came across The Woyingi Blog (2011) where the farsighted blogger discusses the language situation in Ethiopia in relation to the English language. According to him

the language situation in Ethiopia entails some of the learners to learn Amharic also as a second language and the role of English which is hitherto restricted too, it was another way of experiencing something different in a different language for a lot many local readers. He is of the view that:

This may seem ironic for Western readers but as Ethiopia was never colonized by Britain (although there were definitely some British imperialist excursions, the most dramatic one actually precipitated the suicide of Emperor Teodoros II) English has less negative associations with it than Amharic might to someone from an Ethiopian ethnic minority like the Gurage. As many Ethiopian ethnic minorities have to learn Amharic as a second language because it is the language of the dominant ethnic group, the government, and the Church, Amharic speakers have to learn English as a second language. Therefore, as English is no one’s mother tongue, to read in it is to read on a level playing field.

This is the way scholars and general public both speak in favour of English and wish to learn it to get a share in the expected economic growth on account of the spread of English. Dr. Tamene Kitila, Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, Addis Ababa University has this to say with regard to their desire for learning English:

There has always been a growing need for good communication skills in English. Parents send their children to school to help them achieve a good command of English. Employers want their employees to have good English language skills. Today, the need for effective use of English for communication is heard every day, everywhere. In short, effective English language skills are prerequisite for success and advancement in today’s world of work (Briefing paper, 2012).

English in Ethiopia is primarily related to a number of languages being used in the educational setting. The linguistic landscape of the major cities shows that the use of English is in proportion with their own languages. The type of English spoken by Ethiopians depends on a number of factors: their educational background, their social position and upbringing, their sphere of communication and their compulsions. The institutions of higher learning do underline the need of quality education in English and try to take advantage of the presence of the British and the US funding agencies. But there is no apparent inclination or attempt to follow any specific standard as far as the pronunciation is

concerned. The phenomenon of code-switching and code-mixing can be seen in the speeches of the younger generation. We can say that English in Ethiopia is both “Institutionalized” and “performance” variety at the same time. According to Kachru (1983) institutionalized English is one that is introduced formally in a territory via education, and is used in some civil, administrative and governmental functions. Since English in Ethiopia was introduced via education, it is an “institutionalized” variety. On the other hand, a “performance” variety is one which does not have this background; and is picked up by a few people via EFL education or via brief contacts with tourists, visitors, donors, traders, etc. It is evident that English plays some role in administration and education and though never a colony of the British or any other English speaking country, this is a clear case for considering the English of Ethiopia, in the words of Mesthrie (2006) as “intermediate between prototypical ESL and prototypical EFL.”

At present, there is hardly any scholarly discussion with regard to accepting or rejecting certain grammatical and syntactical features found in English used by the educated Ethiopians. There are instances when someone indicates how a group of people fail to pronounce certain words without inserting /i/(hospital, campus, sport...) in the final position. (This phenomenon is similar to the use of /i/ by some Indians at the initial position of certain words beginning with /s/). But these instances are rare.

As the English language was introduced, transplanted, taught and nurtured by those who had no colonial interest to do so and more often than not they were non-native speakers, you can see the beautiful blend unrelated with the Standards of English followed by other East African countries namely Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

Keeping this background in mind, the linguistic competence (the knowledge of rules and usage, i.e. the phonology, the grammar and syntax & the vocabulary) & the communicative competence (the knowledge of rules of use) of the Ethiopian users of English can be studied as follows.

Phonology

A proficient user of the English language from an Outer Circle country goes to buy “curd” in Ethiopia and returns empty handed because when he says “curd” or “curds” he is understood asking for “card” or “cards”. People either call it “Urugu” or it is “Yogurt” for a few (the American English). Mispronunciation is not an urgent matter of concern for academicians. The news of the existence of a pronouncing dictionary is taken

with a pinch of salt even by experienced English teachers. Accent, rhythm, intonation and all other segmental and suprasegmental features of English speech are based on one factor known as “spelling pronunciation”. “Every letter of the word should be vocalized, every syllable should be heard” is the mantra of their English speech. That is why when the plural marker in the words “cats, boxes, books” does not show any distinction, one is not amazed. In most cases English is learnt in schools from local teachers who had either been taught by Indian expatriate teachers, non-native speakers or local Ethiopian teachers. In their description of English in East Africa Hancock and Agogo (1982) differentiate between non-native English spoken fluently as a second language and non-native English spoken imperfectly as a foreign language within the same territory. The same is true here too. Though phonology plays an important role, yet it is not the only feature that keeps Ethiopian English distinct from other varieties. There are two major languages -Amharic and Oromo and the way one speaks English is different from the other in more ways than one.

