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Visual Propaganda and (anti-)separatism in the Cameroonian cyberspace: A conceptual perspective on the role of images in the Ambazonia war

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Abstract

Although the use of disinformation and propaganda in the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon has been the subject of much debate, very little scholarly attention has been devoted, particularly to the use of images as tools for propaganda in the crisis. The leverage of images as a war strategy or a public diplomacy technique in the crisis is still grossly understudied. To fill this gap in knowledge, the present paper examines how images have been at the center of the information war opposing the separatist and anti-separatist movements in Cameroon, particularly in cyberspace. Using secondary sources, textual analysis, and critical observations, the paper specifically explores cases of manipulated images used by both separatist and nationalist movements in the Ambazonia war. The paper also examines foreign observers' use or treatment of images related to the war to contribute to the socio-political discourse on the Ambazonia Crisis. In line with the above objectives, the paper is divided into three main parts. In the first place, the paper provides a theoretical construction of images, propaganda, and secessionist agitations. In the second place, it examines pro- and anti-secessionist movements' use of images in the Ambazonia war, and in the last place, the paper explores how international organizations have been using images to mediate in the conflict.

Keywords: Ambazonia Crisis, Ambazonia Defence Force, Anglophone Crisis, Propaganda, Secessionism, Separatism,

Full length original article

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since September 9, 2017, Cameroon's¹ North-West and South-West Regions have been brutalised by a secession war popularly called the Ambazonia War, the NOSO war or the Anglophone Crisis (see image in Plate 1). The secession crisis started after a series of demonstrations led by English-speaking teachers were violently repressed by the forces of law and order. The demonstrations were aimed at protesting French domination and a perceived "Francisization" of the English system of education in Cameroon. These demonstrations also followed similar movements initiated by Anglophone lawyers, who, on their own part, protested pro-Francophone "adulterations" of the Common Law system in Cameroon's Anglophone Regions. The brutal repression of the two protests mentioned above engendered waves of expressed frustration among Anglophone communities as well as a series of condemnations across the world. These frustrations culminated in the emergence of both armed separatist groups (notably the Ambazonia Defence Forces and the Southern Cameroon Defence Forces) and pro-secession activists who, since September 2017, have been using various offline and online-based campaigns to push for a separatist agenda in Cameroon. The pro-secessionists have launched a series of violent campaigns for the creation of a breakaway state called Ambazonia, an entity that territorially covers the two English-speaking regions of Cameroon. In response to these separatist campaigns, the Cameroonian government and its allies (anti-secessionist communities) have deployed countermovements to downplay or neutralize the separatist rhetoric and ultimately protect Cameroon's national unity. Thus, since September 2017, Cameroon's cyberspace and media landscape have been the theater of an information war between pro- and anti-separatist activists.



Plate 1: Anglophone Regions of Cameroon.

Source: DW News, 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/separatism-in-cameroon-5-years-of-violent-civil-war/a-59369417>

¹ The Republic of Cameroon is a central African country situated at the junction of the Gulf of Guinea. It is bounded on the North by Chad, on the South by Congo (Brazzaville), Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, on the West by Nigeria and on the East by the Central African Republic. The country is administratively divided into ten regions (Far North, North, Adamawa, East, Centre, South, Littoral, West, South West and North West). Its capital city is Yaoundé. Other major towns of the country include Douala (the economic capital), Bafoussam, Garoua, Bamenda, Kumba and Limbe among others. Cameroon has a population estimated at 18 million inhabitants including Francophone and Anglophone communities. The Anglophone communities amount to 20% of the population and are territorially located in the North-West and South West Regions of the country (BBC World Trust 2010). Thus, Cameroon is a bilingual country as it has adopted English and French as its two official languages. The country equally has over 240 ethnic groups. The most dominant include the Fulani-Hausa, Bamileke, Fan-Beti and Duala.

One key weapon used by both sides to this information war has been (digitally manipulated) images and internet driven activism. In effect, both the separatists and the anti-separatist movements have, at various points, anchored their advocacy, propaganda, and counter-campaigns in (well-doctored or digitally manipulated) images, so much so that the Ambazonia War could rightly be described as an image-driven war, what Winkler and Dauber (2014) call “visual propaganda”. At various points, separatist groups such as the Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF) as well as pro-secessionist activists have spread gory footage of the Cameroonian army’s raids in various parts of the Anglophone zones. This has been in an attempt to frame the Cameroonian forces of order and the government as an occupation force and a violator of human rights in English-speaking Cameroon. The separatists’ image-based efforts have also sought to paint the Cameroonian government as a cruel and dictatorial force. The ultimate goal of such use of images has been to woo the international community and secure the latter’s support for the separatists’ independence struggle. Armed separatist groups’ propaganda campaigns have also often involved the use of footage of their “successful” military attacks on Cameroon’s army positions and government institutions. The spread of such images has visibly been to achieve two things: suggest their resilience and invincibility and ultimately win the support and admiration of potential sympathizers among Anglophone Cameroonians. The Cameroonian government has deployed similar image-based propaganda to tarnish the image of separatist movements, downplay the claims of the secessionist movements, or protect itself from harmful disinformation campaigns from separatist groups.

Although the use of disinformation and propaganda in the Ambazonia War has been the subject of much heated debate in Cameroon, very little, if any, scholarly attention has been devoted to the use of images as a tool for propaganda in the crisis. The leverage of images as a war strategy or public diplomacy technique in the crisis is still grossly understudied. To fill this gap, the present paper sets out to examine how images have been at the center of the information war opposing pro and anti-separatists in Cameroon, particularly in cyberspace. The paper specifically explores cases of doctored or manipulated images used by both separatist and nationalist movements in the Ambazonia war in a bid to win the support of the international community and give the impression that they are the dominant and victorious party or side in the conflict. The paper also examines foreign observers’ use or treatment of images related to the war to contribute to the socio-political discourse on the Ambazonia Crisis. In line with the above objectives, the paper is divided into four main parts. In the first place, the article provides a theoretical construction of images, propaganda, and secessionist war. In the second place, it examines pro- and anti-secessionist movements’ use of images in the Ambazonia war, and in the last place, it explores how international organizations have been using images to mediate in the conflict.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper is based on a descriptive research design. As its name indicates, descriptive research aims at describing the characteristics of the population or phenomenon under study. It focuses principally on the “what” rather than the “why” of the research subject (Manjunatha 2019). It seeks to describe the nature of the demographic segment that is the subject of the research. Rillo and Alieto (2018) explain that this research design is “a purposive process of gathering, analyzing, classifying, and tabulating data about prevailing conditions, practices, processes, trends, and cause-effect relationships and then making adequate and accurate interpretations about such data with or without or sometimes with minimal aid of statistical methods” (p. 169). The authors also observe that the research design “ascertains prevailing conditions of

facts in a group under study that give either qualitative or quantitative, or both, descriptions of the general characteristics of the group as results” (p. 169). In line with this, the present study sought to describe the nature and state of visual propaganda in the online-based activism of both pro- and anti-separatist movements involved in the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon.

Three principal methods of data collection were used in the study: documentary analysis, critical observations, and qualitative content analysis of randomly collected online images. The documentary analysis used in the study consisted of analyzing various types of documents in view of collecting data. Only relevant secondary sources were considered in the study. These sources included peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, working papers, institutional reports, newspaper articles, official government texts, encyclopedias, and online contents, among others. The data collected through this method particularly enabled the author to reach the first objective of the paper. This objective was to provide a theoretical construction of images, propaganda, and the secessionist war. The use of a qualitative content analysis of relevant images related to the Anglophone crisis was key to addressing the second and third objectives of the paper. These second and third objectives included: 1) examining pro- and anti-secessionist movements’ use of images in the Ambazonia war; and 2) exploring how international organizations have been using images to mediate in the conflict.

Data collected through critical observations (the use of the senses to gather data) also helped to gather relevant information for the study. This information was used to buttress different points made in the paper. The various examples of visual propaganda presented in this paper may not, in terms of quantity, be representative of pro- and anti-separatist movements in Cameroon. However, they vividly show how both anti- and pro-separatist movements have manipulatively been deploying images to spread fake news and ultimately sway hearts in favor of their respective causes and worldviews.

2.1. Images, Propaganda and Violent Activism Online: A Theoretical Construction

For years, audiences have regarded photographs as an accurate representation of reality. In his famous essay titled “Camera Lucinda”, Roland Barthes (cited in [Bradburne et al. 2010](#)) claims that there is a referential relationship between photographs and reality. He contends that a photographic image is the result of a chemical-optical impression by which reality is imprinted on a material support in the same way in which it presents itself in front of the camera lens. In tandem with this, photographs have, in popular fantasy, been associated with factual representations or something factual. Media [Reality \(2019\)](#) associates this popular tendency with human psychology. The source notes that “photographs didn’t exist 200,000 years ago. So the older part of our brain can’t tell the difference between a photograph of someone and a real human being”.

It should, however, be underlined that the truth claim of photographs is questionable for at least two reasons. The first reason is that even when they are not the products of digital manipulations, images have, in most cases, represented subtle ways of influencing the human mind. As noted by scholars such as [Bog \(2020\)](#) and [Meyer \(2008\)](#), among others, each image is created by a person who has a specific motive or agenda. In fact, almost every image is a medium through which a person practices gatekeeping and tries to ultimately influence others (viewers). In the media business in particular, images chosen (particularly around high-stakes political issues) are rarely chosen randomly. The images are mostly aimed at influencing

viewers or audiences in a specific way by showing the subject being photographed in an unusual way or situation. [Sontag \(2001\)](#) somewhat underlines this ability of photography to bring to the fore the problematic and unusual things that subtly lead to the misrepresentation of the photographed subject. She writes that “to photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them that they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed. To photograph someone is subliminal murder” (p. 14–15).

The second reason why the truth claim of the photograph should be put to question is the fact that digital photography has seriously diluted, nay, neutralized, the referential relationship between photographs and reality. [Bradbume et al. \(2010\)](#) explain the loss of referential relationships mentioned above. They state that:

As production, post-production, and distribution are digitized processes, present-day images lack the original reference linking the photograph to the reality out of which it arises. With the disappearance of the negative and film, there is no longer any way of ascertaining the original source of the image. Since this consists simply of digital code, the photograph in the classical and material sense of the term can be regarded as definitively dead and buried. (p.26).

[Bradbume et al. \(2010\)](#) further contend that the ever-evolving digital techniques of photo manipulation now enable image creators and image users to exhibit the same creative skills and produce the same effects as visual artists. [Bradbume et al. \(2010\)](#) explain that:

Paradoxically enough, the rules governing the functioning of digital photography are similar to those that characterize painting. While digital tools have made possible operations that we could describe as pictorial, the works produced can hardly be compared to paintings. Photographers today can project their mental images onto the photographic surface without leaving any trace of their intervention. They can make the viewer believe that the image is a reproduction of reality, given that he or she has no way of ascertaining the authenticity of the object represented. The reading, understanding, and interpretation of the image depend totally on the availability of secondary information. (p.26)

In spite of photography’s contested relationship with reality, people still continue to ascribe much factual value to photographs. Indeed, people tend to ascribe such values even to digital photographs. As [Collins \(2017\)](#) rightly observes, most photographs provide inaccurate representations of truth because of their ability to be manipulated; however, they continue to be regarded as factual in some sense. In line with this, photographs and other forms of visual representation have for centuries been deployed by various categories of organizations as serious instruments for propaganda. Thus, photography has, in various instances, been leveraged to control subjects and audiences in both democracies and authoritarian nations ([Caroll, 2017](#)). This has led to the emergence of such neologisms as “photo-propaganda” (Winter 2022) and “visual propaganda” (Winkler & [Dauber, 2014](#)), among other concepts. Susan [Sontag \(2001\)](#) makes reference to this scenario in her contention that “just as a camera is a sublimation of the gun, to photograph someone is a subliminal murder”. In other words, photography in particular and images in general could be used as political weapons to the detriment of a people.

Throughout history, photography has represented an efficacious weapon for information wars as well as other forms of political propaganda. Examples to illustrate this truism are found in various regions of the world ([Bolt, 2012](#); [Jowett & O’Donell, 2011](#)). One such example is Adolf

Hitler's use of photo-based propaganda against the Jews in 1930s Germany. In the guise of attaining an imaginary racial purity in Germany, Hitler's Nazi Party initiated sustained anti-Semitic propaganda that was strongly rooted in the use of visual narratives. Technically, the scheme sought to unite the German population against the Jews. Through this visual propaganda campaign, the German public was bombarded with demeaning images that associated the Jews with rats, filth, parasites, and impurity. The photographs represented Jews as scandalous, uncontrollable, and enemies, among other negativities. An exhibition christened Eternal Jews was even organized in Munich in 1937 with over 265 gloomy images of the Jews. The Eternal Jews exhibition associated the Jews with the Soviet Union and African-Americans, who at the time were considered racially impure. Like many other racist projects, this exhibition seriously dehumanized the Jews and ultimately spurred the German populace to develop and manifest anti-Semitic sentiments. These various forms of photographic propaganda were ultimately aimed at building a subconscious association between Jews and a feeling of disgust (Beale, Boyd, & Coan, 2020; Collins, 2017). According to Burleigh (2000), the Nazi Party's propaganda brought to the fore evidence of the perceived wrongdoing of the Jews. Such propaganda also provoked sentiments of racial superiority among the German people. As Burleigh (2000) puts it, "propaganda encouraged and incited people to entertain thoughts that, under normal circumstances, they might have remained blissfully ignorant of" (p. 88).

Another illustration of photographic propaganda is seen in Franklin D. Roosevelt's image-assisted campaign aimed at advocating his 1933–1939 New Deal Program in the United States of America. Collins (2017) reviews some of the images mobilized by Roosevelt to influence the masses in favor of his program. Collins maintains that various poverty and devastation images were, for the purpose of propaganda, distributed by the Farm Security Administration (FSA) in rural America to attract support for Roosevelt's economic recovery plan. In like manner, extremist, insurgent, and secessionist groups across the globe have been mobilizing photographic or image-based propaganda in favor of their respective causes. The ubiquity of the Internet and social media has most often enabled these groups' propaganda to be more diffused, more impactful or harmful, and naturally more talked about. In line with this, Winkler and Dauber rightly observe that "cheap and easy access to modernized communication technologies virtually assures continued improvements in global extremist groups' future use of visual media campaigns" (p. 4).

