

## **Level Of Local Languages Interferences In English-Medium Classes And Their Effect In Attaining Quality Education: The Case Of Four Secondary Schools Located Within Hawassa University's Technology Villages**

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**Abstract:** The main objective of this study was to investigate the level of interference of local languages in English medium classes in four schools in Sidama Zone. The study was designed in conformity with the principles of mixed approach, that is, largely qualitative and to some degrees quantitative. The major research tools used to collect data were classroom observation and interview conducted with students of Grade Nine. Correspondingly, the results indicated that in the selected schools, in Grade Nine, using local language( most frequently Amharic) in English-medium classes was a common scenario. Among all sentences the teachers used while they were conducting classes, 51.4% of them were in the English Language and the rest 48.6% were in Amharic and rarely in Sidama Language. This data take us to the conclusion that the level of local language use in the above selected schools was more than the required amount. The study further indicated that sentence level interference was the most frequently observed linguistic feature. The factors responsible for using local languages in the English-medium classes were: to make the lessons more clear, low level of students' English Language skills, to create a friendly classroom environment, to manage classes more successfully, pedagogical limitations and to save time for various class activities. With regard to local language use in their English medium classes, 14 respondents (87.5%) had the attitude that when their teachers used local language, the lessons became clearer to them than the explanations they received in English Language. The other 2 (12.5%) of the respondents, nevertheless, contended that since the medium selected to transmit education is the English Language, mixing local language was of no advantage save confusion. Regarding different subject teachers' English Language ability, most of the respondents( 87.5%) were of the attitude that their teachers did not have deficiency in explaining lessons in English Language. The other 2 (12.5%), however, had the attitude that some of their teachers had problem in expressing themselves in clear English.

**Key words:** Borrowing, code mixing , embedded language, local language interference, , Matrix language,

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background to the Study**

Local language interference is a meaningful and purposeful exchange between two language codes among people who contribute to those specific codes. During this exchange, as Levine (2003) notes, a number of social contexts and classroom behaviors can be manifested. Though local language interferences (codes switching) in routine social contexts and local language interferences in the classroom have different characteristics, sometimes certain functions are common in both situations.

These days using local languages in English-medium classes is a commonly observed scenario in many bilingual and multi-lingual classes at different level of learning though there are several researchers who argued that repetitive local language use (code switching) was incongruent with the search for quality education. For example, the study conducted by Auer (2001) revealed that even if most countries have the policy which urges that all classroom interactions should officially be mediated through English, in practice, there was a widespread tendency to use local languages or a mixture of English by most bilingual teachers and learners in almost all classes and subjects that constituted the institutional curricula.

In support of using local languages in bilingual classes, Airey (2004) notes that using local languages has been found to be neither random nor meaningless, nor does it necessarily reflect language weakness. Rather, a device conveys social information concerning role relationships or used as a stylistic process to add flavour or emphasis to an utterance. In his conclusion, he remarks that, under some circumstances, local language use seems to be rule-governed, with mastery of the structure of both languages as prerequisite.

As part of the global transformation, in the methods and techniques teachers employ in teaching various subjects through the English language, a large number of scholars consider classroom local language interference as a fact that may not be entirely ignored in any way especially in a country like Ethiopia where English is used as a foreign language medium of instruction. Their major rationale is that local language interferences are important at any stage of learning since the differential codes of two languages have the power to enhance student-teacher interactions.

In the same way, Myers-Scotton (2001), suggests that using local languages in the classroom needs to be considered as a natural phenomenon in a bilingual situation. He further argues that since language alternation in the classroom is not self-evidently counter-productive, there is an ever growing need for the subject to be researched further.