Some common characteristic features of Amharic speakers of English are as follows:

1. The presence of ejectives in the Amharic language and the absence of this feature in the English language is an observable difference. Voiceless stops, affricates, or sibilant fricatives can become ejectives. In Amharic, the consonant sounds /p/, /t/, /k/, and /s/ can be produced as ejectives.
2. In Amharic, there is an absence of combinations or consonant clusters. An example of a combination would be an s-cluster. Amharic speakers will demonstrate epenthesis vowel sounds before an s-cluster or in the middle of pl- or kl- cluster because these clusters do not exist in Amharic.
3. Amharic speakers fail to keep the final consonants and the final consonants are often devoiced or deleted. That is the reason that fricatives may become stops, stops may become fricatives, and vowels are often shortened, lowered, or raised.
4. There are sounds in the Amharic and English phonetic inventories that overlap but there are differences in the inventories also. Consonant sounds that do not occur in Amharic will be deleted or replaced when speaking English.

No doubt, Amharic is the most prominent language of Ethiopia but another language Oromo, (also known as Afaan Oromo, Oromiffa(a) and Oromic), Afan Oromo etc. is noteworthy because it is the language with the fourth most speakers within Africa, after Arabic,

Swahili, and Hausa. The script currently being used to write Oromo is known as Qubee which had been adapted from the Latin language and was formally adopted in 1991. That is why a child familiar with Qubee can learn the English letters in a relatively short period of time.

There is nearly one to one correspondence between Oromo sounds and its letters. In Afan Oromo there are 33 letters that represent 33 different sounds of the language. Unlike English Afan Oromo does not involve complex spelling conventions. In the Qubee alphabet, a single "letter" consists either of a single symbol or a digraph ("ch", "dh", "ny", "ph", "sh"). Afan Oromo has a typical Eastern Cushitic set of five short and five long vowels. The long vowels are indicated in the orthography by doubling the five vowel letters. The difference in length of the vowel is contrastive. For example, "haroo" means "lake" but "haaraa" means "new" and "laga" means river but "laagaa" means "soft palate". It is also remarkable that the consonants length can distinguish words from one another, for example, *badaa* "bad", *baddaa* "highland". Like most other Ethiopian languages, Oromo has a set of ejective consonants, that is, voiceless stops or affricates that are accompanied by glottalization and an explosive burst of air. Oromo has another glottalized phone, an implosive retroflex stop, "dh" in Oromo orthography, a sound like the English "d" produced with the tongue curled back slightly with the air drawn in so that a glottal stop is heard before the following vowel begins. All these mother tongue features interfere and are unknowingly used when a speaker pronounces the English vowels and consonants.

As far as the speakers of Oromo's ability in pronouncing the English words is concerned, they tend to follow the orthographic symbols and often forget that there are some precautions to be taken. The following features can be marked in the English speech of an Oromo speaker:

1. Final vowel / i / is added to closed syllables. Bajaj becomes Bajaji, sport becomes sporti, board is boardi and campus is campusi and so on.
2. As the speakers of English learnt to speak English after getting some practice in writing, reading and listening skills, they tend to pronounce each syllable distinctly and clearly as far as possible. They give all syllables equal stress as they have scarcely been told or tutored about supra-segmental features of English speech. That is why the distinction of three different sounds of plural marker "s"- is, z, and iz are not maintained by Ethiopian speakers of English. (the 's' of present simple

ending sometimes sounds like 's' e.g. works, laughs, writes, etc.; sometimes it sounds like a 'z' e.g. plays, says, lives, etc.) and sometimes it sounds like 'iz' e.g. watches, closes, catches, etc. in Standard English Pronunciation). Similarly verbs with "ed" form are but the Ethiopian speakers tend to vocalize it as / id / only. The final /r/ is generally retained as in father, mother, sister etc.