Extremist groups such as the Islamic State (ISIS), Hizbollah, al-Qaeda, and Boko Haram every day deploy online images to preach their respective political doctrines, indoctrinate, re-brand their movement on the international stage, sway hearts, and ultimately attract followers or sympathizers. Online image-assisted propaganda has, for these groups, been "a ready channel for depicting their violent acts as legitimate, for reaching sympathetic target audiences, and for intimidating opponents" (Winkler & Dauber, 2014). In her book titled "The Terrorist Images", Winter (2022) does a meticulous analysis of 20,000 photographs deployed by the Islamic State. She identifies the implicit value systems that drive the extremist group's ideological appeal. She remarks that ISIS' visual propaganda aims to denote policy, navigate through defeat, and construct an "impossible reality: a totalizing image-world of Salafi-Jihadist symbols and myths" (p. xi). A thing common to most insurgent and extremist groups' use of visual propaganda is that, while graphically making a case for their violent "activism", they tend to stress their military superiority and the weaknesses of the government(s) or the regular armies they combat on the (offline) battlefield. An analyst at the Directorate of National Intelligence Open Source Center, Martin Gurri, and two of his colleagues corroborate the above observation with close reference

to the al-Qaeda movement's use of visual propaganda at the beginning of the Second Gulf War (in Iraq). The researchers pointedly note that:

From the earliest days of the war in Iraq, terrorist and insurgent attacks were regularly staged so that they could be captured on video. In fact, al Qaeda's penchant for spectacular operations can be interpreted as an attempt to persuade the world, using starkly visual arguments, of the weakness of western nations and the strength and military superiority of a fearless band of warriors. (Gurri, Denny, & Harms, 2010, p. 103)

Another characteristic that is common to most extremist and insurgent groups' leverage of image-based propaganda is that, generally, disinformation and misinformation underpin the bulk of the images these groups use online. The footage or photographs they use in their communications are mostly manipulated or doctored. Such manipulation aims to generate post-truths and fake news and ultimately mislead viewers (The [Economist](#), 2007; [Dauber](#), 2009).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Brief Background to the Ambazonia War and Pro-Secession Online Activism in Cameroon

It will be expedient, from the outset, to provide a brief background to the Anglophone crisis as well as a background to pro-secession online activism in Cameroon. The Ambazonia war erupted in 2016, but its root causes are found in Cameroon's contemporary political history as well as in the country's numerous socio-political problems. One of such socio-political problems is the country's mismanagement of the so-called Anglophone problem, which has persisted since the early part of the post-independence period. Actually, Cameroon has a tri-cultural colonial experience. The country was annexed in 1884 by Germany. However, following the defeat of the Germans in the First World War and the signing of the Versailles Treaty, Cameroon was partitioned into two territories (British and East Cameroon) and administered separately by France and Britain as mandated territories, first of the League of Nations and later of the United Nations. Britain administered its share of Cameroon (then called British Cameroons) as an integral part of Nigeria, while France administered its own portion of Cameroon as a colony on its own called French Cameroon or East Cameroon. France took the lion's share of Cameroon. This made French-speaking Cameroon territorially and population-wise dominant compared to British Cameroon.

The partition of Cameroon enabled the introduction of two distinct cultures (Francophone and Anglophone) into Cameroon. French Cameroon got its independence in 1960 and sought reunification with English-speaking Cameroon a year later. British Cameroon got its own independence through a plebiscite in which its people were asked to choose either to join Nigeria or reunite with French Cameroon as a step towards achieving their independence. British Southern Cameroonians voted massively to reunite with their Francophone brothers, believing in the project of a federal Cameroon that is jealous of perfect equality between Francophones and Anglophones. However, upon reunification, the Cameroonian government adopted the 1961 Constitution derived from the 1961 Foumban Conference. This Constitution introduced a federal system of territorial administration, which clearly did not guarantee the long-awaited equality between Francophones and Anglophones. The International Crisis [Group \(2017\)](#) considers this non-egalitarian federalism as one of the factors at the heart of the Anglophone problem in Cameroon. The international observer writes that:

The process leading to the reunification of the two Cameroons is at the heart of the Anglophone problem. [...] Representatives of Southern Cameroons and the president of the Republic of Cameroon, Amadou Ahidjo, met at Foumban in the west of Francophone territory from July 17 until July 21, 1961, to negotiate the terms of reunification. Even today, the failure to keep the promises made at the Foumban conference, which did not produce a written agreement, is among the grievances of Anglophone militants. The Anglophone representatives thought they were participating in a constituent assembly that would draft a constitution guaranteeing egalitarian federalism and a large degree of autonomy to federated states, but Ahidjo imposed a ready-made constitution that gave broad powers to the executive of the federal state to the detriment of the two federated states (West Cameroon and East Cameroon). The Anglophones, who were in a weak position, accepted Ahidjo's constitution and only obtained a blocking minority by way of concession. (p.2-3)

The non-egalitarian federalism adopted in 1961 even evolved into a more problematic dispensation eleven years later: since 1972, Cameroonian governments have abandoned federalism in favor of a highly centralized or fake decentralized system of administration that marginalized various minority groups in the country. The abolition of the federal system in favor of the centralized system of administration is, from the reading of many historians, political analysts, and international observers, the nod of the Anglophone problem in Cameroon (International Crisis Group, 2017; ACAPS, 2021; Agwanda & Ugur, 2021; Bang & Balgah, 2022). The abolition is believed to have ushered in anti-Anglophone political cultures and dispensations as well as perceptible anti-Anglophone marginalization in the country.

In effect, the Anglophone communities claim to be the most affected by Cameroon's fake decentralization. The perceived marginalization of Anglophones in the country has led to what is popularly called the Anglophone Complex and the Anglophone Problem. In effect, Anglophone communities have developed a strong sentiment that they are seriously oppressed and marginalized in all the country's social institutions because of their minority status. They claim not to enjoy top or very influential positions in the country's civil service as well as in the country's administrative architecture. These communities also claim not to be touched by infrastructural development projects comparable to or equal to those conceived for Francophone zones. In line with this, the leader of one of the secessionist movements active in Anglophone Cameroon, Sisiku Ayuk, highlights the (perceived) political, cultural, and economic marginalization of Anglophones, thus:

All our institutions have crumbled; they've taken away everything that makes us human. Even the simple institutions on our land [Anglophone Cameroons] have been destroyed. We had two airports; as we speak, you cannot land on our soil; there's a deep seaport in our land abandoned to a seaport in Douala². Today, there are 38 oil blocks in operation in Cameroon, 30 of which happen to be in Southern Cameroons. They built a refinery on our land, and they channeled a depot of the oil onto their land. (Citation in Ekah, 2019, p. 158)

In addition to the grievances mentioned above, the Anglophones vehemently decry the second-class status of English and Anglophone cultures in the country. They constantly denounce the more than visible Francophone dominance of all sectors of activities in the country. In tandem with this, ACAPS (2021) remarks that "the majority of Cameroon has its roots in Francophone traditions and the Francophone judicial system, while the minority NWSW (Northwest and

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Douala is a city located in the Littoral Region of Cameroon. It is situated in Francophone Cameroon and is the economic capital of Cameroon.

Southwest) regions have roots in Anglophone traditions and the judicial system and have long viewed the Francophone influence as a threat to their way of life” (p. 2).

This widespread sentiment of marginalization and suspicion among Anglophones has motivated the creation of a good number of secessionist movements since the 1990s. A case in point are the clandestine non-violent campaigns initiated by Federick Alobwede Ebong’s Southern Cameroun National Council (SCNC) since 1995. The campaigns have been aimed at pushing for separatism and the independence of Anglophone Cameroon. The failure of the above-mentioned non-violent movements and the Cameroon government’s lukewarm attitude towards addressing the Anglophone problem have fuelled more violent secessionist movements. These factors have led to the emergence of new armed separatist groups bent on actualizing the independence of former southern Cameroon. In September 2017, Anglophone lawyers took to the streets to protest the adulteration of the Common Law system in Anglophone courts. The lawyers, among other things, protested the imposition of Francophone judges in English-speaking courts and the presence of French-speaking judges who had a doubtful knowledge of the English system of law. The lawyers’ protest was violently repressed by Cameroon’s security forces, leading to widespread condemnation inside and outside the country. Almost simultaneously, Anglophone teachers initiated a movement similar to that of their counterparts in the legal profession. The teachers’ industrial action aimed to protest the “francization” of the English system of education in Cameroon, among other issues. The Anglophone teachers’ protest was similarly brutally repressed. This fuelled violent secessionist movements in the country, characterized by the emergence not only of armed insurgent and secessionist groups such as the Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF), the Ambazonia Military Force (AMF), the Ambazonia Tigers, and the Southern Cameroon Defence Forces (SOCADEF), among others, but also of a myriad of pro-secession activists who have been using social media to spread all manner of disinformation and violent messages. Such activists have been capitalizing on the growing internet penetration in the country and the loose nature of social media to spread sensational messages, many of which qualify as fake news (Nounkeu, 2020).

From the year 2000 to 2021, there has been a remarkable growth in internet penetration in Cameroon, though such penetration remains low compared to the one observed in most western countries. According to the World Internet Stat (2021), Cameroon has, from 2000 to 2020, witnessed an internet growth of 59.29%. NoiPoll (2020), in the same line, affirms that 29% of Cameroonians have access to the Internet and social media. The literature available also indicates that social media use in Cameroon has remarkably increased since the year 2000. According to Statcounter (2022), the most popular social media platforms in Cameroon are as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Use of Social Media in Cameroon

Rank	Name of Social Media	Users in Percentage
1	Facebook	83.29
2	Twitter	5.65
3	Instagram	4.75
4	Pinterest	.3.22
5	YouTube	22.72
6	Linkedin	0.31

Source: Statcounter (2022)

This increase in internet penetration has enabled the emergence and popularity of various forms of digital culture in these countries, including hashtagging, citizen journalism, online activism, and even online extremism, among others. Since 2011, an increasing number of internet-based movements have been observed in the country (Endong 2022). In October 2016, for instance, a train derailment that claimed the lives of 70 people and left over 600 Cameroonians seriously injured engendered virulent online criticism against the government. This online anti-government criticism tested the nerves of Cameroonian officials. It also led many top government officials to brand online activism as a form of terrorism and to propose stringent internet censorship (Stannard, 2016).

The outbreak of the Ambazonia crisis has even made these online movements more perceptible and popular. This is true of the emergence of such online protests as #BringBackOurInternet, #FreeMiniMefo, #FreeMicheleNdoki, and #FreeAllArrested, among others, which marked various phases of the Anglophone crisis. Pro- and anti-secessionist activists and movements have capitalized on the growing penetration of the internet and the progressive explosion of social media in Cameroon to spread various forms of propaganda, half-truths, and even fake news. This will be analyzed in greater detail in the subsequent sections of this paper.

3.2. Pro and Anti-Secession Activists' use of Online Visual Propaganda

Pro-secessionist activists have been deploying diverse strategies in cyberspace to spread post-truths, sensational news, and controversial stories that may, on the one hand, discredit the Cameroonian government and, on the other hand, enable them (secessionist activists) to woo the international community in favor of their separatist cause. The literature available highlights the use of multimedia contents ranging from videos to screenshot tweets, presumably aimed among other things at three targets: (i) expose perceived dirty secrets of top members of Biya's regime; (ii) inform the international community about the gross human rights violations committed daily by security forces in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon; and (iii) project the resilience, the strike power, and the valour of secessionist fighters in activity in the troubled zones of Cameroon (Ngange & Mokondo, 2019; Nounkeu, 2020; 2019; Nganji & Cockburn, 2020; Endong, 2021). As earlier mentioned, one of the weapons used by these pro-secessionist activists to achieve the above-mentioned objectives is doctored or manipulated images. Pro-secessionists have actually been collecting images from different online sources, which they carefully distort using sophisticated computer software. Such manipulation of images has enabled them to superimpose their pro-secession messages, spread fake news, and ultimately deceive and mislead viewers. Prime examples of these distorted online images are given in plates 2–4 below.



Plate 2: Manipulated Image of a March Protest in Bamenda

Plate 2 presents the original image on the right and the distorted image generated by separatists on the left. The plate illustrates how pro-secessionist activists manipulated an image that, originally, was meant to counter the separatist cause. The plate also shows how the above-mentioned violent activists used such a distorted image to give the impression that their secessionist agenda has gained popularity in the troubled Anglophone zones of Cameroon. The original image (on the right hand side) documents an event that happened in May 2019 in the North-western Region of Cameroon, particularly in the region's headquarter called Bamenda. During the event, masses came out in their numbers to march in protest of a ghost town movement instituted by separatist and secessionist insurgents in the region as a way of defying the Cameroonian administration in the region. On the banner held by the marchers, one can read the cry "THE PEOPLE OF BAMENDA SAY NO TO GHOST TOWN". Using sophisticated digital tools, the separatist activists maintained the visual composition of the image but carefully doctored the verbal message of the image (see image on the left-hand side). Thus, the above anti-ghost town inscription was changed to "THE POPULATION OF BAMENDA SAYS YES TO GHOST TOWN! FREE SOUTHERN CAMEROONS". This distortion intrinsically reflects Anglophone insurgents' gloomy portrayal of the Cameroonian army and government in the North-West Region. In effect, the insurgents consider Cameroon's army and government institutions operating in Anglophone regions of the country as forces of occupation or colonial entities. Through the manipulated image, the insurgents and separatist activists seek to sell the idea that the majority of Anglophones view Cameroon's army as a colonial force that must be resisted and flushed out of the Anglophone zone of Cameroon.



Place 3: Manipulated Image of Boko Haram Islamist Group

In Plate 3, a similar image manipulation is done to give the impression that the separatist movements and insurgent groups operating in North-West and South-West Cameroon have a well-equipped army that backs their cause and protects pro-secession Anglophones. The plate actually shows how the separatists manipulated an image of Boko Haram fighters to make it look like a glimpse of the sophisticated army that fights for the independence and human rights of Anglophones in the South-West and North-West Regions of Cameroon. The separatists doctored the image by simply superimposing the separatist flag on that of the Boko Haram Islamic sect. The ultimate goal of the manipulated image is to galvanize Anglophone

Cameroonians and make them believe in the insurgents and separatists ability to actualize the independence of Anglophone Cameroon.



Plate 4: Image of a Policeman Manipulated by Pro-Separatists

Another instance of visual propaganda used by pro-separatist activists in Cameroon is shown in Plate 4. The image shown in this plate accompanied or spiced up various online contents aimed at reporting police and army brutality in North-West and South-West Cameroon (Ngange & Mokondo, 2019). The image was actually used on various platforms to support rumors that the police officers responsible for the deaths of presumed separatist fighters in North-West Cameroon were being lynched or assassinated by angry mobs or secret agents of the separatist army. Meanwhile, the image was captured on the occasion of a spiritual deliverance. Actually, a police officer visited the temple of a popular African prophet, who prayed and exorcised him. The policeman fell to the floor in the course of the exorcism and was photographed by people present at the scene of the deliverance session. Separatists used this image out of context to give the false impression that violent and deadly reprisal actions were being taken by the masses and members of secessionist movements against security forces involved in the fight against separatism in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon.

Similar to pro-secession activists, a number of pro-government entities have been leveraging visual propaganda to tarnish the image of Anglophone separatist fighters. A case in point is Cameroon officials' use of unproven online image-assisted rumors to negatively frame secessionist Anglophone movements. On June 25, 2018, for instance, Cameroon's Minister of Territorial Administration, Paul Atanga Nji, hinged on a controversial Facebook post to label Anglophone separatists as cannibals and terrorists. The Facebook content in question was actually a link showing footage of a man cooking body parts in a pot over a wood fire. The footage had gone viral in Cameroon, and according to rumors, the video was shot in English-speaking Cameroon, and the man in the footage was said to be a cannibal. Also, rumors said the perceived cannibal was a member of one of the separatist insurgent groups fighting for the creation of a breakaway state in Anglophone Cameroon. Without seeking adequate verification, Minister Atanga Nji capitalized on the opportunity that offered him the controversial video

to associate Anglophone separatists with cannibals. He used the controversial situation to support more severe military actions against secessionist fighters in Cameroon's Anglophone Regions. In his language, Anglophone separatists are even worse than Boko Haram terrorists. On "Presidence Actu", a program aired on state television Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV), the Minister said "Boko Haram committed atrocities, but they did not cut up humans and cook them in puts" (cited in [McAllister, 2018](#)). The statement was made in the June 25, 2018 edition of Presidency Actu.