In contrary, Macaro (2001) is of the opinion that: "If the students start speaking in their own language without your permission... it generally means that something is wrong with the lesson" (p. xiv). In the same way, Bauer and Kruth (2002), have the view that local language interference is largely disadvantageous as it may hamper the students' ability to understand the notions of various subjects in the foreign language. The above scholars wind up their opinion suggesting that frequent use of learners' L1 is one of the most serious factors in learning L2 terminologies in different disciplines' vocabulary. From the above suggestions we observe that the issue is still alive with serious pedagogical implications for on-going research studies. Consequently, the present researchers are motivated to conduct their study on the extent to which local languages are used in teaching various subjects in four secondary schools, which are located within the technology villages of Hawassa University, Namely: *Chirie, Mejo, Arbegona, and Wondo Gennet Secondary Schools*.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Local language interference is a common phenomenon in the current bilingual or multi lingual language classrooms where English is used as a medium of instruction. It is one of the classroom behaviors where teachers or students shift from one language to another in a conversation. This language switching might not be the whole sentence, but also can occur in brief phrases or words. When we investigate various research studies conducted so far on local language interferences (codes switching), most of them depict sociolinguistic nature. The sociolinguistic approach has explored languages in touch with bilingual or multilingual communities and dealt with the social and cultural motivations for its use. When we examine the case with some details, however, we observe that little has been done on issues related to its pedagogical benefits or drawbacks, motives of the instructors for local language interference, attitudes of both instructors and students, its impact on the teaching/ learning perceptions about linguistic features and situations in which code switching occurs. The other serious issue is that there are no sufficient findings on the impact of local languages interferences on students' understanding of target language and students' learning ability to see whether the interference augments or deteriorates their progress in learning various subjects or courses.

In deciding to switch codes (languages), researchers suggest different conditions, which are responsible for doing so in their classrooms where the English language is mandatory to teach other subjects. Khan (2004), for example, lists the following events as pre-conditions: proficiency, language preference, social identity, and role of the participants and the like. Other researchers who conducted their study on the same area confirm that the relationship between the two languages and their status, power, and prestige associated with them are also decisive factors when a teacher intends to switch the code.

The more we read on the area, the more we find issues which are kept pending. The crux of the present researchers' argument is, thus, unless the amount and purposes of code switching in classrooms are limited and is clearly identified, its effect can be devastating. The Ethiopian Education and Training Policy issued in 1994 states that the medium of instruction at secondary schools shall be English across the country. Accordingly, students who are attending their studies at this level need to have reasonable proficiency of the English language that help them acquire the knowledge that they require. All subjects teachers are similarly expected to have an appropriate level of English language command that help them conduct various lessons in English language. Thus, if instructors and students do not successfully communicate through the medium of instruction, that is, English, the quality of education can be affected directly or indirectly.

These days it is common to hear various opinions about local language use in English medium instruction. Some teachers say that they use local languages sometimes when they found them beneficial. Others witnessed that they do it frequently as majority of the students' English language proficiency is below the required standard. Very few, however, suggested that no matter how complicated the subject matter is, they do not feel comfortable when they use other local languages; instead, as they remarked, they prefer to explain the subject under discussion repeatedly through simple words. Hence, it is these tumultuous opinions and informal observations of the researchers, which triggered them off to investigate the actual classroom practices, with regard to level of using local languages while teachers are conducting various lessons in the four secondary

schools aforementioned where the English language has already been selected to be used as a medium of instruction. In like manners, this study is designed to address the following basic research questions:

1. Is using local languages a common practice during classroom discourses in the secondary schools under investigation?
2. What are the major pedagogical purposes (motives) which force Grade Nine teachers, who teach various subjects other than English, to switch codes during classroom instructions (if any)?
3. What are the most frequently observed linguistic features during local language use (if any)?
4. What are the students' attitudes towards code switching while they are learning various lessons of various disciplines?
5. Are there impacts that result from local language uses with regard to the subjects that have already been taught?

### **Significance of the Study**

The ultimate findings of this study may give hint to secondary school teachers in general, Grade Nine teachers, in particular to reconsider their classroom behaviors in line with the trend of mixing local language(s) in teaching other subjects where the English Language has already been selected as a medium of instruction. Second, teacher education colleges would get some insights that help them give awareness to their trainees (would be teachers) regarding the benefits and disadvantages of code switching when they commence their actual teaching profession in the real world. Thirdly, various school management bodies in the zone can look into the findings and organize workshops or seminars that help secondary school teachers under their management to re-conceptualize the strengths and limitations of local language uses so that the teachers can make appropriate rectifications on their teaching practices in the classroom.

### **Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.4.1 General Objective**

The major objective of this study is to investigate the extent to which Grade Nine teachers' of various subjects do code switching (mix local language(s) when they teach other subjects in English and what the functions thereof are.

#### **Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of this research are to:

1. investigate whether local language interferences are common practices during classroom discourses of various subjects in the schools selected for this study.
2. examine the major pedagogical purposes (motives) which force Grade Nine teachers to employ local languages when they conduct discussions on various subjects in the classroom (if any)
3. identify the most frequently observed linguistic features during local language interferences (if any)
4. study the students' attitudes towards local language uses in English-medium classes while they are learning various lessons in various disciplines
5. appraise the impacts that result from local language uses in connection to the subjects that they teach.