3. Length differences in vowels are levelled and not contrasted phonemically. Differences at the phonemic level have to be maintained to avoid misunderstanding at the lexical level. When the word "book" is pronounced as "buuk" there is hardly any problem but when the distinction between "kill" and "keel", "hill" and "heel", "shit" and "sheet" is not maintained between the elements of such pairs, a considerable degree of homophony is created.
4. The speakers of English have no immediate native model to follow, so they largely depend on what is written or generally follow the rules of Oromo.
5. Other prominent feature of English in Ethiopia is of the inability in pronouncing consonant clusters in English speech. The clusters are either dissolved or one of the consonants is dropped. But it does not cause any major problem because the intelligibility level is not hampered by such acts.
6. As with almost all African pronunciation the speech pattern is syllable timed rather than a stress-timed rhythm. So each syllable is given more or less equal stress. Even those who know that there is a difference between such pairs as Subject and subject tend to ignore it.

Lexicon

The Lexicon of Ethiopian English is a mixture of the British Standard English and the American English. There have been a steady arrival of Indians as teachers and others & their influence can also be marked in a few cases. The use of Amharic, Oromo and even Arabic words (the frequent use of the phrase "God willing" is a literal translation of "Inshaallah") and the use of some of the semantic markers from other languages can also be seen. It is interesting to see the semantic expansion of Standard English lexemes too.

1. Lexical items that are used in rather restrictive meaning acquire a wider semantic range in Ethiopian English. The kinship terms like father, mother, brother and sister are used indiscriminately to give extended and expanded meanings. Every elderly person can be called "father" similarly "mother" is used. Likewise, the use of 'brother' and 'sister' for 'boyfriend' and 'girlfriend' respectively is also

- accepted and understood. The use of “father” in plural “fathers” for fatherly figures is not uncommon. (This tendency is very similar to Indians using “cousin- brother” and “cousin-sister” for these extended words and the use of uncle and aunt /aunty for elderly people.)
2. In general the preferred staple food dishes. “Injira” is hardly ever translated and the word for “tea” is “*sha*” (“Chai” from Indian word “*Chay*”).
 3. English word forms are used for different meanings. Standard English use of the word “room” when associated with ‘class’ is often heard when the estate agent asks you, “Do you want a house with one class, two class or three class?” (“Class” is a bed- room here.)
 4. Loan translation i.e. translation of a local current usage using high sounding English word e.g. “*Aterera*” (from Amharic) is a short note used for cheating in the examination and “*Taski*” is used for “ taxi” (the use can be attributed to the role of phonological convenience in pronouncing a phoneme). “*Beefy*” has nothing to do with “beef” in particular. It is a simplified coinage for “buffet” dinner.
 5. Unusual and different compounds. Ethiopian English has compounds such as ‘take away’ for a “call girl”, “No matter” is for “No problem”, “Deep talking” for “serious talk”...
 6. Many words go through change in meaning, For instance ‘play’ is used as a noun as well as a verb and it may mean “talk”. In Amharic and Oromo there are words “*teccawet*” and “*taphadhu*” respectively. This usage can be attributed to the result of direct translation of these words.
 7. Many words change their membership in grammatical categories. Adjectives/ nouns used as verbs with verbal inflections happy-happied, sure- sureness, chance- chanceful, coherent- coherented, will- willing (as in the sentence-They must have willing to learn.) thief- thiefed, thieving, handsome- handsome liness, successful- successfulliness ...
 8. Unusual word coinages bad-badache, bed-bedache (perhaps imitated from head – headache). “Home take course”(Take home course) can be found printed on all the study booklets and hand-outs.
 9. Coined for various local purposes new idioms and metaphors are created not only by the writers and educated elite but also by those who use English in everyday speech in the multilingual contexts. “Happy Night” is also heard in place of “Good Night”.
 10. English word forms are used with their dictionary meanings and extended and

expanded meanings as well. E.g. “to skip” is used like “to forgive”, “to opt out” like “ come out”, “to make signature” like “ to sign”, “face” like “get”, “history” like “biography” & “story”...

11. English word forms are used in other contexts, mixed collocations, and connotations. E.g. “you will get the value of what you did.” (The word “value’ is used to mean “ in return of”).