It should, however, be noted that the minister's statement was made in the context of an information war opposing pro-government and nationalist movements and separatist fighters and sympathizers. In this war, government officials sought to hinge on the least unfavorable information available to tarnish the image of separatist movements in the country and ultimately win the hearts of both local and international observers for the government's anti-secession agenda in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon. Thus, the minister's statement hinged on mere fake news: the footage so talked about was, in reality, not a reflection of reality. The footage, no doubt, went viral, but the man in the video was neither a separatist (fighter) nor a cannibal. The body parts seen in the video were not real. Neither was the video even shot in Anglophone Cameroon. Contrarily, the clip's images were extracted from a Nigerian film and originally uploaded to Instagram on June 17, 2018 by Nigerian make-up artist Hakeem Onilogbo. Mr. Onilogbo had the culture of using Instagram to showcase his artistic works. He never intended to represent real-life situations or human conditions in Anglophone Cameroon.

Besides the controversial cannibal video, government officials have often sought to inflate or exaggerate real incidents of separatist fighters' use of brutality or animosity against civilians. Such exaggerations have aimed to sell the idea that the separatist fighters have no humanistic mantra and no legitimate cause to defend. In addition to this, they are rather a barbaric force seeking to perpetrate chaos and extreme human suffering in Anglophone zones. This attitude to video purporting the excesses of the separatists was observed in August 11, 2020 when a video showing two presumed separatist fighters manhandling and killing a defenceless 35-years old woman created a buzz in Cameroon's cyberspace. The video in question, shows a woman who had been identified by the government as Confort Tumassang, being beaten and dragged on the ground with her hands tied behind her back. Her two detractors manhandle her while she, begs in vain for mercy. The two men finally behead her and abandon her body in a Kumba street.

A second video, filmed before the killing, provides clues into the motivations of the assassins. This second video shows the same woman being interrogated and threatened by her murderers, who accuse Tumassang of cooperating with security forces against the separatists. Government officials capitalized on these two gloomy videos to fuel their propaganda against the separatists. On August 13, 2020, Cameroon's Minister of Communication, Issa Chirouma Bakari, issued a statement condemning the killing of Tumassang and lambasting the separatists. Meanwhile, an investigation carried out by Human Rights Watch revealed that separatists' responsibility in the murder is a matter for debate and further investigation, although many factors related to the gruesome act point to the secessionist groups' agency. When contacted to react to the two videos, the three main separatist groups claimed innocence and rather suggested that the killing and the videos were a well-orchestrated government scheme aimed at discrediting their cause of self-determination. Human Rights Watch reporter [Mudge \(2020\)](#) documents this accusation and counter-accusation episode around the two videos thus: "When Human Rights Watch contacted the three main Anglophone separatist groups [...] for their reaction to the

video, they condemned the killing but denied responsibility. Some blamed each other, while others accused government soldiers of disguising themselves as separatist fighters to commit atrocities—an accusation which the Minister of Communication dismissed” (Mudge, 2020, p. 5).

3.3. International Observers’ Use or Treatment of Images to Mediate in the Anglophone Crisis

Pro-government movements’ and separatist fighters’ use of online visual propaganda has, in most cases, attracted the attention of the international community. Global human rights observers such as international non-governmental organizations, international media, telecom operators, and social media sites, among others, have intervened in various cases of visual propaganda and fake news related to the Ambazonia war to clarify issues. Such interventions have been aimed either at simply debunking fake news or contributing to the socio-political debate about the crisis. Many of these international organizations have also relied on images or image-treatment technologies to enrich or substantiate their positions. For instance, when the footage of the presumed cannibalistic separatist went viral, many local and international websites quickly debunked the notion, providing both visual and anecdotal evidence to explain the context in which the footage was generated and the basis on which these online images were fake and misleading news and a threat to peace in Cameroon. Regional news agencies, such as Reuters, drew the attention of Facebook to the misleading nature of the footage, calling on the social website to withdraw the contents as they violated Facebook’s principles. Thus, international observers have often deployed sophisticated fact-checking technologies to verify the contents of the video-aided messages spread in Cameroonian cyberspace. These technologies have helped determine the veracity of online images deployed by separatists or pro-government movements to shape public opinion in and outside Cameroon (Ndongmo 2019).

In tandem with the above, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) published a video report on June 25, 2018, where it sought to prove the veracity of a series of online gory footage that suggested the occurrence of serious incidents of military brutality and gross violations of human rights in Cameroon’s Anglophone zones. Titled “Burning Cameroon: Images You’re Not Meant to See”, the video report assessed over 131 villages through satellite imagery and provided the geo-location of various incidents of military aggression in Anglophone zones to highlight evidence of Cameroon’s army’s destruction of buildings by burning in the five different subdivisions of South-West Cameroon. These five subdivisions include Mbonge, Kumba, Ekondo Titi, Konye, and Nguti. The BBC used satellite imagery to confirm the veracity of a series of widely circulated videos and online contents that purported that the Cameroonian army was randomly and arbitrarily burning down villages in the Anglophone Region to sow untold terror in districts considered or suspected to be pro-separatist and non-cooperative with the army.

Although many sources have brandished this BBC video report as relevant and irrefutable evidence of military brutality in zones considered pro-separatist, it should be noted that “Burning Cameroon” only provides evidence of building destruction using satellite imagery. It only answers the what, where, how, and when questions related to the burning of villages. It does not credibly identify the perpetrators of this destruction. The video intermittently presents footage of men in fatigues burning villages unrepentantly. The video merely suggests or assumes that the men in fatigues are members of the Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR), an elite army unit dreaded in the country for its very muscular *modus operandi*. Such an

assumption is arguable, as any entity could disguise itself as a member of the security forces to mislead viewers and generate confusion. No doubt, Cameroon officials have dismissed much of the claims made in this BBC video report. These officials have, on various occasions, deployed the “it could be anyone” line of argument to protect the government from accusations of building destruction and human rights violations in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon.

Former Cameroonian Minister of Communication Issa Chirouma Bakari once questioned the veracity and credibility of online videos and video reports such as the BBC’s “Burning Cameroon”. On several occasions, he has argued that “they (the separatists) are able to acquire military uniforms of the Rapid Intervention Battalion or any other brigade of the defense forces in order to perpetrate their crime and blame our defense and security forces for it” (Kome, 2019). At first sight, Mr. Chirouma’s statement could be regarded as a predictable subterfuge to bail the Cameroonian government out of trouble. According to the popular fantasy in Cameroon, such subterfuge is very much expected of the government. However, his logic is tenable if one considers the fact that some separatist fighters often wear military uniforms when they launch their operations.

If international observers such as Reuters and the BBC cited above have most often intervened to debunk or confirm the truth claim of videos that are in the disfavor of the Cameroonian government, other observers, notably Human Rights Watch, have on a few occasions confirmed or emphasized the veracity of videos that plead in the disfavor of the separatist movements. In a report titled “Horrific Video Shows Cameroon Killing”, Human Rights Watch analyzes the two (earlier mentioned) videos showing the killing of 53-year-old Tumasang. The right organization also makes allusion to many other videos and visual evidence that it has analyzed and found apt to prove human rights violations perpetrated by separatist fighters in North-West and South-West Cameroon. In tandem with this, Human Rights Watch reporter Mudge (2020) observes, for instance, that the video showing the killing of Tumassang “corroborates previous accounts of killings by armed separatists documented by Human Rights Watch since late 2016” (p. 4). It goes without saying that, although such well-researched investigations primordially serve valid purposes, they intrinsically aid the parties involved in the information war. In effect, although they credibly inform the masses about the state of human rights protection and violations in the war-ridden zones, Human Rights Watch reports sometimes provide elements that the Cameroonian government and the separatist fighters use in their information war to discredit or frame one another.

4. CONCLUSION

Since the beginning of the Anglophone crisis in 2016, images—in the form of video, photographs, and audio-visual media reportage—have represented strategic weapons for the parties involved in the war and their allies. Indeed, the crisis has been characterized by an information war opposing pro-government and nationalist movements and secessionist and separatist fighters. This information war has involved the use of more or less manipulated visuals aimed ultimately at re-enforcing pro- or anti-separatist propaganda. In this article, over three types of visual propaganda have been examined. The first type includes propaganda aided by purely doctored images and fake news. This has been observed in situations where separatist activists and their allies used sophisticated software to fake photos or videos in view of tarnishing the image of their adversaries or government and in view of representing their violent activism as a cause that is not only legitimate and ideal but also natural. Separatist fighters and activists in particular have been using this type of cooked images and fake news to give the impression that most

Anglophones in Cameroon are in support of their separatist cause and that the various socio-political institutions (notably the “liberation army”) clandestinely established by the separatists in Anglophone regions are well equipped, dedicated, resilient, effective, and promising.

The second type of visual propaganda examined in this paper is aided by videos or other forms of images that, although real or a representation of reality, are intentionally or inadvertently used out of context to sell a pro- or anti-separatist concept. Both pro-government and pro-separatist movements have been using this type of visual propaganda. The third type of visual propaganda involves the deployment of images that, although undoctored, are interpreted exaggeratingly with the intent to frame opposing parties. Both pro- and anti-separatist movements have also been using these typologies of visual propaganda.

It has also been argued in this paper that the information war between pro- and anti-separatists has attracted the attention of international observers, including international non-governmental organizations, international media houses, and telecom operators, among others. These international observers have been using images to mediate in the conflict or to contribute to the social and political discourse around the crisis. These international observers have often used images to debunk or confirm the truth values of video contents used for propagandist or extremist purposes in Cameroon. The recrudescence of visual propaganda by pro- and anti-separatist movements in Cameroonian cyberspace warrants constant fact-checking initiatives to debunk fake news. The visual propaganda also calls for efficacious and intelligent internet censorship.

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6. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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Determinants of youth migration aspirations decision in Ethiopia

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Abstract

This study examines the factors influencing the migration aspirations of young people in Ethiopia. Using data from the Migrating Out of Poverty Research program Consortium household survey, the study analyzes a sample of 1938 youth aged 16 to 34 from four regions in Ethiopia. A logit regression model was used to predict youth migration aspirations. The findings indicate that respondents' marital status, education level and school attendance, previous migration experience, network with migrant members and relatives, and employment status significantly shape youth migration aspirations. Moreover, youth living with male and aged household heads, from better-off families are less likely to express aspirations for migration. The results further noted that remittance increases youth's probability of aspiring to migrate. Finally, this study emphasized the stark differences between male and female youth in migration decision-making, showing that females are much more likely to be influenced by household factors than their male counterparts. Based on the present results, the study concludes that youth education, employment status, previous migration experience, household welfare, and poverty conditions are crucial for determining youth migration aspirations in Ethiopia. Therefore, policies and programs that enhance youth access to education and skill development training, thereby increasing their employment opportunities, can significantly impact youth migration aspirations. Moreover, government offices concerned with youth migration should consider integrating youth in policy development.

Keywords: Youth migration aspirations, demographic factors, socioeconomic factors, household characteristics, Ethiopia

1. INTRODUCTION

International migration is a global phenomenon that has significant economic, social, and political implications (Koser, 2007). In 2020, the number of international migrants worldwide reached 281 million, with individuals aged 15–34 accounting for the largest share (42%) (IOM, 2020). Within this context, Ethiopia, as a developing country, has witnessed a steady increase in the number of Ethiopians migrating abroad. In fact, in 2019, Ethiopia ranked third among countries of origin for refugees and asylum-seekers worldwide, and it stood ninth among the top countries of origin for international migrants globally, with a significant proportion being youth (UNHCR, 2021). This growing trend has prompted scholars to investigate the determinants of migration aspirations, particularly among the youth, who form a substantial portion of Ethiopia's population and are among the most vulnerable groups affected by international migration. However, the existing body of research offers a limited understanding of the determinants of international migration in Ethiopia.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) estimates that Ethiopia had a net emigration rate of 6.29 per 1,000 population in 2020, indicating a considerable outflow of individuals seeking opportunities abroad (UN DESA, 2020). This trend raises concerns regarding the potential brain drain, as the departure of highly skilled and educated youth can impede the country's development efforts. Consequently, it is crucial to investigate the factors influencing youth migration aspirations for sustainable economic growth and social stability in Ethiopia.

The phenomenon of youth migration and the factors influencing their aspirations for migration have been the subject of considerable research and scholarly attention. Several studies have explored the motivations and determinants of young people's migration intentions in different regions and contexts. One important aspect that emerges from the literature is the role of economic disparities and opportunities in shaping young people's migration aspirations. Economic factors such as unemployment, lack of job prospects, and low wages have been consistently identified as push factors driving youth migration. Studies in the Arab Mediterranean region (Etling, Backeberg, & Tholen, 2018) and the Middle East and North Africa region (Ramos, 2019) highlight the high unemployment rates and limited opportunities as significant determinants of migration intentions among young people.

However, economic factors alone do not fully explain youth migration aspirations. Social and cultural factors also play a crucial role. For instance, studies in Mexico (Azaola, 2012) and Romania (Roman & Vasilescu, 2016) emphasize the influence of peer groups, social networks, and the desire for financial independence on young people's decision to migrate. These studies demonstrate that migration can be seen as an alternative way of including rural youth or a means to escape limited opportunities in their localities.

Furthermore, the political context and perceptions of governance and democracy are important factors shaping young people's migration intentions. The study by Etling et al. (2018) in the Arab Mediterranean region highlights the significance of political discontent, the perception of democracy, and the ability to shape government policies as determinants of migration intentions. Similarly, the study by Mol (2016) on European youth during the economic crisis reveals the role of individual characteristics, feelings of discontent, and the economic situation in the country of origin and destination.

Religion and cultural norms also emerge as influential factors in migration aspirations. Hoffman, Marsiglia, and [Ayers \(2015\)](#) find that internal and external religiosity can influence Mexican youth's desire to work or live in the USA. This suggests that religious and cultural norms can shape young people's aspirations by discouraging or facilitating migration.

A systematic review of determinants of migration aspirations by [Aslanyan et al. \(2021\)](#) found that the factors that stand out as the most certain and steady drivers of migration aspirations are young age and ties with current or former migrants. Other determinants, especially dissatisfaction with public services and exposure to violence and insecurity – appear to raise migration aspirations even more consistently, but they have been studied less frequently.

Overall, the above empirical studies indicate that youth migration aspirations are multifaceted and influenced by economic, social, political, and cultural factors. Economic disparities, lack of opportunities, social networks, political discontent, perceptions of governance, and cultural norms all influence young people's decision to migrate. Understanding these factors is crucial for policymakers and stakeholders to develop effective strategies and interventions that address the needs and aspirations of young people in relation to migration.