## **III. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Description of the Study Area**

There four schools which were selected for this study are located within the technology villages districts demarked by Hawassa University. Chirie Preparatory and Secondary School is found in Sidama Zone, Chirie Woreda. Majo Secondary School is located in Aroresa woreda. Arbegona Preparatory and Secondary School is found in Arbegona Woreda and Wondo Gennet Secondary and Preparatory School is found in Wondo Gennet Woreda.

### **Study Subjects**

The major subjects of this study were Grade Nine various subject teachers who were teaching in the aforementioned secondary schools within the technology villages demarked by Hawassa University. Furthermore, the study encompassed students who were attending their education at the same grade level.

### **Study Design**

#### **Study Type**

This study was designed, by and large, qualitatively (non-experimentally) and to some degree quantitatively. The main reason is that in studying meanings, classroom behaviours and experiences qualitative research paradigm is more preferred to other research models.

In the same way, the rationale for this study was to examine the extent to which local language interference was these days observed as one of the classroom behaviors while Grade Nine teachers taught various subjects in English medium classes. In addition, it attempted to examine the convergence and divergence of both Grade Nine teachers of various subjects and students' attitudes towards local language uses in English medium classes.

#### Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

Several qualitative researchers remark that there is no fixed way to determine the sample size of the population in qualitative study. These days, however, most qualitative researchers follow the widely accepted model of data sampling known as data saturation Saumur and Given (2008). In the same way, even if the technology villages demarked by Hawassa University were used as a basic criterion to select the secondary schools to be used as research sites for this study, data saturation model was the second sample size determining technique that the researcher used.

On the basis of the information obtained from the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State's Education Bureau, in Sidama Zone, there are thirty-four secondary schools. Among these schools, four secondary schools were selected based on their distance from the capital, Hawassa. As has been mentioned earlier in this paper, the reason is that the farther the schools are from the capital, the more challenges are observed in teaching various subjects. As a result, the researcher is determined to give priority to schools, which are located at the farthest distance from the capital, Hawassa City. In addition, the data collected and collated prior to the main study indicated that conducting the study in the aforementioned schools can represent realities in other schools in the zone.

### IV. STUDY METHODOLOGY

After the researcher had decided on the number of schools which involved in this study, he conducted observations for one month in eight Grade Nine teachers' classes, that is, two teachers' classes who were teaching different subjects in each school. In other words, one teacher's classes from the social science stream and the other from the natural science were observed.

As a result, having identified the major attention areas of the observation scheme, the researcher developed eighteen observation check-list items which helped him as guiding framework while he was following each of the activities taking place in classrooms. During the observation sessions, each of the activity was tape-recorded as this could make the data analysis more feasible later.

The second research tool that the researcher selected for data gathering for this study was semi-structured interview that was conducted with various Grade Nine subject teachers. To achieve this, eight various subject teachers whose classes had already been observed were invited for semi-structured interviews.

In addition, the researcher selected four students from each school who were learning in various streams using data saturation method as had already been done in determining the sample size of teachers and then in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with each respondent.

When the interview was going on, though moving to and fro was possible, the researcher used interview guide which helped him as compendium or topical trajectories in collecting the required qualitative data. The interview guides (frameworks of the theme) were usually more open-ended than questions prepared in a structured interview. However, in the course of interviewing, the researcher rearranged the sequence of the items of the interview by rejecting or adding more questions based on the context of the conversations. To improve the quality of the interview, one of the recommendations was conducting pre-interview assessments with the respondents.

### V. DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS

#### Discussing the Observation Data

In analyzing the observation data for this study, the researcher first transcribed the data that were recorded into the audio-tape-recorder onto blank sheets of papers. During the second stage, the lessons that were conducted in each period were divided into different categories following the qualitative description model suggested by Seidel and Kelle (1995). Each category was then subdivided into various themes and sub-themes. Finally, the researcher described, interpreted and discussed the data obtained based on 'their linguistic features and purposes.

#### Discussing the Semi-structured Interview Data

In discussing the semi-structured interview data for this study, the first step was transcribing the responses from the tape-recorder onto blank sheets of paper. After the data had been properly transcribed, the next step was coding the responses to identify categories of major and sub-themes. The purpose of coding was to make categories of themes and sub-themes clear and more consistent to readers so that ambiguities can be

resolved from the data. This indicates that all responses that are coded the same way, that is, given the same label, are simple for investigation and explanation.