According to Schmied (2006) “contexts & style choices constituting idiomaticity form a complex interplay and this special flavour can only be studied in larger sections of authentic texts.” Therefore the following examples of typical verb usage, collocations & different connotations have been collected from An IIE Briefing Paper (2012):

1. An English Language Improvement Program (ELIP) was established.
2. We are gathered to share experiences on how to improve quality education in our country.
3. I am looking forward to your active participation in the conference.
4. If you share my judgment, the Germans, in fact, without denying others’ support, rebuilt their nation.
5. Our students themselves are showing huge demands toward improving their English language performance.
6. One can come with a long list of problems that are related practice.
7. Participants felt that the method had taught them to soul-search.

It is interesting to note that local address forms “Ato” is being used both by the Ambassador of the United States of America to Ethiopia and Ambo University President. In the same way the use of “Digoma” teachers is an indication of code-mixing to make the listeners understand without any difficulty.

Grammar

English grammar tells us the right way to construct sentences in English. There are a number of English grammar books around (e.g. Quirk et.al.1985).The dictionaries can also guide us (e.g. ALD).The two prominent varieties- British and American English are well codified and the grammar books often tell the readers that the American usage and the British usage may sometimes differ. For example, in American English, there is a tendency to use the past tense instead of the present perfect (e.g. Did you eat? Have you eaten?). Ethiopian English is neither codified nor seems to follow a particular variety. As soon as one gets down a vehicle, someone

will invariably enquire – “Where are you go?” And the student in a class will invariably retort- “It is not my faulty.”

The following tendencies are observed in Ethiopian English:

1. Articles and determiners- The grammar of the nouns mainly deals with the dependency between articles and determiners. The distinction between singular count nouns and count/mass and singular/plural is also noteworthy. The occurrence of “*the*” in Oromo is not as frequent as in English. The distinction between count noun and noncount noun is also not strictly observed. It seems that the teachers and the learners (in most cases) are unaware or unmindful of the standard rules governing the use of articles and determiners in English. That is why sentences such as- “I am student. You are teacher.” are considered OK.
2. There are two numbers – singular and plural. (book- books). In Ethiopian English the use of “-s” plural marker is used even where it is not required. Uncountable items such as furniture, equipment, dirt and luggage are regularly used with a plural marker to denote more than one. The complex system of English count nouns is further simplified by Ethiopian users when the national currency is called “*Birr*” in both singular and plural forms.
3. According to Quirk *et al.*, (1972) the distinction of stativity is central to the grammar of verbs in English. For example, the sentence ‘*I am not understanding*’ will be labelled as “incorrect” by grammarians. As a rule statives do not usually occur in the progressive. But this rule is not strictly followed by the expanding circle users including Ethiopians.
4. Verbalizing strategies are employed by the users to avoid complexity of meaning. In English many verbs are derived from nouns. The expanding circle users of English in Ethiopia takes further liberty and invent – thief-thiefing.
5. Complex tenses are usually avoided (perfect and perfect continuous). The continuous form is used more often (I am having a car). The interrogative sentences are usually formed without the auxiliary verb-How you go? Where you live?).
6. According to Quirk *et al.*, (1972) the meaning of place preposition can be described in terms of those that signal location at a point, along a line, on a surface or in three dimensional space. Prepositions signal location as well as motion. But the Ethiopian users of English tend to use the prepositions according to the supposed meaning of the words. For example

– the use of “to” in the sentence – “I go to home.” can be seen in tune with “I go to school.” The reason may be lack of systematic knowledge about the standard usage and over-dependence on meaning.

7. Ask for a person who is naïve about Amharic would assume “*astwawk’eachelehu*” a single word; but it is actually a sentence which would mean “I’ve got them introduced to each other”. In Sidama, a high land East Cushitic language, the same sentence has a different structure, i.e “*ensisu:mmonssa*”. In English, we say call me or phone me; in Amharic, it is “*dewillign*” (if it is for 3rd p. sing. subject), which can literally mean call to me. This is why we at times hear Amharic speakers use expressions like *he called to me, *please tell to him,*let her to come, *make them to suffer etc. (After Ababayehu Messele & Endashaw Wolde Michael, 2009).

A few examples of typical verb and other usage are being gratefully reproduced from Wollega University’s module “Communicative Grammar” just to underline the premise that the acceptance of such forms is widespread among the educated users of English in Ethiopia.