Despite the increasing attention given to international migration in Ethiopia, limited research specifically focuses on the determinants of youth international migration aspirations. Existing studies primarily concentrate on general determinants of internal and international migration, patterns, and consequences of migration in different regions of Ethiopia. The determinants of migration vary depending on the type of migration. Wealth and network variables emerge as crucial factors in international migration, where wealthier households with established networks have a higher likelihood of sending members abroad ([Beyene, 2011](#); [Tegegne & Penker, 2016](#)). Human capital variables such as age and education play an important role in internal migration, with younger individuals and those with higher education levels being more likely to migrate internally ([Beyene, 2011](#); [Tegegne & Penker, 2016](#)). Push factors like environmental degradation, lower agricultural productivity, and inadequate social services drive both internal and international migration, while pull factors such as better employment opportunities and urban amenities attract people from rural areas to urban centers ([Kassegn, 2020](#); [Melesse & Nachimuthu, 2017](#)). Moreover, social and human capital theories are emphasized as significant in explaining migration, with social capital, represented by networks and connections, influencing international migration decisions, while human capital, including education and skills, being more relevant for internal migration ([Beyene, 2011](#); [Tegegne & Penker, 2016](#)). Additionally, recent trends indicate a shift towards economic motives, with the United States and the Middle East being identified as major destinations for Ethiopian migrants ([Ayanie et al., 2020](#)). As such most of the above studies focused on factors of internal and international migration without considering those determinants that influence youth migration aspirations in the country.

In the context of international migration few empirical studies conducted in Ethiopia have shed some light on the determinants of youth international migration aspirations in the country. The studies by Schewel and [Fransen \(2018\)](#) and Schewel and [Fransen \(2020\)](#) explore the relationship between education and migration aspirations in Ethiopia. According to Schewel and [Fransen \(2018\)](#), rising levels of primary and secondary education influence aspirations to migrate. They find that completing primary education increases the aspiration to live elsewhere. In their study on immobility aspirations, Schewel and [Fransen \(2020\)](#) reveal that the desire to stay decreases with higher levels of education. These studies challenge the assumption that migration is solely

driven by poverty and emphasize the role of education in shaping migration patterns. However, the two studies did not give detailed examination of the major non-education factors that shape youth migration aspirations in Ethiopia.

Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap in the literature by building upon these existing studies and further investigating the determinants of youth international migration aspirations in Ethiopia. By considering factors such as education, income, job opportunities, social networks, and the influence of migration experiences, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the unique factors that shape youth migration aspirations in Ethiopia in the context of international migration.

The purpose of this study is to explore the factors that influence youth international migration aspirations in Ethiopia. To achieve this aim, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What are the socio-demographic characteristics of youth who aspire to migrate internationally in Ethiopia?
- What are the economic and non-economic factors that influence youth international migration aspirations in Ethiopia?
- How do social networks and family ties affect youth international migration aspirations in Ethiopia?

This study holds significant value as it provides insights into the unique factors that shape youth's international migration aspirations in Ethiopia. The findings from this study can inform policymakers and stakeholders in developing targeted interventions that address the driving factors behind youth migration aspirations. Ultimately, these interventions can help reduce the number of vulnerable youths who undertake dangerous and irregular migration journeys. To achieve these objectives, this study uses data from the 2018 Migrating Out of Poverty (MOOP) Research Program Consortium (RPC), funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) household survey for Ethiopia. The sample consists of 1200 rural households with and without migrants, and the data were collected through face-to-face interviews. The analysis includes descriptive statistics, bivariate analysis, and logistic regression models.

The structure of this paper is as follows: Section 2 describes the data and methodology used in this study. Section 3 presents the results and discussion of the study. Finally, Section 4 provides the conclusions and policy implications of the study and recommendations for future research.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Data source and methods of data collection

The data for this study was obtained from 2018 migrating out of Poverty (MOOP) Research Program Consortium (RPC), funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) household survey for Ethiopia. The survey covered 1200 rural households with migrants and households without migrants. The survey covers four regions (Tigray, Amhara, Oromiya, and SNNPR), seven woredas, and sixteen kebeles.

For the survey, a migrant is defined as a “former member of the household in which the interview is being conducted who is not currently living in the household and who has moved away from their kebele during the past ten years, and has been away for at least three months or is expected to be away for three months or more”.

Survey data collection was undertaken to identify and examine households with and without migrants, including detailed information on all the individuals residing at home and currently away. The data covers current migrants, social relationships and remittances from current migrants, household socioeconomic wellbeing, other sources of household income, and perceptions of quality of life, and household expenditure on food and non-food items, migration experience of returned migrants, asset, and migration aspiration. In this survey, questions related to migration aspiration were collected from household members aged between 16 and 40, and this study considers a sample of youth aged 16 to 34 (N=1938) to study determinants of their migration aspiration.

2.2. Methodology

Binary logistic regression was chosen as the most suitable method for data analysis due to the binary nature of the dependent variable. As a result, a logit model incorporating individual and household characteristics was employed to determine young people's migration aspirations (Table 2.1). Individual and household characteristics have average marginal impacts on young migration aspiration, as shown in Table 2.2. The coefficients should be regarded as a percentage point shift in the likelihood of aspiring to migrate. Stata 14.2 was the statistical software utilized to analyze the data.

2.3. Variables and operationalization

In sociology, social psychology, and economics, “aspirations express goals or goal orientations (or desired future end states) that are relevant to well being broadly defined” (Bernard et al., 2014). As goals, they “serve to mobilize and direct energy into action with respect to their objects, thus providing motive power for action” (Haller and Miller, 1963, cited in Bernard et al., 2014).

Bernard and Taffesse (2014) characterize aspirations as (1) future-oriented, i.e. goals that could be achieved in the future, (2) motivators, i.e. aspirations are something that people are willing to invest resources to achieve, and (3) specific dimensions of well-being such as wealth and social statuses, but also a combination of two or more of this dimensions to attain general life outcomes. This implies that aspirations are very important psychological factors that could affect future-oriented current decisions and predict economic behaviors (Bernard and Taffesse, 2014). In this study, aspirations are defined as the desire to fulfill or achieve the desired goal.

The dependent variable that specifies migration aspirations variable is derived from a survey question that connects the prospect of future migration to a current or recent cognitive or emotional state. The two parts can be analytically distinguished as the action and the mindset, respectively (Carling, 2019 cited in MOOP 2018) household survey question filter migration aspiration, through a direct question asked only those who are currently living in the household and were aged 16 to 40 whether they were considering migrating in the next 12 months and reasons for considering and not considering migrating, where they are considering migrating, and whether they have any connections at the planned destination. The survey question,

therefore, intended to analyze measures of consideration, intention, duration, or some other form of mindset regarding the prospect of migrating: The nature of the mindset (e.g. consideration, intention) 2. The temporality of the mindset (e.g. during the 12 months the moment of the interview) 3. The nature of the action (e.g. migrate destination, live in another place) 4. The temporality of the action (e.g. likelihood that individual will migrate, probability). Based on the combination of the questions asked above those individuals who considered migrating are coded as 1 that the respondent aspires to migrate, whereas response 0 shows that the respondent does not wish to migrate.

Relevant independent variables that are likely to affect the migration aspirations decision of youth are included from theories, empirical studies, experience, and data availability. These explanatory variables were chosen and categorized into individual and household characteristics. The variables and expected signs are summarized in Appendix Table 1.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Descriptive statistics

Tables 2.1 show the characteristics of youth respondents in 2018. The data show that about 27% of the sample youth aspire to migrate in 2018. About 53.7 % were male and had a mean age of 23 years. The data show that around 22% of the youth were married, and about 21% of them have children aged less than 15 years of age. About 10.2% of the youth had previous migration experience, and 7.3 % have maintained networks and attachments with migrant members and relatives. The mean schooling of youth was around seven years, and 36% are currently attending school. About 8.4% of the youth reported that they are not currently employed (including those unemployed looking for work and not looking for work).

Regarding household characteristics, 72% were male-headed, and the household head's mean age was 54. Around 75% of the head were married and had a mean household size of six. Most households had land for agriculture (94%) with a mean log of income and wealth index of 0.3 and 0.1, respectively. About 54% of the households perceive that their overall quality of life has improved over the past five years.

Table 2.1: Descriptive statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Youth characteristics					
Aspire to migrate	1992	0.27	.444	0	1
Age	2001	22.522	5.315	16	34
Age (square term)	2001	535.49	258.009	256	1156
Gender(male)	1974	0.537	.499	0	1
Currently in school	1998	0.359	.48	0	1
Highest education level completed(in years)	1998	6.692	3.805	0	25
Marital status	2001	0.221	.415	0	1
Having child aged less than 15	2001	0.208	.406	0	1
Previous migration experience	2001	0.102	.303	0	1
Network with migrant members and relatives	2001	0.073	.26	0	1
Unemployed	1998	0.084	.278	0	1

Household characteristic					
Age of household head	1986	54.816	14.347	17	99
Sex of household head(male)	1969	0.7222	.448	1	2
Household head is Married	1986	0.747	.435	0	1
Education of household head (in years)	1986	2.199	3.292	0	15
Household size	2001	6.025	2.031	1	13
Household has Land for agriculture	2001	0.941	.237	0	1
Log of income Percapita	2001	7.905	2.169	1	11.571
Parent's Wealth index	2001	0.309	.138	.007	.891
Parent's Wealth index Sqare term	2001	0.115	.102	0	.793
Household received remittance in the last 12 months	2001	0.68	0.466531	0	1
Perception of the overall quality of life(subjective wellbeing)	2001	0.59	.492	0	1
Region of residence
Tigray	2001	0.213	.41	0	1
Amhara	2001	0.227	.419	0	1
Oromiya	2001	0.28	.449	0	1
SNNPR's	2001	0.279	.449	0	1

3.2. Determinants of youth migration aspirations: Regression result

This study aims to identify the main determinants of the migration aspirations decision of youth in Ethiopia through the log it regression model. The log it model was estimated using the maximum likelihood technique and are presented in Table 2.2. Additional insight was also provided by analyzing the marginal effects, calculated as the partial derivatives of the non-linear probability function, evaluated at each variable sample mean. The likelihood estimates of the log it model indicated that the Chi-square statistic of 567.785 was highly significant ($p < 0.001$), suggesting that the model has strong explanatory power. The pseudo coefficient of multiple determinations (R^2) shows that 25% of the variation in migration aspiration decisions in Ethiopia was collectively explained by the independent variables. Table 2.2 lists the determinants variables that were identified to affect migration aspirations. They are grouped in individual and household characteristics. Some of the variables that were not significant in the model were excluded from the model.

Taking individual characteristics, the result showed that the relationship between marriage and migration aspirations is negative and significant. This result indicates that married individuals are less likely (14%) to aspire to migrate. This might be the fact that individuals that aspire to migrate, such aspirations will certainly affect the considerations of their partner. in addition, family responsibility might influence the decision. The result is in line with ([Etling et al., 2020](#); [Ivlevs and King, 2015](#); [Krieger and Maitre, 2006](#); [Lee and Lee, 2019](#); [Lovo, 2014](#); [Maleszyk and Kdra ,2020](#); [Manchin and Orazbayev , 2018](#); [Marrow and Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2020](#); [Migali and Scipioni, 2019](#); [Sadiddin et al.,2019](#); [Smith and Floro, 2020](#)).

The result indicated that educational attainment which is measured by an individual's number of years of education has a positive association with aspirations to migrate. This might be the fact that educated individuals may think that they face lower institutional barriers and they may find it is less difficult for them to learn a new language or thinking that could make them more likely to aspire migration because migration is viewed as more achievable. The other plausible explanation is that individuals may have migration aspirations because they think

that they are educated or skilled and can get a job easily or it might be the fact that they are educated and they seek higher education to fulfill their aspirations to migrate. The finding from this study is consistent with most empirical studies c

In contrast to the above related to educational attainment, current school attendances discourage individuals who wish to migrate. This study showed that school attendance negatively affects migration aspiration decisions. An individual currently in school is less likely (7%) to aspire to migrate than those not attending school. This result might be because individuals may have their dream to fulfill and want them to come true.

Personal previous migration experience (both internal and international migration) and having a network of ties with migrant members and relatives positively affect migration aspiration. Individuals with previous migration experience (return migrants) are more likely (15%) to aspire to migrate than their counterparts. Similarly, those with ties or networks with current or former migrant family members and relatives are more likely to aspire to migration by 76 percentage points. Previous migration experience may have a positive and higher likelihood impact on individuals' migration aspirations since return migrants may know how to transform aspirations into a real movement, which they can employ to make migration possible a second time around. Furthermore, if the community from which they migrated has a high share of out-migration, in that case, return migrants are more likely to have networks at their prior residence or in other regions. These factors suggest that those who have previously migrated would have stronger migration desires than those who never did so. This finding is in line with the works of (Efendic 2016; Etling et al., 2020; Hoffman et al., 2015; Nieri et al., 2012; Nowotny 2014; Tabor et al., 2015). There is a larger propensity to aspire to migration with ties to former or current migrant members and relatives. This can affect individuals' migration aspirations for instance, individuals with close family members who live elsewhere in the country or abroad may wish to move to be reunited with those family members. Furthermore, current migrants' ties might influence opinions of migration and the destination location, for example, through return visits, social media posts, or direct conversation. This finding is consistent with the results of (Carling 2002; Etling et al., 2020; Marrow and Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2020; Tabor et al., 2015; Sadiddin et al., 2019; Smith and Floro 2020; van Dalen et al., 2005).

When it comes to the impact of household characteristics like age, sex, and marital status appears to affect individual migration aspiration decisions negatively. Specifically, the result showed that with the increase in age of the household head, youth members of the family are less likely to aspire for migration at a 10% significant level. Similarly, aspiration for migration reduced with the head being male and married. The plausible reason for the reduction of aspiration with age might be related to support and care given by individual's family members for parents at old age discourage them from migrating out. Concerning sex of the household head it is common in the Ethiopian tradition that the male is the breadwinner of the family the household headed by male is expected to fulfill need of the family members. Because migration in Ethiopia is mostly used to support one's livelihood, a young person living in a household that meets their needs is less likely to aspire for migration. Similarly, if the household head is married, marriage instills responsibility to take care and support partner and young members and may motivate young children and family members to prioritize education than migration. Being male headed and married household head reduce the probability of youth aspiration for migration 9 % and 10 % respectively.

Household income that is measured by per capita household income appears to have positive impact on migration aspiration of youth in Ethiopia. The coefficient is positive and significant at 5 % level though weak, that likely affect aspiration by 1.4 percentage points. This positive relationship of income with aspiration to migration could be that individuals that live in household that earn well parents can afford to cover migration costs including travel expenses expecting that they will gain additional income gains from migration. Such considerations make individual youth in the household to have aspiration for migration to seek for better opportunities in destination areas. This result is consistent with (Ivlevs 2013; Manchin and Orazbayev, 2018; Marrow and Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2020; Sadiddin et al., 2019).

Remittances can play a variety of roles when it comes to migration aspiration. The result evidenced that individual that is living in household that receive remittance more likely to aspire for migration (5 %) than others. This might be due to strong family attachment and network with current and former migrant members might have migration encouraging effect – either in order to be together with the remittance sender or because obtaining assistance in settling in a foreign country appears to be more likely to encourage migration aspiration. Furthermore, remittances might be viewed as physical proof that migration pays off, which can encourage people to migrate. The positive effect remittance on migration aspirations is in line with studies by (Carling 2002; Hiskey et al., 2014; Groenewold et al., 2012; Ivlevs and King, 2015; Kandel and Massey, 2002; Ivlevs and King, 2015).

In a country like Ethiopia where migration is commonly considered as a livelihood strategy and as a gateway to a better life wellbeing condition of household is presumed to determine aspiration for migration of household members. Hence, current perception of the overall quality of life of household is expected to influence migration aspirations. Overall, the result from this study indicates that individuals that are living in a household who perceive their current overall quality of life better compared to five years before are less likely (4%) to have migration aspirations. Similar result is obtained from the works of (Cai et al., 2014; Chindarkar, 2014; Graham and Markowitz, 2011, 2013; Ivlevs, 2015; Lovo 2014g; Migali and Scipioni 2019g; Smith and Floro 2020b).