**Results of the Classroom Observations**

**Purposes for Local Language Use**

The findings obtained from the observation data are presented and discussed as follows:

**Lack of Confidence on Students' English Language Skills**

Grade Nine teachers were observed using local language, most frequently Amharic Language, thinking that the students that they taught were in difficulties to understand explanations in the English Language. As they informed to the researcher informally, they could understand this from the eye-contact they made during lectures, their previous years teaching experience, complaints heard about most students' English Language skills from various colleagues, etc. For further understanding, let us see the following event in in Grade Nine Geography class.

Teacher: Ok, students what is the today's lesson in Amharic Language?

አሺልጆችየዛሬውትምሕርታችንባማርኛምንተብሎየተማራችሁትነው?

Students: Metamorphic rocks in Ethiopia

Teacher: ንጥፍድንጋይበኢትዮጵያ

Teacher: Into how many parts are they divide?

Teacher :በስንትይከፈላልብለንነበር?

Students: In three.

Teacher: Very good. What are they?

Teacher: :በጣምጥሩ:እነማናቸው?

Students: Metamorphic rock, sedimentary rock and igneous rock

ልውጥድንጋይ:ዝቃጭአለትናንጥፍአለት.....continues

From the above lesson scripts we understand that the teacher had deep interest to make his/her teaching as clear as possible. Nevertheless, he was of the belief that the students were unable to understand his lesson unless they were re-taught in Amharic Language. Because of this, after he/she had made an eye contact in the middle of the class, he/she decided to re-explain the lesson in Amharic Language to get confirmation about the clarity of his/her lesson. As the observation data from this class revealed, more than 60% of the geography teacher's lessons were presented in Amharic. Based on the close observation of the researcher, the teacher had no trust on the English Language ability of the students. Consequently, his/her remedial measure was to repeat most lessons in Amharic Language.

In connection to this, three major points can be taken into account. The first is that unless students are encouraged to think in English and struggle to understand most ideas in this language, they will seriously limit their effort to learn and improve their English language skills. Secondly, some students whose mother-tongue is not Amharic, will be under pressure to think and associate things in three languages. This kind of approach in turn leads them to the feeling of inferiority. Thirdly, the teacher him/ herself improves his/her English language skills when he/she uses the language as frequently as possible in the classroom. It is evident that in most Ethiopian contexts, the use of English Language is limited to classroom. Teachers or students at any level of learning hardly use English after the class even in those contexts where higher levels of learning are taking place. As a result, respecting the medium of instruction and motivating students to learn most subject matters in English is a better option to improve the students' English language skills and increase their interest to learn any subject in English.

**Lesson Clarity**

Some Grade Nine teachers were found using local language to make their lessons clear to their students. For further understanding let see the following mathematics teacher's class. First, the teacher revised the previous day's class fully in English Language. When he/she was asking different questions and students were answering he/she was urging them to use English. In the middle of his/her class, he/she advised his/her students: "Without good skill of English, it is difficult to become a good mathematician." Finally he/she took a piece of paper from his/her pocket and wrote the following terminologies in both English and Amharic Languages on the blackboard.

**Meanings of Important mathematical Terminologies**

Word	Definition in English	Amharic Equivalent
Infinite	-----endless.....	መጨረሻየሌለው
Sets	-----a collection of well	

defined objects.....ሰብስብ

Composite number----a number that has

more than one factors.....ከሁለት በላይ ተካፋይ ያለው፣ etc.

From the above code-switching practices we observe that the teacher had the conviction that the shortest way to make the lesson clearer to students was switching the code to the commonly used local language, that is, Amharic Language.

In this regard, scholars who conducted studies on this area remark in their conclusion that using the students' mother-tongue (commonly used language) is time saving and is the shortest way of making lessons clearer to students. In link to this, when we examine the above practices in line with modern pedagogy, using local language for such type of lessons is an acceptable practice.

Nevertheless, when there is an excessive use, the expected goal to be achieved will suffer from various setbacks. One of the constraints is that when students are accustomed to such kind of lesson presentations, they stop to think in English and hardly give attention to the teacher's explanation as they had previous experience that the teacher would inevitably switch the code into Amharic Language for further clarity or summarization.

This kind of scenario has its own disastrous effect. One of them is that even if the lesson largely conducted in Amharic Language become clearer to the students, who have problem in understanding explanations in English, the insurmountable problem is coping with challenges during examinations where there is no one to translate concepts for them into Amharic Language or any other language.