1. The bird does migrate
2. Everyone has done his or her work.
3. Kenenisa Bekele is the fast runner of the world.
3. Those students are belongs to Wollega University.
4. Read the sentences in below.
5. Two-third of the students did not registered on time.

(Waktola *et al.*, 2010)

Writing

In an Expanding Circle country like Ethiopia, it is natural that the written mode (I do not mean creative writing) will be more useful than the spoken one. When the medium of instruction is English, there will be a lot of writing. The domains in which writing is very important include business and commerce, academics; cultural and diplomatic exchange. The purpose of all writing is communication and interaction. Writing is also used to convey factual information with a view to persuading, convincing and informing the readers. That is why it is useful to study how Ethiopians use English in their writing.

Most Ethiopians write for their own people and their main aim is to grow and go steadily. They are not in a hurry to master the foreign tongue. There is an Ethiopian proverb that can underline their approach, “Little by little the Egg begins to walk.” There are no *Calibany* compulsions, in the

postcolonial sense; there is no *Rushdieque* writing back syndrome too. One can find examples of Ethiopian writing in almost all educated persons' professional letters and academic writing. According to Kachru (2001) speaking and writing are creative activities as all linguistic acts are. They are based on individual experience situated in a context. The context and register is bound to reflect itself in written texts as well as in oral discourse. Look at the following unedited original extract:

Dear distance learners, no doubt that you know from preceding studying some linguistics courses that one of the various characteristics of language is the specific study of human language. The purpose of this module is to bring you a bit closer to this fact; i.e, the study of language & linguistics. To the specific, it may give you some invaluable insights into some subtopics such as the nature & characteristics of human language & its origin as well as the nature and history of linguistics and some of its essential basic concepts (Shewa, 2013).

The writer of this paragraph is a representative educated Ethiopian English user. He has been teaching English for a long time. But his English does not represent the conventions of the Inner Circle mode of academic writing. Look at the use of a single word "some". Let us focus on this word first. It is the "*cohesive tie*" in Halliday's sense for the writer. The sentence does not conform to the conventions of Inner Circle Englishes; they will do so only if the item *some* is deleted or they will not use it repeatedly. The use of "that is", "as well as" "to the (sic) specific", "no doubt", "you know" "such as" "some of its" etc. also indicate that the educated Ethiopians use innovative linking devices when they write in English. The use of 'dear distance learner' and subsequent use of "you learners" repeatedly in the entire module is also noteworthy. The use of these cohesive devices of English in this way is unknown to most speakers of Inner Circle varieties of English. The purpose of this comment is not to inspire the Expanding Circle users to indiscriminately follow the norms provided by the Inner and Outer Circle users of English. Such usage cannot be termed "fossilization" in Selinker's sense. This is also not a case of lack of linguistic and communicative competence (cf. Chomsky, Halliday and Hymes). In the example quoted above, the use of the linking devices is patterned on the conventions of the first language. Perhaps such use and usage makes sense to the user and the readers of this variety.

Discourse

It is a known fact that different language speaking communities have different ways of speaking. In fact, different ethnic groups living in the same speech community use a shared language differently (Tannen, 1984). For instance Amharic speakers of English are different from Oromia speakers of English in Ethiopia (The situation is similar to Indian speakers of English where a Hindi speaker usually speaks English differently from a person from Kerala state). Discourse is language beyond the sentence. Effective communication requires competence in language and capacity to utilize linguistic competence in expressing one's intended meaning (Widdowson, 1984). As said earlier, in the Ethiopian context English is only one code in the linguistic repertoire of the local speech communities. Conversation is one of the activities in which the language use is not restricted by the standard as the immediate aim of the speakers is to enact their respective social roles. The proper management of the interaction is more important than grammaticality of the syntax. For example, the following conversation between two friends not only underlines their verbal repertoire but also indicate their preferences as far as syntax is concerned.