Spatial factors also influence youth aspiration for migration. Accordingly, the result of the study showed that considering Tigray region as a reference the probability to aspire for migration is more likely (7.3%) for those youth living in SNNPR's region while the propensity to aspire for migration is less for those youth living in Amhara and Oromiya region compared to youth residing in Tigray.

Table 2.2: Logit Regression result on the determinants of youth aspiration decisions

Variables	Coefficient	Marginal effect
DV: Aspire to migrate		
Youth characteristics		
Age	0.209 (0.125)	0.0294 (0.0176)
Age (square term)	-0.00409 (0.00259)	-0.000575 (0.000364)
Gender of aspiring (1=male)	-0.0073 (0.127)	-0.00103 (0.0179)
Marital status (=Married)	-0.990***	-0.139***

	(0.261)	(0.0363)	
Currently in school(=yes)	-0.484**	-0.0681**	
	(0.16)	(0.0223)	
Highest education level completed (in years)	0.0859***	0.0121***	
	(0.0186)	(0.00257)	
Having a child aged less than 15	-0.0126	-0.00177	
	(0.254)	(0.0357)	
Previous migration experience(=yes)	1.071***	0.151***	
	(0.198)	(0.0272)	
Network with migrant members and relatives(=yes)	5.368***	0.755***	
	(0.535)	(0.0703)	
Currently Unemployed(=yes)	-0.334	-0.047	
	(0.237)	(0.0333)	
Household characteristics			
Age of household head	-0.0128*	-0.00180*	
	(0.00541)	(0.000757)	
Sex of household head(male)	-0.621**	-0.0874**	
	(0.231)	(0.0323)	
The household head is Married	-0.690**	-0.0970**	
	(0.232)	(0.0323)	
Education of household head (in years)	0.00417	0.000587	
	(0.023)	(0.00323)	
Household size	0.0189	0.00265	
	(0.0326)	(0.00458)	
The household has land for agriculture	0.373	0.0524	
	(0.293)	(0.0412)	
Log of income Percapita	0.0994*	0.0140*	
	(0.0393)	(0.0055)	
Parent's wealth index	(-0.902	-0.127	
	(1.728)	(0.243)	
Parent's Wealth index Square term	0.838	0.118	
	(2.337)	(0.329)	
Household received remittance in the last 12 months	0.325*	0.0457*	
	(0.163)	(0.0229)	
Perception of the overall quality of life(subjective wellbeing)	-0.265*	-0.0373*	
	(0.134)	(0.0188)	
Region of residence			
Tigray(reference)	0	0	
	(.)	(.)	
Amhara	-1.384***	-0.157***	
	(0.239)	(0.0253)	
Oromiya	-0.455*	-0.0653*	
	(0.196)	(0.0283)	
SNNPR's	0.422*	0.0727*	
	(0.179)	(0.0302)	
Mean dependent var	0.271	SD dependent var	0.445
Pseudo r-squared	0.2504	Number of obs	1938

Chi-square	567.485	Prob > chi2	0.000
Akaike crit. (AIC)	1748.657	Bayesian crit. (BIC)	1887.892
Log likelihood =	-849.32856		

Note: Marginal effects; (d) for discrete change of dummy variable from 0 to 1;

Standard errors in parentheses * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

4. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to identify the impact of individual demographic and socioeconomic characteristics as well as household characteristics on the migration aspirations of young people in Ethiopia. The study is based on data from Migrating out of Poverty (MOOP) Research Programme Consortium (RPC), funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) household survey for Ethiopia. a survey of 1207 rural households conducted in 2018, and considers a sample of individual youth aged 16 to 34 (N=1938). The survey covers four regions in Ethiopia.

The results from the logit model show that both individual and household factors significantly shape the probability of youth migration aspiration. Probability to aspire to migrate increases with higher years of education level, previous migration experience, and frequent contact with migrant members and relatives. At the same time, it decreases with individual youth currently married and attending school. Household factors such as aged, male, and married household heads, from better-off families, make youth less likely to express migration aspirations. The results further show the importance of remittance on youth migration aspirations that living in a remittance-receiving household encourages youth to aspire to migrate out. Finally, this study further emphasized the stark differences between youth and male migration decision-making, showing that females are much more likely to be influenced by household factors than their male counterparts. Overall, these results suggest that youth education, employment, return migrants, household welfare, and poverty conditions are crucial for determining youth migration aspirations decision in Ethiopia.

Therefore, policies and programs that enhance youth access to education and skill development training, thereby increasing their employment opportunities, can significantly impact youth migration aspirations. Moreover, government offices concerned with youth migration should consider integrating youth in policy development. Finally, poverty reduction policies and strategies should work on poor households are recommended.

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6. FUNDING

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7. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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The efficacy of phonics approaches to enhance the basic reading skills of public primary school children in Hawassa

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the efficacy of phonics approaches—synthetic and analytic—to enhance grade one children's basic reading skills in an EFL context. The targeted population for quasi-experimental design consisted of approximately sixty children from a randomly selected government primary school in Hawassa. They took part in the experiments without any special arrangements that disrupted the regular sessions. Accordingly, two randomly selected sections—each of them consisting of thirty students—were assigned to the treatment/synthetic group and the control/analytic group, respectively. A mixed research design that relied more on quantitative data was used. The major instruments employed for data collection included reading tests, observation, and interviews. The reading tests were administered before and after the interventions. The observations were meant to check the implementation of the phonics approaches under study based on the guidelines provided for teachers. The interviews were used to elicit the teachers' reflections on their perceptions and experiences before and after the interventions. The four weeks of training, including the orientation given to teachers and the evaluation sessions that were carried out in the first and fourth weeks of the experiment, The outcomes of the research revealed that the synthetic and analytic phonics approaches had a positive effect on raising the children's basic reading and decoding skills. They were identical in terms of their effect on the basic reading skills of first-grade children. It was also learned from the observations that teachers generally implemented the interventions with slight variations that had little effect on the children's reading attainment. The teachers witnessed that the experiments enhanced the achievement of children in basic reading and decoding skills.

Keywords : Analytic Phonics, Basic Reading Skills, Decoding Phonics, Synthetic Phonics

1. INTRODUCTION

With the intention of laying the necessary foundation for further education, students should be taught English effectively right from the primary level itself. This is due to the vital role the target language plays in the Ethiopian educational system. In response to this precondition, there used to be a well-developed curriculum for the English language during the imperial period (i.e., 1947–48). Accordingly, elementary school students were given the opportunity to practice the language by interacting orally, presenting dramas, and writing journals and letters, despite the prevailing shortcomings like teachers' limited competence in English and a shortage of the necessary facilities.

However, various studies indicated a deterioration of quality in English language education since English was replaced by Amharic as a medium of instruction in 1962. In view of this, the Ministry of Education has taken the initiative to design a special program, the English Language Improvement Program (ELIP), in order to help primary and secondary school teachers raise their competence in English. In fact, the program was launched a decade ago in collaboration with the British Council and the College of St. Mark and St. John.

It is high time to take more appropriate measures that improve the quality of teaching English in general and literacy skills in lower grades in particular, strengthening secondary and higher education.

1.1. Conceptual Framework for Synthetic Phonics and Analytic Phonics

The skill of reading words accurately and fluently is seen by many as a key prerequisite to reading comprehension. Phonics is the practice of reading individual words from the individual sounds of letters or letter clusters. For example, sounds associated with the letters c, 'a, and t can be assembled to use phonics to read the word 'cat'. It also provides students with an awareness of word structure, which allows them to generalize the rules they have mastered to read unfamiliar words. Furthermore, it provides students with an awareness of using letters to represent words in writing, which allows them to recognize that their spoken words can be separated into smaller units of sounds and a visual representation can be assigned. Consequently, students can go a long way to instill in themselves the multitude of letter-sound correspondences that are essential to reading. What is more, the practice of phonics is related to the concept of phonological (phonemic) awareness (being able to identify sound patterns in a new language). However, phonics is conceptually different from it in that it brings speech sounds and print together (Lyster, 1999, pp. 5-7).

As indicated by the National Reading Panel, teaching phonics in the early grades is more effective than teaching it after grade one. This, however, does not mean phonics should be ignored in later grades. It should be taught explicitly in the first and second grades and casually (in combination with other approaches) in the later grades. Despite such consensus, researchers and educators have had hot debates on how to teach basic reading and decoding skills through phonics. Among these, the one that is more relevant to this research is the debate about the most effective form of phonics instruction: whether it should be synthetic phonics, which refers to saying a word sound by sound (i.e., saying the sounds of the word 'cat' as/kuh-a-tuh) and blending them into words (i.e., saying kat) to read fluently, or the analytic phonics approach, which refers to teaching children to read monosyllabic words by combining the phonological

units of onset (the initial letter or letter cluster) and rime (the rest of the syllable). For instance, teaching students to read words like cat and star as kat and sta*, respectively, by combining the initial letter c or letter cluster st with the rime at or ar in each of the words (Torgerson, Brooks, and Hall, 2006)

Accordingly, those who are behind the Rose Report claim synthetic phonics is more effective for teaching basic reading skills (Smith, 2011, p. 2), while those who are behind basal programs claim that analytic phonics is more effective for teaching the same skills (Gunning, 2003, p. 151). Hence, an attempt was made to carry out the research to examine the efficacy of these phonics approaches to teaching the basic reading (decoding) skills in our (an EFL) context.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Ethiopia has boosted primary school enrollment to historically unprecedented rates in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), just like many other developing countries with international support. Though a number of children are enrolled in primary schools in almost every corner of the nation, it is questionable—on the part of teachers, parents, and the public at large—whether students are really learning or not. The situation becomes more serious when the early literacy skills of children are measured, for it is absolutely vital to ensure their success throughout their education and beyond.

As reported by the EGRA (Early Grade Reading Assessment) survey at the national level in 2012, almost two-thirds of students tested in reading in English were not able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills expected of the curriculum's MLC (Minimum Learning Competence) for grade two through four students. According to the same study, 24% of grade 4 students could not read a single word when asked to read a single word from the list of familiar words. This implies that English reading literacy is at least as poor as mother-tongue literacy across the country.

Hence, one can learn from such a finding that improvements in student learning are lagging significantly behind improvements in access to schooling, and this implies that what matters more is the quality of education than the accessibility of education (i.e., spending years in school). Perhaps one of the important factors in this failure is that the approach employed to teach basic reading (decoding) does not focus on developing learners' reading skills. With regard to this, Gessese pointed out that students at the primary level pass through several developmental phases in acquiring word analysis and text analysis skills. He also said that children in kindergarten (KG) through grade two learn basic reading in a logographic approach, which uses cues that rely on visual, contextual, or graphic features to read words. (Gessese, 1999, p. 18). These methods have, of course, been practiced for decades, as indicated by the thesis on beginning reading instruction. Besides, a recent study on the practice of early reading instruction revealed that teachers failed to implement the teaching of early reading according to the theories and principles of teaching early reading. Teachers were seen using inappropriate reading techniques and procedures at the mentioned grade level. The study also revealed that teachers are deficiently trained in phonological awareness, phonics instruction, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. Most importantly, another recent study on improving the quality of education in Ethiopia underlined that inappropriate pedagogical approaches are one of the underlying factors for low levels of learning in primary education in Ethiopia (Alebel & Tassew, 2018).

Although it is now widely accepted that the knowledge of letter-sound correspondence is very important in learning to decode or know how to say a word, there is no agreement about how to teach this knowledge to children through phonics in the early school years. One aspect of the controversies is the controversy over the superiority of one phonics approach to teaching basic reading (decoding) skills over the other. As a result, we have different phonics approaches to teaching basic reading skills systematically (Aukerman, 1984), among which synthetic phonics and analytic phonics approaches gained prominence. Primarily, the synthetic phonics approach refers to teaching children to say a word sound by sound, as in 'kuh-a-tuh, followed by blending these phonemes or sounds into the word to read it fluently (Chall, 1997; Watson, 1998; Johnston and Watson, 2005). On the other hand, the analytic phonics approach refers to teaching children to read monosyllabic words by combining the phonological units of onset (the initial letter or letter cluster) and rime (the rest of the syllable). For instance, teaching students to read words like cat and star as kat and sta* respectively by combining the initial letter c to be read as k or the letter cluster st to be read as st with the rime at and ar to be read as at and a* in each of the words (Torgerson, Brooks, and Hall, 2006)

So far, there is no statistically significant difference in the efficacy between these phonics approaches to teaching basic reading and decoding skills (Ehri, 2000, p. :1), despite claims by their proponents (Chew, 1997; Miskin, 2003). Hence, it is this controversy over the choice of the appropriate phonics approach to tackle failure in basic reading (decoding) skills that pushed the researcher to investigate the effectiveness of using synthetic phonics and analytic phonics approaches to teaching the basic reading skills mentioned above for children in grades one. The motive behind such concern comes from accepting the idea of the crucial effect of quality instruction in general and the quality of phonics instruction in particular on reading achievement in English in particular (Stahl, 1992, p. 29). As a result, learning to decode words effectively through the aforementioned phonics approaches results in better comprehension on the part of children. Therefore, decoders taught in such a way develop greater automaticity through abilities in rapid word reading and fluent text reading (Adams, 1990), since the ultimate goal of systematic phonics instruction should not be learning rules to read or decode familiar words only. It would rather be improving children's literacy skills in decoding unfamiliar words based on the set of rules taught (Stahl, 1992, p. 28).

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there has never been any study at home on the efficacy of the aforementioned phonics approaches to teaching basic reading and decoding skills to first-grade students. Therefore, an attempt is made to investigate whether the practice of synthetic or analytic phonics enhances the basic reading and decoding abilities of government school students in Hawassa or not. Thus, the following null and alternative hypotheses have been formulated:

- H0 There is no difference in basic reading and decoding skills between students taught in synthetic phonics and analytic phonics approaches.
- H1 There is a difference in basic reading and decoding skills between students taught in synthetic phonics and analytic phonics approaches.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine if the practice of synthetic phonics and analytic phonics approaches has any contribution to improve the basic reading (decoding) skill of grade

one government school children in Hawassa. In specific terms, therefore, the study will try to do the following:

- examining the impact of using synthetic phonics approaches on enhancing the basic reading/decoding skills of grade one children.
- examining the impact of using analytic phonics approaches on enhancing the basic reading /decoding skills of grade one children..
- eliciting teachers' reflections on their perceptions and impressions of the trainings on the phonics approaches under study and their implementations respectively.

1.4. Significance of the Study

As far as this study is concerned, it might generate some pedagogically relevant ideas about the teaching of basic reading/decoding skills using the above-mentioned phonics approaches in an EFL context. As a result, it is hoped that syllabus designers, material writers, English language educators, students, and parents are potential beneficiaries of the findings of the study, directly or indirectly. In addition, the results of this study could provide an important base for further research in the area of teaching basic reading skills in our context, as the area is seldom investigated.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main purpose of the study was to examine if the use of synthetic and analytic phonics approaches makes any difference in the basic reading (decoding) ability of first-graders. The study was mainly experimental in design and quantitative in approach. An attempt was made to see if a significant gap in performance could be observed among grade one children as a result of implementing phonics approaches to teach basic reading and decoding skills (Lodico, M. G. et al., 2010, p. 228).