### **Pedagogical Limitations**

Teaching is a complicated activity which requires deep understanding of pedagogical theories and practices that lead the teacher to success in various contexts. Various lesson presentations require different pedagogical decisions that suit the existing reality. If the teacher has wider pedagogical background in presenting various lessons, then each pedagogical principle has its own time, place and situation for implementation based on the nature and purpose of the lesson. Under some circumstances, for example, the popular method of teaching, known by name the learner-centered method, may not fit in presenting some lessons. Thus, it is up to the discretion of the teacher to decide on the more feasible and simple method. To see the decisive role of pedagogy in presenting language lessons, let us examine the following episodes in English class at Grade Nine.

Lesson Topic: The Past Perfect Tense

Teacher: Can you tell me about the past perfect tense? When we use?

Eacher: መቼኛው ይህንን ትንሹ ጥያቄ መጠቀም፣

*What does it mean? The past perfect tense is used to show that something happened before another event (ይህንን ትንሹ ጥያቄ መጠቀም ሁለት ተከታታይ ድርጊቶች ሲፈጸሙ፣ የመጀመሪያውን ድርጊት ለመግለጽ ነው።*

*Example: The murderer had left the room before we arrived at the scene of the murder. In this example, " had left .....an example of "past perfect" and "arrived" an example of simple past.*

First and foremost, an English teacher needs to teach English. Hence, if his/her major purpose is to teach English, especially at secondary school level, he/she has to think of the degree to which local language is required for better lesson understanding. In teaching tenses, for example, there are various techniques that the teacher can use apart from explanations in local language. For instance, using time-line, showing pictures, reading a short story which comprised the tense targeted to teach, giving contextualized exercises can make the lesson simple and clear.

In the above lesson, however, we see that the teacher used decontextualized sentences in English and Amharic Language alternatively which were really less effective to understand the rule and use the tense in various communicative situations. Furthermore, the practice exercises that the teacher gave to students were not as such essential to practically use the tense in various everyday communications.

### **To create a Friendly Environment**

As could be seen from the observation data, Grade Nine teachers were using local language to establish positive and friendly environment in the class. For example, one of the teachers went out to the respond to the telephone call he received while he was teaching in the class. After he had finished his conversation, he entered the class and told students the main point of the conversation on telephone in Amharic Language. As soon as he finished his narration, all students burst into laughter. Then, he directly came back to his teaching. In so doing, he created solidarity with his students. At that moment, some students were raising up their hands to ask him some questions despite his unwillingness. This kind of behavior helps teachers to minimize the social distance between themselves and their students ;f course, without forgetting the relevance of limited distinction.

### **Vocabulary Scarcity**

A plenty of studies conducted into local language switching state that one of the reasons for code switching is when speakers are not able to find out another equivalent word which can substitute the harder word used in the speech. At this time, some teachers prefer to look for an equivalent word or expression from the local language. The main reason is to fill in this linguistic gap. Here is an example:

Teacher: *The chairperson is neither eloquent nor knowledgeable.*

Student: What is *eloquent*?

Teacher: *eloquent eh...a person who speaks without difficulty and is capable of convincing others easily*

*Is it clear? Ok in Amharic, who can tell me?*

Student: *No answer.*

Teacher: *አንደበተ-ርቱአ.... ማለት ሰሚገባተናግሮ ማሳመን የሚችል (eloquent –means a person who can speak easily and convince others*

### **To Help Academically Low Achievers**

The observation data in almost all classes indicated that most teachers, even those who were resistant to use Amharic Language during their lecture sessions, were observed using Amharic after they had checked whether low achievers had understood the main points of the lesson. To see the practical situation, let us look into the following example:

#### **Lesson Topic: Important In-organic Compounds**

Teacher: Karicha, What are the two groups of inorganic compounds?

Teacher: *ይቅርታ ተቸርጥዎታል፡፡ (Sorry teacher, the question is not clear to me)*

Teacher: *ኢንኦርጋኒክ ኮምፖውንድ ስምንት ብለው ይከፍላሉ? (What are the classification of organic compounds?)*

Student: *ሜታልና ኒንሜታል*

Teacher: In English?