- A: Hi, Tolera! Have you met my friend, Hawine Boru?
 B: No, I have never met her. Is she your marriage partner?
 A: No, she is my class-mate. We've been studying together since grade twelve.
 B: Oh, you have been together for so long. Didn't you talk any love affairs to her?
 A: Not at all. I approach her as I do to my younger sister. We seem as if we are from the same family. Even her body colour resembles my aunt's daughter.
 B: Where is she now?
 A: She's consulting her advisor. She'll come after a while. Oh, even she is heading towards us from there the office.
 B: Is she the tall lady in a blue skirt walking down the stairs?
 A: Exactly!
 B: Wow! She is pretty.
 A: May I introduce you to her?
 B: Please do. I'd love to.
 A: Ok, let's stroll towards her and we'll take her to Robera Café.

(Wollega University Ethiopia, Communicative English Skills Final Exam for first year Students of 2012-13 A. Y., Page 4)

It would be appropriate to mention here that the Ethiopian society is not only directed by their social values, cultural and ethical codes of

conduct but also governed by their customs and environment. The dialogue reproduced above is not only a reflection of the Ethiopian social norms and conduct (I approach her as I do to my younger sister....) but also familiarizes us with a mosaic of collocations such as “marriage partner” and “to talk love affair”. Look at the use of personal pronoun “she” in the yes- no question- Is she the tall lady in a blue skirt walking down the stairs? Mark the use of “there” in the statement - even she is heading towards us from *there* the office. One can very well understand that the speaker’s intended emphasis makes him use this kind of strategy which may be unusual for the Inner Circle ear but is quite normal for the Ethiopian speakers of English.

Another area of interest is the use of greetings and phatic communion by Ethiopians who rely more on their oral traditions than the “*firanz*” (foreign) ways of greeting with “Hi” and “Hello”. An Ethiopian greeting is also an elaborate affair to make a lasting impression. The normal hand-shake in the English way is considered incomplete without adding the push of the shoulder with the shoulder. In addition to this, the exchange of phatic communion is not limited to a word or two. (As in English Good Morning... Good Morning.) The hand-shake is an ostentatious ritual and might perplex an outsider. (akkam Bultan (literally means “ How did you pass the night?”, ,nagaa nagaa, fayyaa fayyaa ...Galata Wakayyo etc.). After asking about the family, their health and well being, there will be a chance to start the real “play” (conversation). In English, one can directly ask a pedestrian, “Would you mind telling me how to reach Wollega University?” It would be considered affected and uncivilized in Ethiopia. An average Ethiopian would not mind and rather find it appropriate if one uses a few words of Amharic or Afan Oromo in between English speech. A very frequent sound “ish” is heard to indicate approval and affirmation. In the same way the word “ abhit” is a friendly address-form even to address a stranger. There are many other words and phrases that might strike the foreign ear (tinnish... tinnish (little ... little) but this is the way the Ethiopian discourse in English is carried.

CONCLUSION

And now, in conclusion, let me say something from the core of my heart. English in Ethiopia is slightly different. The Ethiopians use English but avoid the Georgian Calendar and prefer their own way of clock- time. They are at ease with the “thirteen months” of sunshine instead of usual twelve elsewhere. As the spread of education

among all is very fast and the knowledge of some English is mandatory in the educational setting, the users with little knowledge and limited vocabulary also try to evolve their own kind of communication strategies. I will always remember a gentleman sitting in front of Classic Café (Nekemte town) and helping newcomers to get a rented- accommodation. I named him “Mr. Fulfil”. When he doesn’t get any appropriate word in reply of the racy speakers of English, he invariably says, “and everything fulfilled.” There are instances when someone couldn’t follow the talk given by a native speaker of English but was able to fill in the questionnaire given to her. During a two- day ELT workshop (March, 2013) for school teachers held at Wollega University, one of the participants shared his experience of using an audio cassette player in the class. The teaching aid was a gift from an Inner Circle country. Whenever the students heard the two voices (one male & the other female) they were amazed and bewildered to find a different “English” piercing their ears. They could hardly pick up a few words. The level of their intelligibility was really very low. But the same set of learners was very comfortable with their teacher’s English. They were also amazed to find an Indian professor speaking English the same way as they speak. For them the English emanating from the teaching aid was “NO English!” (“Is it also English?” They asked in bafflement). The English they are familiar with and comfortable in is their English. With due respect to William Shakespeare and his ilk, it should be stressed that once the language variety is ear-marked, it should be named too. The case of Ethiopian English is thus presented before you for further research and consideration.

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