It was also qualitative in approach so as to explore teachers' opinions through interview and observation regarding what their reflections are all about the basic concepts of the new phonics approaches and the challenges they face in employing them for teaching basic reading and decoding skills. Hence, the study employed a mixed method for triangulation, as it called for the use of interviews and observation to complement the data gathered through testing. In relation to this, it is underscored that such a design makes use of a sequential explanatory strategy, which is characterized by the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data to give a more detailed and comprehensive idea of the subject under investigation. It is also pointed out that the priority is typically given to the quantitative data, and the two methods are integrated during the interpretation phase of the study (Creswell, 2003, p. 210).

2.1. Research Participants and Sampling

Among several primary schools in Hawassa, the data for this study was gathered from one primary school called 'Nigist Furra'. This school was selected by convenience sampling as it is near the researcher's residence for easy access to the participants (Kumar, 1996). Besides, the selection was made in consideration of homogeneity to minimize any intervening variables related to language background and socio-economic status, for most of the students in the government schools are more or less thought to be identical in these regards. As to the sample

size, the relatively best solution suggested is to have a large sample size in mind, tentatively based on the principle that the larger the sample size, the better the accuracy would be (Powell, 1996; Singh, 2006). Accordingly, the researcher randomly selected one section for the experimental group to employ the synthetic phonics approach and another section for the control group to employ the analytic phonics approach from the existing three sections for basic reading (decoding) skills for grade one children in 'Nigist Furra' primary school.

3. THE RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. The Experiment

As a major tool, the experiment was conducted during the first two weeks of March, excluding the two weeks devoted to the training and evaluation sessions in the above-mentioned primary school. For this purpose, two sections were randomly selected to administer a pre-test session and to give short training for teachers on how to implement synthetic and analytic phonics approaches to teach basic reading (decoding) skills using the lessons from the text books at hand. This is followed by conducting the lessons and the post-test session. With the intention of quantifying the independent variables (the teaching of basic reading and decoding skills in synthetic and analytic phonics approaches) and the dependent variables (the students' basic reading and decoding performance in English), the researcher has, therefore, planned to conduct the measurement mainly using modified forms of standard tests. Such tests are preferred because it is thought that the original standard tests might be highly demanding due to the language difficulty faced by foreign language learners like ours and may not correspond to the purposes and contents of the syllabus the children are familiar with. Therefore, they may have an adverse effect on the learning outcomes and the teaching practices (Cohen et al., 2007). Accordingly, reading tests were carefully adapted by the researcher from the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) tests developed by RTI (Research Triangle Institute) International with support from USAID and the World Bank.

This is because such tests are designed as system-level diagnostic tools for evaluating a given intervention and are exploitable for such purposes with possible modification in accordance with the situation of a particular country (RTI International, 2009, p. 10). The necessary care was, therefore, taken by the researcher and testing experts to cross-check the tests with the objectives and contents of the curriculum in use (Heaton, 1990). These tests were, therefore, meant to measure the basic reading skills of the students related to identifying letter-sound correspondence and reading high-frequency words. These are focused because they cover most of the literacy skills the current curriculum aims to develop (FDRE, MOE, 2017).

3.2. Classroom observation

With the intention of supplementing the data to be collected through the experiment, the observation was conducted after the training session on how to use synthetic and analytic phonics approaches to teach basic reading (decoding) skills. Accordingly, a standard observation protocol or checklist was designed to evaluate the way teachers are implementing the types of phonics approaches they are supposed to implement. To sum up, the observation was used to investigate the extent to which synthetic and analytic phonics approaches are used properly and to give immediate corrective feedback in cases of malpractice.

3.3. Interview for teachers

Among the different types of interviews, the researcher has decided to employ a semi-structured interview, which is flexible enough to allow depth to be achieved by providing opportunities for the interviewer to probe and expand the responses. It involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents so as to explore their perceptions of a certain idea, program, or situation. Hence, the semi-structured interview was used with 'Nigist Furra' primary school teachers in order to explore their views about the basic concept of the phonics approaches under investigation, the challenges faced during their practice to teach basic reading skills for grade one children, and the possible remedies to tackle them.

3.4. Data Collection Procedures and Data Analyses

Being the most prominent criteria for research, especially in the social sciences and humanities, reliability and validity are usually associated with tests in general (Bryan, 2005). Furthermore, it is confirmed that they can be used to examine the appropriateness of instruments other than tests—observations and interviews—for data gathering (Markzyk et al., 2005, p. 112). Thus, the following is a brief description of the concepts and their use to measure data collection techniques such as tests, classroom observations, and interviews as well.

3.5. Reliability and Validity of the Reading Test

The researcher considered reliability during the pre- and post-test sessions in the research carried out to check the stability of the score obtained over time and across settings (Markzyk, 2005, p. 105). In addition, there is a need for validity to check what the instrument measures and how well it does so (Anastasi and Urbina, 1997). To this effect, an attempt was made to prepare a reading test while maintaining content and face validity. In relation to this, for instance, the test was prepared on the basis of the curriculum so as to measure students' performance in the basic reading and decoding skills that are familiar to them. To put it another way, appropriate care was taken to ensure that each test was relevant and comprehensive by the researcher, testing experts, and school teachers (Heaton, 1990).

3.6. Reliability and Validity of Classroom Observation

As a research instrument commonly used in qualitative studies, observation demands a systematic and careful examination of the phenomena being studied. Particularly, it is imperative for researchers who use direct observation to conduct their research in a valid and reliable manner by taking care of each and every step in the observation (Lodico et al., 2010, pp. 114–115). Accordingly, an attempt was made to conduct the observation as naturally as possible by allotting a time frame relatively long enough to make the participants less conscious of what is going on through time and to elicit in-depth information for the research to be carried out. Besides, the researcher designed an observation checklist in the form of field notes that includes a list of items to be observed and provides spaces to be filled in for recording any reaction or feeling (Kumar, 1991).

3.7. Reliability and Validity of the Interviews

As a mixed-methods design, it is imperative to consider interviews for strengthening the data gathered through classroom basic reading skill tests and observation. In relation to this,

Kelinger (1970), cited in Cohen (2005), said that the interview may be used in conjunction with other methods for triangulation purposes in order to follow up on unexpected results or to validate other methods. A semi-structured interview was, therefore, conducted using a set of predetermined questions for better reliability and validity (De Vos et al., 2002). As a result, there were long interview sessions with 'Nigist Furra' primary school teachers so as to give them a better opportunity of expressing their opinions exhaustively, as indicated earlier (Cohen, 2005). Besides, all that is required is to refrain from paraphrasing what was said or making judgmental comments such as good or that's interesting" to minimize personal bias (Mack et al., 2005). At last, the whole process of administering the interviews, classroom observation, and basic reading test took place after a brief and vivid explanation of the objectives and significance of the research for the participants in particular and the public in general.

3.8. Methods of Data Analyses

The concept of data analysis is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between deductive and inductive reasoning, and between description and interpretation (Meriam, 2001). This is to mean that data analysis is an effort to make a swing between quantitative and qualitative data in accordance with the situation as far as a mixed research approach is concerned. To this effect, there was an attempt to follow a sequential explanatory procedure, which implies that priority was given to the collection and analysis of quantitative data. Accordingly, first came the systematic organization of the test scores through coding, categorization, and tabulation. Next came analyses of the same data through charting and comparing the scores of the two groups using SPSS 26 to examine if there was a statistically significant mean difference. Accordingly, the comparison was done by looking at the scores of children taught synthetic phonics and analytic phonics in each group to see the impact of each of the interventions using a paired sample t test. Then came the comparison of the means of the two groups, which was done using an independent sample t-test. These computations were done because the t test is considered the most powerful test of mean equality for two groups with broadly normal distributions. Above all, eta was used to measure the effect size, or the extent to which the finding comes as a result of the interventions mentioned above.

After that, the data obtained from the direct observation and the semi-structured interview were thematically outlined, interpreted, and presented in text form to supplement the findings obtained from the test scores in the process of proving the hypotheses. By implication, maximum effort was exerted to enhance the reliability and validity of the research by drawing conclusions supported by data gathered from a variety of instruments, which include testing, observation, and interviews.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section deals with the presentation, analysis, and discussion of the quantitative and qualitative data respectively in accordance with the hypotheses and research questions in the first part.

4.1. Analysis and Discussion of the Quantitative Data

Analysis and Discussion of the Pre- and Post-Test Results of the Experimental Group (EG) and the Control Group (CG) in the Basic Reading Skills using the T-Test.

Table 3.1: The Paired-Samples T Test Results of Students who were taught in Synthetic Phonics Approach in decoding (40%)

Pre test			Post test				DF	T-value	P-value	Sig.
N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	Mean Df				
30	10.70	8.90		21.30	7.40	10.60	29	6.986	.000	Significant

As indicated in Table 3.1, paired-samples t-test results of the data were gathered for a pre-post test comparison of the treatment group in the main component of basic reading skill decoding. Hence, the mean and standard deviation of the group's performance during pre- and post-sessions were calculated to be approximately 10.70, 8.90, and 21.30, 7.40, respectively. This implies that there was a statistically significant difference in mean of -10.60 between the sessions at a t-value of 6.99 and a p-value of 0.00, favoring the post-session, for research carried out with the assumption of a p-value of 0.05. To sum up, the result confirms that the synthetic phonics approach was effective in developing the students' ability to recognize words since the eta squared statistic (0.63) indicated a large effect size of such an approach (Cohen, 1988).

Table 3.2: The Paired-Samples T Test Results of Students who were taught in Analytic Phonics Approach in decoding (40%)

Pre test			Post test				DF	T-value	P-value	Sig.
N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	Mean Df				
30	7.683	7.9313	30	13.783	8.1861	6.10	29	3.704	.001	Significant

In table 3.2, paired-samples t-test results of the data were presented for pre-post test comparison of the control group in the main component of basic reading skill decoding. Consequently, the mean and standard deviation of the group's performance during pre- and post-sessions were calculated to be approximately 7.73, 7.93, 13.83, and 8.21, respectively. This is to mean that there was a statistically significant difference in mean of -6.10 between the sessions at a t-value of 3.70 and a p-value of 0.01, favoring the post-session, for research carried out with the assumption of a p-value of 0.05. To sum up, the result confirms that the analytic phonics approach was effective in developing the students' ability to recognize words since the eta squared statistic (0.32) indicated a large effect size of such an approach (Cohen, 1988).

Table 3.3: The Independent-Samples T Test Results (Pre-test)

Pretest mean comparison								DF	T-value	p-value	Sig.
	Experimental Group (taught in synthetic app)		Control Group (taught in analytic app.)								
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	MD				
Decoding	30	10.667	8.8759	30	7.683	7.9313	2.9833	58	1.373	.175	Not Significant

As can be seen from the table 3.3, the independent-samples t-test analysis compares the children's decoding skills before they were taught in synthetic and analytic phonics approaches. Hence, their mean and standard deviation were computed approximately as 7.68, 7.93, and 10.67, 8.87, respectively. By implication, there was no significant difference in scores between the groups in word recognition, as the difference in their mean was only 2.98, which was significant at a t-value of 1.43 and a p-value of 0.18 for research carried out assuming a p-value of 0.05. In sum, one can deduce that students engaged in both synthetic and analytic phonics approaches to instruction do not have a visible gap in recognizing words.

Table 3.4: The Independent-Samples T-Test Results (Post-test)

								DF	T-value	p-value	Sign.
Post test mean comparison	Experimental Group		Control Group	(taught in analytic app.)							
	(taught in synthetic app)										
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	MD				
Decoding	30	18.633	9.6257	30	13.783	8.1861	4.8500	58	2.102	.040	Significant

As shown in the table, the independent-samples t-test analysis compares the children's decoding skills after they were taught in synthetic and analytic phonics approaches. Hence, the mean and standard deviation of the students taught in the approaches mentioned above were computed approximately as 18.63, 9.63, and 13.93, 8.21, respectively. By implication, there was a significant difference in scores between the groups in word recognition, as the difference in their mean was 4.90, which was remarkable at a t-value of 2.10 and a p-value of 0.04 for research carried out assuming a p-value of 0.05. In sum, one can deduce that students engaged in synthetic phonics instruction outperformed those engaged in analytic phonics approach instruction in recognizing words, although the average result was less than the pass mark and the eta squared statistic (0.07) indicated a moderate effect size of the intervention (Cohen, 1988).

4.2. Analysis and Discussion of the Qualitative Data

4.2.1. Classroom Observations

During the observation, the researcher noticed that both teachers in 'Nigst Furra' Primary School familiarized the children with the graphemes on the pictures, focusing on, for instance, the graphemes 'ow' and 'ox' and their and ok as witnessed in the sample observations, respectively. The children were familiar with the pictures and the sounds associated with the phoneme, as a child recalls the words 'snow' and 'fox' in the case of the synthetic and the analytic lessons, respectively. This is because the scheme has been designed to teach children phonemes and the corresponding graphemes or groups of graphemes using picture prompts (Miskin, 2005). Through the course of the lessons, they learned that the sound can be graphically represented in at least two different ways.

The teachers helped the children generate words by describing something and encouraging them to say what it was, as witnessed frequently in the lessons. Developing children's metalanguage, or knowledge about language, is thus a principle of the scheme, and the students' explanation demonstrates that the student has understood this phoneme-grapheme relationship. During the lesson observations, the researcher noticed that children were working with their peers on synthetic and analytic phonics activities in groups of about five to six in their break time

as well. Lesson contents, therefore, were matched to the children's reading levels. More over, the teachers involved in both experiments used the detailed lesson plans provided, and the attempts to fulfill resources for the children during the interventions were successful. This ensured the quality of the lessons was consistent throughout the sections selected to carry out the experiments.

Another important issue during the observations was exploring the variations observed during the implementations under investigation. As a result, it was found that the teachers showed slight variations in practice. For example, the teacher assigned to employ synthetic phonics instruction used flash cards for revising the letters and sounds taught, while the other teacher assigned to employ analytic phonics instruction used the blackboard or the text book itself for the same purpose.

4.2.2. Interviews

Qualitative data was gathered through interviews with two female teachers (the first is more experienced in teaching, with more than half a decade of teaching experience, though she studied English as a minor subject at Hawassa Teachers Training College, and the second is a novice teacher, though she studied English as a major subject at the same college) who were involved in the experiments in order to supplement the quantitative data obtained through pre- and post-test results. Accordingly, the responses of the teachers were transcribed and synthesized as follows:

In relation to the first question that deals with the availability of any on-the-job training opportunity on teaching basic reading/decoding in an EFL context for first-cycle primary school teachers, including themselves so far, both teachers responded that they have never been exposed to such training up to now; therefore, they are forced to stick to the approaches taught in teacher training colleges.

With regard to the second question that refers to the approaches they have been employing to teach basic reading and decoding, especially for grade one instead, the first teacher said she usually teaches basic reading using a look-and-say approach with the help of picture cards and objects in and around the school. For instance, she told the researcher that she shows 'Apple' to teach letter 'A', 'Ball' to teach letter 'B', etc. The novice teacher, however, said she usually teaches word reading using the aforementioned approach after taking much time to teach the alphabets using the alphabetic method, which requires her to teach the names of the letters of the alphabet, saying "ay", "bee", "see", etc. to teach letters A/a, B/b, C/c, etc. This is because, according to her, most of the students do not even identify alphabets, even though they have come across them at the kindergarten (KG) level.