*I feel wretched when I speak Amharic in English-medium classes: You yourselves too should be accustomed to speaking English for the sake of your own advantage (በአማርኛ መናገር ይደብረኛል” እናንተም ለራሳችሁ ጥቅም ስትሉ በእንግሊዘንኛ መናገር ልመዱ፡፡)*

The above lesson presentation indicated that the teacher was enthusiastic to explain every lesson in English to the best of his/her capacity. In the middle of his/her discussion, he/she was giving a pause and asking students in English whether his/her discussion was clear or not. He/she was also encouraging them to speak in English when they asked questions or answered questions. As the researcher observed his/her classes repeatedly, he/she was struggling to use simple English words to explain complicated ideas rather than repeating the same explanation in Amharic Language or in students’ native language. Nevertheless, when some students who had serious problem to understand English showed him/her gloomy faces, which signify that the lessons were not clear to them, he/she was explaining in Amharic Language very economically; even with discomfort.

### **Disciplining Purposes**

All teachers teaching at Grade Nine were observed using various English and Amharic Expressions alternatiely while disciplining and managing classes. Most of them were frequently advising their students saying: **“Discipline is the foundation of any activity.”** Most of them were commonly using the following expressions to discipline the class:

English Amharic

Keep Quiet ፀጥብሉ

Why haven’t you worn your uniform?

ለምን ይኒፎርም ሽንገል ስሺም;;.....continues

We observe from the above teacher’s classroom behavior that he/she wanted to maintain discipline in his/her classroom using both Amharic and English Languages side by side. The main reasons for using both languages were that he/she might have suspicion that some students could have difficulties to understand him/her when he/she spoke only English. Secondly, he/she wanted to convey her message with emphatic expressions. However, one surprising thing that the researchers observed was that most students gave more respectation to the teacher’s instruction when he/she used English than Amharic. The reason could be due to more effort required of them to work out the meaning of the English expressions.

### **Linguistic Features Frequently Used During Local Language Use**

In order to give readers further understanding about the observation sessions in all schools, the researcher counted the number of sentences used during the teaching/learning. He then classified them into the following categories: word level code-switching, phrases-level code-switching, sentence level code-switching, intra-sentence level code-switching and inter-sentence level-code switching.

**Frequency of Linguistic Features During Local Language Use**

No	Subject	Total No of Sents	Total No. of Pure Eng. Sent.	%	Word-level interf.	%	Phrase Lev. Interf.	%	Sent - Lev Interf	%	Intra-sent-Lev Interf	%	Inter-sent-level Interf	%
1	geog	408	60	12.5	72	17.64	56	13.7	250	61.2	76	18.6	234	57.3
2	ICT	296	200	67.6	54	13.2	20	6.7	80	27	0	0	56	18.9
3	maths	324	148	45.6	48	14.8	68	20.9	40	12.3	8	2.46	52	16.24
4	English	508	262	51.5	40	7.8	134	26.3	252	49.6	51	10.03	201	39.5
5	Chem	396	324	81.8	24	6	44	11.1	32	8	16	4	16	0
		Total	994	51.4	238	12.3	322	16.6	654		151	11.6	559	9.5

The above table demonstrated that out of the total number of 1932 sentences, used by all Grade Nine teachers, who were observed while teaching various subjects,, 994 (51.4%) of the sentences that they used during the teaching/learning process in the classroom were purely in English Language. This suggested that the use of the English Language and local language (Amharic) was almost fifty-to-fifty percent. This practice implied that using local language, i.e. Amharic is a very well established scenario across the schools in the zone. However, in a very restricted form, few of the teachers were using Sidama Language which is one of the widely used languages in the zone. Most studies conducted in the area recommend that the maximum local language use should not exceed 20%. In conclusion, using the English Language as a medium of instruction was partially trapped with various factors at Grade Nine level in the zone. In the same way, the data obtained from 11 observation sessions depicted that 48.6 % of the teachers used local languages, in most cases, Amharic Language and rarely Sidama Language. The other 51.4%, however, used the matrix language, English.

As we observe from the data further, the word level interferences were 238 and at phrase level 322. These data signified that Grade Nine teachers used local language at phrase –level than word level.

The other worth mentioning point from the above table was that the most frequent local language use was at sentence level. Next to inter-sentence-level and the least frequently used interference was intra-sentence level. These data take us to the conclusion that most teachers employed most frequently sentence-level interference.

As the observation data further suggested, the major reasons for using sentence level interference could be two. First when teachers code switch at sentence level, they could transfer full information. Secondly, they had the belief that the students could learn the English word uses and the Amharic equivalents in a better way when ideas were framed at sentence level. Thirdly, they wanted to avoid fragmented sentences so that they could transfer ideas more clearly to their students.