When the teachers were asked about the effectiveness of what they are doing to teach basic reading and decoding and their reasons for their comments, both of them said that they do not think it is effective since the aforementioned approaches and methods being employed are not helpful enough to deal with students who are joining grade one without getting appropriate lessons in learning to read at KG level and who are suffering from an acute shortage of text books.

Concerning their impressions about the use of synthetic and analytic phonics approaches for the experiment to alleviate the students' problems in basic reading/decoding, both teachers

indicated that they hope these approaches can bring significant change in this regard, provided that there is a conducive environment to employ them for quite sufficient periods of time. However, they gave different responses to the question based on their observations of the improvements the students have shown. Accordingly, the first teacher who taught the students using an analytic phonics approach commented that she observed a significant change in identifying letters and sounds, while the second teacher who taught the students using a synthetic phonics approach commented that she observed a significant change in attempting to read words using letter-sound correspondence, as opposed to the evidence from the t test results that show no significant difference between the two groups in word reading.

In response to the question on the students' reaction to learning to read using the new approaches mentioned above, both teachers confirmed that they found their students very interested and highly motivated, contrary to their expectations. For example, the first teacher said she observed her students practicing continuants such as /f/, /m/, /s/, etc. during their free time as part of their game after learning them analytically. The second teacher also told the researcher that she saw her students attempting to read words from their note book even outside the classroom individually and in groups, particularly those words that have a C-V-C pattern, e.g., leg, sun, etc., by counting each sound after learning to read words with similar patterns synthetically.

According to these teachers, this happened because they began to recognize better ways of identifying the already learned letters and the corresponding sounds. Above all, they managed to make use of such knowledge to improve their word-reading abilities. The researcher also witnessed the same thing during his attempt to look at the students' exercise books every day in order to check whether the teachers are doing their job in accordance with the training offered.

In response to the question on the challenges faced while the experiment is going on, the first teacher disclosed that it was not easy to get the concept of the analytic phonics approach at the beginning, for she was not clear on what makes it different from the existing look-and-say approach. But, she added, the difference became clear after realizing that words are selected carefully based on their pattern (CV, VC, or CVC) and are grouped under selected sounds to be taught. On the other hand, the second teacher said she was comfortable with the concept of the synthetic phonics approach right from the start, for the training was supported with an audio CD.

Moreover, both teachers stressed time as a serious factor in doing the experiments in terms of duration and scheduling. Accordingly, they underscored the need to extend the duration to more than two weeks to get sufficient time to teach the topics effectively. At last, the teachers were asked about the coping mechanisms they used to handle the situation smoothly. In relation to this, both of them indicated that they were forced to use extra periods to cover the topics since the school principals and most of their colleagues were cooperative enough to facilitate such an opportunity.

5. CONCLUSION

Since the purpose of the study, as stated in the opening part, was to investigate the impact of synthetic and analytic phonics approaches on the basic reading and decoding attainment of grade one children in government schools in Hawassa, the following conclusions and suggestions can be made: The first thing is to declare the results of the paired sample t test so

as to check the impact of each of the interventions on the basic reading and decoding skills of the children in each group. It is indicated in the reports that significant differences between the pre- and post-test outcomes of the two groups in word reading were observed. This implies that both the synthetic and analytic phonics approaches have a similar impact on enhancing the children's performance in word reading.

Despite the similarity mentioned above, there are still some gaps to mention in their outcomes. The children in the analytic group displayed more significant progress in their basic reading and decoding performance than their counterparts in the synthetic group since the former scored a far higher effect size (0.43) than the effect size (0.16) of the latter. The reason for the unsatisfactory performance of the synthetic group might be the requirement to learn relatively more phonics rules than their counterparts in the analytic group. In relation to this, there is a research finding that reported that learning the rules of phonics for better decoding skills might bother and confuse the children if it is not carried out selectively and appropriately for primary school children who get bored and distracted easily due to their short memory and attention span (Wu, 2005). On the other hand, children in the synthetic group were not learning such rules explicitly. So, they were favored in getting more time to practice the blending and segmentation of words through various activities provided in the experiments and in their text books as well.

Later comes the outcome of the independent sample t test analysis of the children's performance in the basic reading and decoding skills after the interventions. Consequently, the t-test results proved that the synthetic and analytic phonics approaches had the same impact on the reading test scores of the children in an EFL context. This happened because the P value of the result in the reading skill was insignificant since the instructions were conducted under the same teaching variables like target words, instructional materials, duration of the instruction, and the experiments. As a result of this finding, the alternative hypothesis that was meant to investigate the significant difference in the children's scores of word reading between the synthetic and the analytic groups after the interventions is rejected. Thus, the finding seems to confirm the idea of a third position that dictates both approaches — synthetic phonics and analytic phonics — are necessary, as each of them has its own contribution to make to helping children improve their reading performance in English (Torgerson et al., 2006).

However, the children who were taught in the synthetic phonics approach managed to attain a slightly higher mean result in word reading skills than those who were taught in the analytic phonics approach. Such an achievement of the synthetic group in the skill mentioned above is consistent with the findings of Kan (2009), Watson & Johnson (2009) and Yen (2004). This happened because of the explicit and systematic nature of the synthetic phonics instruction. In addition, the letter-sound correspondence the children are taught were organized from simple to complex (Belvins, 2006; Chard & Osborn, 1999). As a result, children could learn to read quickly by applying the simple letter-sound relationship to simple words with the CVC pattern first so as to conceptualize the alphabetic principle. Besides, its explicitness might help to tell children directly the grapheme-phoneme correspondence and the related rules rather than rely on their own discovery of them (Wu, 2005).

As learned from the interview and observation sessions, the teachers understood that the primary focus of phonics is to help the children build the relationship between sounds and letters systematically. Besides, they recognized that systematic and explicit phonics instruction would assist the students word reading skills, as confirmed by the fact that phonics yields a

better result when systematically and explicitly introduced in an EFL context such as ours where limited English exposures exist (NRP, 2000).

In addition, it is learned from the responses of interviewees and the observations made that there was some flexibility on the part of the teachers in understanding and implementing the phonics approaches under study without violating the basic guidelines. Besides, the teachers said they found the method interesting to use and were willing to make personal sacrifices, such as devoting their regular periods to imparting their lessons through the interventions understudy for better mastery, as witnessed by the children when they were asked informally by the researcher during the observation sessions. Most importantly, the researcher himself often witnessed that they were enthusiastically teaching the lessons using phonics songs and word flash cards in extra periods as well. At last, the teachers said they were grateful for the opportunity to take part in the experiment as it helped them to be more clear with the what and how of the phonics approaches under investigation than the training opportunities offered to them previously.

6. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The following pedagogical implications have been forwarded based on the research findings for those interested in employing synthetic and analytic phonics instructions in an EFL context.

- Teachers are advised to make use of these phonics approaches alternatively, for the findings of the study proved that they have a similar impact on the children's performance in basic reading and decoding skills.
- Instruction in phonemic awareness is vital for employing the phonics approaches under study smoothly since such awareness helps children acquire how letters and sounds are blended to form words and segmented to break them in their efforts to learn to read.
- The researcher would like to advise on the need to avoid teaching complicated phonics rules so as to get rid of confusion for the children and to focus on those rules with the most utility and at a point when children can best understand how to apply them for basic reading and decoding skills.

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8. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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Indigenous institutions of communication among the Sidama: challenges and prospects in the 21st Century, Ethnographic study in Sidama Regional State, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The Sidama have rich historical traditions that reflect a unique and egalitarian culture. Among such traditions, the most notable one is their indigenous communication system. Hence, the main objective of this study was to identify and analyze the indigenous communication systems that the Sidama people have employed for many generations. It further examines the patterns of changes, challenges, and prospects facing the development of these indigenous cultural institutions by taking Dara, Aroessa, and Hawassa Zuria Woredas of the Sidama region as cases. Moreover, we delved into understanding the competing performance of indigenous communication practices vis-à-vis modern institutions of communication and possible ways of integrating them for sustainable community development. To investigate these knowledge systems, the study employed a participatory research approach and used interactive research methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observations. The findings of the study revealed that the indigenous communication system has paramount importance in transmitting information between persons and groups for the Sidama society since the day's technologies and modern means of communication were not apparent. Despite the current dominant nature of conventional institutions of communication, the Sidama has continued to endure the indigenous institutions in the day-to-day communal context of rural society and serve their purposes to the satisfaction of the rural people by fulfilling their desire for information about local events, the necessity to spread information about political and religious decisions, as well as threats to security. The study also discusses the recognition and structural supports delivered towards the customary communication schemes as they help to enhance the continuity of cultural identities, values, and norms to be shared among members over many generations.

Keywords: Indigenous Knowledge, Communication, Sidama

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

Communication is the process by which a sender passes information to a decoder or receiver. It involves contacting, relaying, and transferring ideas, news, secrets, messages, orders, and information from people, groups, and communities to others. Communication, in general terms, can be described as the act of sending and receiving messages from a source through a medium. [MacBride et al. \(1981\)](#) describe communication not just as the exchange of news and messages but as an individual and collective activity embracing all transmissions and the sharing of ideas, facts, and data. Thus, communication may be looked at as a system or process. According to [Okunna \(1999:6\)](#), communication is a complex process because it involves the exchange or sharing of information or a message and requires certain basic components. These include the source from whom the message originates; the medium through which the message is conveyed; the audience who receives the message; and the feedback, which is the reaction of the receiver to the message. Man is a communicating animal or being. He is therefore almost always engaged in one form of communication or another, in a near state of perpetuity, and even in his sleep ([Obiora, 2010](#)). Thus, communication is central and critical to all human activities.

Definitions of the Indigenous Communication System (ICS) vary as there are scholars, movements, or schools of thought. [Ansu-Kyeremeh \(1998\)](#), cited in [Odunlami \(2006: 161\)](#) defines it as any form of endogenous communication system, which by virtue of its origin, form, and integration into a specific culture, serves as a channel for messages in a way and manner that requires the utilization of the values, symbolism, institution, and ethos of the host culture through its unique qualities and attributes. In addition, [Hachten \(1971\)](#) in [Dele Odunlami \(2006: 161\)](#) outlines it as an “informal channel of communication”. Other scholars like [Akpabio \(2003:3\)](#) perceive ICS as the process and systems which utilize symbols, values, and institutions which directly appeal to and readily connect with the people and thus enhance the variety and effectiveness of messages that circulate in the community.

Every society has evolved ways of transmitting information from one person to another, and Africa is no exception ([Doob, 1966](#)). In Africa, the indigenous or traditional communication system, apart from transmitting information, which includes the news function and other declarations, amuses, persuades, and is also used for social exchanges ([Doob, 1966](#)). It was stated by [Olulade \(1998\)](#) that traditional communication as used in Africa is an admixture of social conventions and practices that have become sharpened and blended into veritable communication modes and systems that have almost become standard practices for society. It is, therefore, composite coordination of communication, which spread through all aspects of rural African life. According to [Denga \(1988\)](#), cited in [Mede \(1998\)](#) and [Aziken and Emeni \(2010\)](#), it has varied characteristics, which include dynamism, and the tools employed in the course of disseminating information vary from place to place. It is perhaps the most important way in which rural people communicate among themselves and with others. Therefore, despite the advent of modern-day media in Africa, the use of traditional means of communication is still very common, acceptable, and recognizable by the people.

Ethiopia is very rich in different indigenous knowledge systems in such areas as communication systems, architecture, medicine, agriculture, and cottage industry. The following are some of these IK systems: Dagū (What have your ears heard?) communication of the Afar people of

north-eastern Ethiopia; the traditional skills of the Konso people in hillside terracing and banding (they also practice traditional irrigation to supplement the meager precipitation received during the cropping seasons). In Bale administrative zone, farmers prepare a trench around a potato plot to protect the potato from a porcupine. In Gondar, farmers shift their barns from one farmland to another to fertilize the land. The people in the Wolqite, Waliso, and Tilili areas are skilled in hornwork. Around Debre Birhan and Tigray, it is common for the residents to build their houses from stone, mud, and ash. In Addis Ababa and Hawassa, people can be witnessed engaged in producing and selling household furniture made of bamboo and/or sisal. The stelae of Axum, the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, and the castles in Gondar are some of the standing monuments of civilization in ancient Ethiopia in terms of architecture. With regard to metalwork, what is today known as annealing and hardening is very common with every Ethiopian traditional blacksmith. In rural parts of Ethiopia, if someone is struck by lightning, the survivor will be immediately brought into contact with the moist ground or dung (Report of the Ethiopian National [Workshop, 2002](#): 6). The Sidama people (one of the over 80 ethnic groups in the country) live in the southern part of present-day Ethiopia, in the Horn of Africa. They belong to the people of Cushitic origin that occupy the vast area of northeastern and eastern Africa, extending from Sudan throughout the Horn of Africa to Tanzania ([Wansamo, 2007](#): 1).

The Sidama, like their counterparts in Africa and Ethiopia, have rich historical traditions that reflect a unique and egalitarian culture. Among such traditions, the most notable one is their indigenous communication system. Even if this knowledge system is changing because of the emergence of modern-day information dissemination facilities, education, political changes, and contacts with different people from other regions and religions, it continues to play vital roles in every social context of the rural Sidama society of today. The main functions of traditional communication, among others, include being a medium for the participation of the people in their community affairs, a medium for the struggle against social disobedience, and a medium for the efforts to consolidate neighborhood unity. Thus, this paper stimulated the recognition and description of indigenous people vis-à-vis modern institutions of communication among the Sidama of southern Ethiopia.

1.2. Statement of the problem

The Sidama are one of the Cushitic-speaking people living in North-Eastern Africa in what is today South Ethiopia. The society has distinctive traditions and cultural life as regards traditional beliefs, the administration system (Luwa), judgment procedures, marriage ceremonies and arrangements, traditional dance and its clothes, the celebration of assorted culture-based holidays, its calendar, the New Year (Fiche) celebration, mourning ceremonies, and customary norms. These are among the most exquisite indigenous norms and social values of the Sidama that distinguish them from other socio-cultural formations.

Despite all these, the Sidama people also possess an assortment of traditional communication institutions that enable them to share information among themselves. These forms of communication occur within families, at meetings of village organizations, in the market place, or at the well. Much of the communication is informal and unorganized, interpersonal, oral rather than written, controlled locally rather than by outsiders, and uses no or low levels of technology. However, even with the dominant nature of modern institutions of communication, those indigenous institutions among the Sidama have continued to endure in the day-to-day communal context of rural society and serve their purposes to the satisfaction of the rural

people by fulfilling their desire for information about local events, the necessity to spread information about political and religious decisions, as well as threats to security. Despite having rich cultural elements and traditions, only a small number of studies on Sidama have been written, and not much data on their indigenous communication systems is available in a well-primed manner.