**Results of the Semi-structured Interviews Conducted with Students**

Key: Resp<sub>1</sub>-Respondent one, Res<sub>2</sub>- Respondent two, etc.

**Attitude toward Local Language Use in Relation to Lesson Clarity**

In responding to the item which requested the interviewees to explain their attitude towards the connection between local language use and lesson clarity, 14 respondents (87.5%) had the attitude that when the teacher used local language to reinforce his/her point of discussion, the message became clearer to them than his/her explanation in English. In their further explanation, they remarked that since English is a foreign language, understanding everything explained in English is challenging for them. Thus, sometimes, explanations in local languages are helpful for better understanding and confidence building. Resp<sub>3</sub>, in this regard had the attitude: እኛ የምንፈልገው እውቀት ነው፡፡ እውቀቱን ካገኘን ቃንቀውን በሂደት እንደርስታለን፡፡ In English, “What we basically need is the knowledge; if we acquire the knowledge, it is not that much difficult to understand the language in the course of time.”

From the responses given above we understand that the vast majority of the students were of the attitude that local language interference was of positive contribution in making the lessons discussed in the class clearer. The other 2 (12.5%) of the respondents, nevertheless, contended that since the medium selected to transmit education is the English Language, mixing a local language is a way of creating confusions. Moreover, they stated that the only opportunity where they can use English is the classroom: Either teachers or students hardly use the English Language when they are out of the classroom. Hence, reducing the practicing time of this restricted opportunity would deteriorate the motivation to learn the English Language. The other challenge is determining the type of local language to be used along with the medium of instruction. For some students, for



example, Amharic is not second or third language. As a result, sometimes the Amharic explanation itself could be more difficult to understand for such type of students than the English.

#### **Attitude towards Local Language Use in Relation to Classroom Management**

When students were asked their attitude towards local language use in managing the classroom, 8 of them (50%) of them had the attitude that they could have a good level of understanding when their teachers used local languages to manage their classes. The rest of the respondents 8(50%) had the attitude that using local language for the purpose of classroom management, did not help the teachers to maintain discipline. In their further explanation, they suggested that most students remained silent or respected regulations when the teachers used English because everyone gave attention to work out the meaning of each word in each sentence.

#### **Attitudes towards Constraints That Result from Shift to Local Language Use**

As the data demonstrated, 14 respondents ( 87.5) of them were of the opinion that using local language reasonably in the English medium classes did not have negative impact on the smooth running of educational activities. The other 2 (32.5%), nevertheless, reported that when local language was used more than the limit in an English medium class, it does not only pollute the matrix language but also it brings down the whole instruction into quagmire.

When they explained their opinions in details, they had the attitude that reasonable and limited local language use was of many contributions in enhancing the teaching/learning process. All of the contributions that they explained were almost the same as those discussed in the observation data analysis section. Hence, discussing them in this part makes the analysis monotonous. With regard to the drawbacks that result from local language use in English –medium classes, the main constraints that they listed were the following: diminishing academically high achieving students' status,, time consumption, lack of good skills in in the language switched and limiting the students' efforts and/or demotivation to practise the language and improve their competence are the dominant ones.

#### **Attitude towards Local Language Use in Relation to Interpersonal Relation**

Regarding the role of local language use in developing the interpersonal relationships, all respondents agreed that it can enhance the social relationship that needs to be established between the teacher and the students. As some students further explained, when the teacher spoke Amharic or Sidama Language, they developed a sense of familiness. As a result, they could approach him/her without any reservation and learn from him/her. Moreover, such kind of tie, as they further explained, helped them evaluate the extent to which the teacher was eager to learn their language (If he/she is from another linguistic group and culture) so as to assimilate him/herself with them. This kind of trend ultimately created a sense of oneness, which was assumed psychologically as one important tool to achieve the stated academic goal.

## **VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **4.1. Conclusions**

Based on the analyses and discussions presented above, the following conclusions have been made. According to the data obtained from the observation sessions, in Grade Nine, using local language in English-medium classes was a common scenario. All teachers used local language (Amharic) while teaching various subjects in English-medium classes though the degree varies. Among all sentences the teachers used while they were conducting classes, 51.4% of them were in the English Language and the rest 48.6% were in Amharic and rarely in Sidama Language. This finding suggested that the level of local language use in English medium classes was to some extent beyond the limit. Thus, it is difficult to attain quality education.

With regard to the linguistic features teachers employed during their explanation, the sentence-level interferences were 654 and the intra-sentence level interference was 151. And the intersentence-level interference were 559. In analyzing the above data further, we see that the most frequent local language use was at sentence level and the second one was at inter-sentence level and the least frequently used interference was at intra-sentence level. This implied that most teachers employed sentence-level interferences most frequently of all other linguistic features.

When we see the factors responsible for using local languages in the English-medium classes, the dominantly observed ones are the following: Lack of confidence on students' English Language ability, to make lessons clear, teachers' pedagogical limitations in presenting certain lessons, socialization among students, lack of vocabulary knowledge to explain some difficult concepts, to freely chat in informal environment, students frequent use of English-Amharic dictionaries, to establish positive relationships with students, to help academically low achievers, to discipline the class, to give strong advice to students.

Regarding students' attitude towards local language use in relation to lesson clarity, 14 respondents (87%) had the attitude that when the teacher used local language to reinforce his/her point of discussion, the

central message of the lesson became clearer to them than his/her explanation in English. The other 2 (12.5%) of the respondents, nevertheless, contended that since the medium selected to transmit education is the English Language, mixing a local language was a way of creating confusions. The other point was determining the local language to be used as a supportive medium of instruction. To some students, for example, Amharic is not second or third language. As a result, sometimes the Amharic explanation itself could be more difficult than the English for such types of students. Therefore, those teachers who teach in linguistically heterogeneous classes have to think critically before they decide to use local languages in English medium classes.

The other interview item aimed at examining the attitude of students towards their pride when Amharic Language is used in English-medium classes. Accordingly, 8 (50%) of them had the attitude that they developed a sense of pride. The other 50%, however, had the attitude that when the local language (Amharic) was used, they had no sense of pride; rather they expected the teacher to translate the lesson for them into their own native language i.e. Sidama Language.

Regarding the students' attitude towards local language use in relation to classroom management, 8 of them (50%) had the attitude that they could have good understanding when the teachers used local language. However, when the teachers used local language (Amharic) to manage the class successfully, some students did not give attention to their instructions or exhortations. The main reason was that, as they further explained, the students were reluctant to the instruction, warnings, or items of advice since they were familiar with the language. Contrarily, when the teachers used the English Language, respect for the teachers' instructions or advice could increase because everyone was cognizant of the challenges that everyone should experience while learning a foreign language. In other words, every student considered the English Language as a symbol of intellectuality.

With regard to the constraints that result from shift to local language use, 14 respondents (87.5%) were of the opinion that using local language with limit in the English-medium classes, did not have negative effect on the smooth running of academic activities. The other 2 (32.5%), nevertheless, thought that when local language was used more than its limit in an English-medium classes, it did not only pollute the matrix language but also it brought down the whole instruction into quagmire.

### **Recommendations**

On the bases of the data analyses and conclusions made in this study, the following recommendations have been drawn:

1. As the findings in this study revealed, the practice of using local language (Amharic) was beyond the limit determined by researchers in the field. Hence, there needs to be an intensive mini-seminars and workshops to all teachers at school level, woreda level, or zonal level at an appropriate time of the academic year to minimize the degree of its severity.
2. Teacher training colleges or universities need to give more attention to the issue and incorporate it into their teaching methodology courses in harmony with the realities in our country in general in our region in particular.
3. The English Language competence of each teacher needs to be maximized from time to time. In like manner, various English Language improvement programmes need to be designed for teachers who teach various subjects and the English Language itself so that they can augment their skills from time to time. To this effect, there has to be a system in which the English Language skills of all teachers would be tested at least every academic year and incentives or supports are given to them based on the result they achieve.
4. Teaching is a very complicated, demanding and challenging activity. As a result, it requires updating oneself from time to time and building one's knowledge continuously and critically. Thus, the school management in collaboration with other bodies concerned have to organize various forums in which the teachers can exchange experiences and improve the status of their teaching profession.
5. In order to make students successful communicators in foreign language (English in Ethiopian context), the most important attention is when they were at lower grades level. Thus, those teachers who are teaching the English Language at lower grade level, have to be recruited for training based on their interest for the profession and their level of competence in the language. Moreover they need to get adequate and quality training when they are in teacher colleges or universities. Once they have graduate from colleges does not mean that they are fully competent to teach the language effectively. Thus, continuous and practicable refreshment and upgrading trainings have to be given to them.
6. English Language development is unthinkable or very challenging unless collaborative efforts are made across schools, zones or regions. Therefore, there has to be a network that helps teachers share experiences and learn from each other.

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