Early investigations on such indigenous institutions were carried out by Kifle Wansamo in 2007 and the Sidama Zone Culture and Tourism Bureau in 2009, soon followed by a broader study by Mesay Bogale in 2016. Mesay [Bogale \(2016\)](#) has investigated “Qeexaala” (public demonstration) as a cultural communication practice among the Sidama by taking Arbegona, Hawassa Zuria Woredas, and Hawassa city administration as the focus areas. However, with the presence of many other forms of media, the purpose of his study is solely restricted to the analysis of Qeexaala from a cultural communication point of view. The function of traditional communication media was well described in Kifle Wansamo’s [\(2007\)](#) essay titled “Sidama: An Overview of History, Culture, and Economy,” but only in a few words. The book published in 2009 on Sidama culture and history also points out a variety of traditional forms of communication in different parts of the society, yet barely gives a portrayal of them. Commonly, these documents, which were hardly interested in studying the Sidama media of communication, made little effort in associating them with the modern communication media on the one hand and the state institutions on the other hand, which significantly threatened the practices of indigenous communication media. Hence, given that no comprehensive research has been conducted on the indigenous institutions and their relevance in the contemporary world, it becomes exceptionally vital to carry out this study to value and conserve those communication systems that the Sidama people have employed for many generations. The study further attempted to assess the patterns of changes, challenges, and prospects facing the development of indigenous systems of communication institutions.

Therefore, in light of the above, the study strived to address the following principal research questions:

1. What were the Sidama’s indigenous communication institutions before the advent of the digital era?
2. What are the evolving developments due to the interface of modern and indigenous institutions of communication?
3. How can the advent of the modern state in Sidama land be seen with their institution of communication? Is the state contributing to the enhancement or cramp of ICIs?
4. How can modern and indigenous institutions be integrated for sustainable local development?

1.3. Objectives of the study

The overall objective of the study is to carry out an empirical investigation of institutional contact and changes in the indigenous institutions of communication among the Sidama in southern Ethiopia.

The specific objectives of the study are:-

- To identify and describe Sidama's indigenous institution of communication before the advent of the digital era.
- To ascertain the evolving developments due to the interface of modern and indigenous institutions of communication.
- To examine how the advent of the modern state on Sidama land affected the indigenous institution of communication.
- To determine if the integration of modern and indigenous institutions of communication can be strategically used for sustainable local development.

1.4. Significance of the study

The following points highlight the significance of the research:

- The Sidama people use different forms of communication. Among such practices, the most prominent ones are Qeexaala, Iyyaha, Lalallawa, Lasa, Korora, Baderi Mayii Noo, and the Songo. These indigenous media are still playing a very significant role in the day-to-day social existence of rural society. Thus, the study analyzes and discusses the positive consequences of the aforementioned traditional institutions. Correspondingly, it shows the public how significant they are in terms of creating economic, social, religious, political, and cultural ties within the people.
- Indigenous and long-established communication media are unquestionably genuine tools for grassroots mobilization and development. In other words, these media, which are rooted in the people's culture, are considered very effective or more effective in grassroots mobilization for participatory development. But most of the time, those communication systems are rarely taken into consideration by development agents. This reluctance in turn led to the failure of agents in accomplishing their projects and communicating with and mobilizing the grassroots, who are mostly rural, poor, and illiterate, for development. To avoid such scenarios, there is a need for close collaboration between development agents and traditional communicators to make optimal use of the interactive power of the traditional communication system to stimulate people's participation.
- As an anthropologist, studying a certain society involves examining its culture, reconstructing its values, and giving meaning to its peculiar behaviors. Therefore, it is believed that scrutinizing the indigenous communication systems of the Sidama people will help to popularize, reconstruct, and conserve the cultural identity of the society and the appropriate aspects of their intangible cultural heritage.

The results of this study will also fill the existing research gap, serve as one source of literature for similar research, and perhaps provide a base for other scholars and students who would like to conduct further anthropological studies on the selected topic. Plus, if there are areas that are perceived not to be treated in detail, the study will help to bring forth curiosity capable of inciting research interest in this area. Besides, it could help to establish an information base that would enable the government, varied institutions, and other concerned bodies to preserve and maintain positive aspects of such kinds of intangible cultural heritages, advance knowledge in the field, and avail themselves of firsthand information that could be used as input for policymaking.

Given the above situation on the ground, the researchers believe that it is timely and reasonable to research the identified topic.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Considering the ontological dimension of the topic to be investigated, that is, constructivism (which stresses social phenomena and their meanings are deeply embedded in the social actors' accomplishments), the researcher utilized a qualitative research approach in this study. Unlike the quantitative technique, "which relies on collecting data that is numerically based and amenable to such analytical methods as statistical correlations, often in relation to hypothesis testing" (Walliman, 2006), the qualitative epistemological foundation of the study depends on methods that help in interpreting detail and sensitive human actions. Besides, it centers on the process of theory development rather than testing. Hence, throughout the study, I was totally dependent on qualitative research approaches, and data were qualitatively gathered, analyzed, and interpreted.

2.1. Description of the study area

Sidama is one of the Cushitic-speaking people living in South Ethiopia, and their region is bordered by the Oromia region in the north, east, and southeast, the Wolaita Zone in the west, and the Gedeo Zone in the southwest. The regional government is one of the administrative states of the country and was formed on June 18, 2020, from the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR). According to 2011 estimates, the total population of Sidama was 3.4 million (Sidama Zone Finance and Economic Development Sector, 2011). The major language is called Sidaamu-afso, which, according to the 1994 national census, is the language of 99.5% of this ethnic. As per the existing conventional information, there are two ancestral groups and fourteen clans that constitute the Sidama Nation. The Sidama people regard Bushe and Maldea as their two ancestral forefathers, under which further sub-divisions within each subgroup descend down to the small hamlets, constituting each and every family. The Bushe group includes Hadicho, Holo-garbicho, Malga, Faqisa-Tumano, and Awacho, whereas Hawela, Qewena, Sawola, Alata, Darasha, Dafina, Alawa, Hoffa, and Fardano belong to Maldea (Markos et al. 2011).

The capital city of Sidama, Hawassa, is located 275 kilometers south of Addis Ababa. Land features range from lowlands of about 1500 m.a.s.l. in the Great East Africa Rift Valley that cuts through lakes Hawassa and Abaya up to 3000 m.a.s.l. in the eastern Sidama highlands of Arbogona, Bansa, and Arroressa districts. Sidama land is one of the most evergreen and fertile lands in Africa. As a result, for centuries, the Sidama people led one of the most stable and self-sufficient lives as an independent nation-state in northeastern Africa. They lived in indigenous egalitarian and democratic social, economic, political, and cultural systems. The society has distinct indigenous cultural life as regards marriage ceremonies and arrangements, resolution of problems between individuals and groups, religious practices, the celebration of culture-based holidays and ceremonies like the New Year festival (fichche), the classification of the generational system or Luwa, adherence to the yakka institution serving as Ombudsman for women, customary norms, and mourning rituals. These are among the most cherished customary norms and social values of the Sidama that distinguish them from other socio-cultural boundaries (Markos, 2014).

2.2. Methods of primary data collection

Participant observation: the researcher employed this technique to gather detailed and well-rounded data on the day-to-day activities of the study community in analogy to their socio-cultural events. Through this method of inquiry, attempts were also made to observe the general settings of the study area, communal places (such as Gudummale), villages, and places where traditional communication media are entertained.

Key informant interviews are of different types, and semi-structured interviews are one of the most widely used methods in qualitative social research. Thus, the researchers employed the semi-structured interview type for this particular data inquiry process. Key informants included community elders, leaders, representatives, experts of the Culture and Tourism Bureau, and heads of households. Interviews are carried out at different stages of the research process to gain in-depth qualitative data. Informants were recruited using a purposive sampling technique, where we identified samples based on an individual's specialist knowledge.

Focused Group Discussion (FGD) is distinctively advantageous, for it gives the respondents chances to ask questions of each other, thereby reducing the possible biases of the research (Dawson, 2002: 30-31). Thus, this is what makes FGD very important in the study and differentiates it from key informant interviews and observation. Through this time-saving method, the researchers attempted to obtain a wide range of relevant responses from a larger number of people within a single session. Accordingly, two focus group discussions were conducted with purposefully selected groups comprised of 6–10 community members in the study areas. During the discussions, people from similar backgrounds or experiences (for example, indigenous knowledge practitioners such as local farmers, elders, and community leaders) were brought together to discuss a specific topic of interest to the research process. Furthermore, the FGDs were carried out with discussants that were selected based on their specialist knowledge of the study topic and setting.

2.3. Methods of secondary data Collection

This data was utilized to support and argue the data collected through the primary methods, make the study reliable, and organize the related literature review. The secondary data was collected from diverse published and unpublished materials, such as books, dissertations, articles, magazines, journals, and the Internet.

2.4. Data analysis

As Walliman (2006: 129) stated, "Qualitative research does not involve counting and dealing with numbers but is based more on information expressed in words—descriptions, accounts, opinions, and feelings. In such circumstances, it is also important that we recognize that the analysis and interpretation of data occur in the field as the researcher takes notes. That means the process of data collection and analysis actually takes place together, all through the interview (Henn et al., 2006: 193). Therefore, corresponding to all the above procedures, like gathering, recording, and documenting the necessary raw data from the study setting, the parallel activity is analyzing those data. In this research, which is also qualitative, the data that was gathered all the way through the above qualitative research methods was reduced and analyzed descriptively in a sequential and continuous manner in such a manner that it answered or replied to the research questions while the details were fresh in the mind. In order

to prevent data overload and complications during analysis, coding or classifications were used for the purpose of organizing or arranging the bulky data in the form of notes, observations, transcripts, and documents. This classification mechanism helps the researcher gather the intended data through ¹

2.5. Conceptual framework

Indigenous communication systems refer to the means by which members of a certain society communicate among themselves, with other social groups, with nature, and with the supernatural. According to Aziken and Emeni (2010), these systems of communication are expressed through oral tradition, theater, drama, drumming, orators, songs, folk tales, proverbs, ceremonial occasions like initiations, funerals, weddings, announcements, and other related experiences passed from generation to generation. In the course of those systems, the Sidama were able to make sense of their everyday lives and structure their actions. Conceptually, we intend to analyze the indigenous institutions of communication among the Sidama from a holistic perspective. Put differently, we are going to incorporate all institutions of communication that are embedded in interpersonal relations, inter-group relations, the relations of the Sidama with their neighbors, local communities' relations with their natural environment, and also relations with the supernatural being. Below, we depict our conceptual framework in a diagrammatical format (Figure 1).

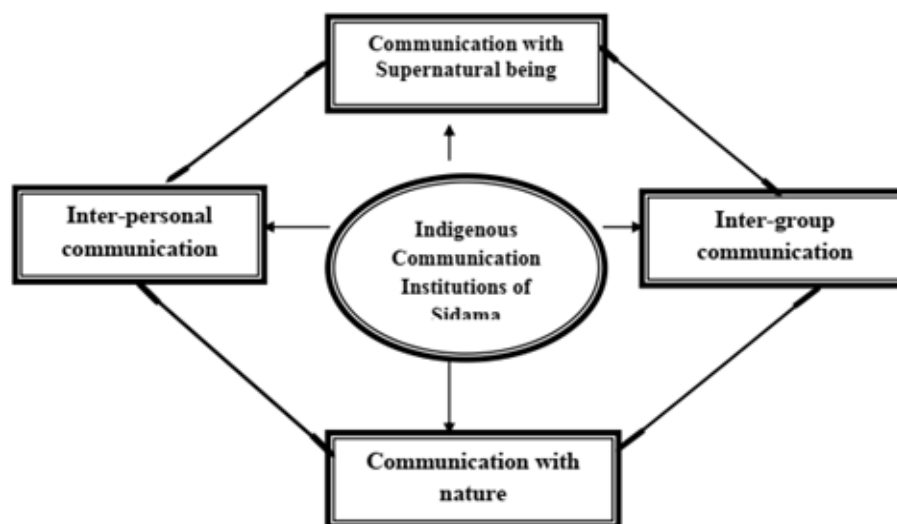


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Indigenous institutions of communication

Lallawa: Before the day to celebrate New Year festivity (Fiche Chemballala), elders communicate the advancement of the day through a messenger who conveys the message to the people by hanging fresh and wet skin on a stick at the local marketplace, Gudumaale, to signal the approaching of the calendar day. This process is called Lallawa (an announcement). Fichche is the most celebrated Sidama cultural holiday, which is based on the lunar calendar. Sidama elders known as 'Ayanto' (who have the wisdom ²

The ayanto are responsible for systematically constructing the calendar not only with regard to the celebration of the event but also taking responsibility for coordinating all other associated social, cultural, and ritual functions (Markos, 2014). Along with those duties, they also possess other functions pertaining to early warning systems for natural disaster management. They look into the number, size, nature, movement, and structure of stars in the sky to forecast future scenarios, particularly the nature of rain and drought, which range from one week to three years. It is neither spiritual nor hereditary, but a skill that anyone can learn. The reading is carried out at night for consecutive days. In rare cases, the Ayanto may find correct forecasting within a few days, but they continue reading the stars for up to a dozen days to prove the reading. According to key informants, ayanto considers different types of stars during the night, and it is based on these stars' movement (speed and direction), size, structure, and the days, months, and weeks of observation that the forecasting would be done about events and the social welfare of the community.

All suggested days that are suitable for conducting different social ceremonies, events, and rituals using indigenous prediction systems are then communicated through local innovation and a culturally built strategy: Lallawa. Matured youth would be called, informed in detail about the identified scenario, and sent to a market place with fresh and wet skin dangled on a stick to disseminate the information. The wet skin signifies the emergence of a new message from the community leaders, so the market people gather around to hear the confirmed account of events. Those primary community members from the market who are being informed about the proceedings are then expected to circulate the information through the snowball method. Accordingly, it will be dispatched to the whole community through the same channel within a very short period of time. On ways of communicating upcoming events, Mesay (2016) states that clan leaders use markets that are found in all woredas of the Sidama to announce decrees regarding 'Fiche' and other occurrences to the people. According to him, the markets have a channel role because, beyond the exchange of commodities, people attend to share information on various issues. An announcement concerning the celebration of the upcoming 'Fiche' is made in such places. In the same manner, Oduko (1987) outlines that village sectors in Africa communicate mostly via the market place of ideas contributed by traditional religion, divination, mythology, cult societies, the chiefs' courts, the elders square, secret and title societies, ³Baderi mayii noo is an inter-personal communication network among the study community. If two individuals come across each other on the road, traveling far from their dwelling villages, they are required to temporarily halt and exchange whatever information they have. This traditional communication system, which resembles the modern-day news media, is known as Baderi Mayino. The Sidama society had no newspaper but had institutions and cultural traits that, in several respects, served the same purposes as modern-day information exchange and dissemination facilities. Likewise, Baderi Mayii Noo, one of the social institutions with particular purposes in the livelihood of the Sidama, served the interests of all community members in pre-modernization. Even with urbanization and modern culture negatively affecting Baderi Mayino, the Sidama still practice the indigenous communication system to run their day-to-day activities. As most of society settles in rural areas, they principally depend on this interpersonal communication network. News about the arrival of a newcomer in the community reaches every nook and cranny of the village and beyond through the interpersonal network. Moreover, news of death, accidents, uprisings, floods, natural disasters, and epidemics spread like fire in society through Baderi Mayii Noo. Similarly, a key informant from Dikicha Kebele stated that

During Baderi Mayii Noo, the two people who met along their way usually sit down and engage in a small talk exchange. The conversation typically begins with greetings and goes like this:

Person One: 'Gooba keerreho, Ooso keerreho, Laalu keerreho, Galte keerreho'?

Person Two: 'Keerehola'

Person One: Baderi Mayii Noo

Person Two: Kanchafara Qareseoo...

Here, the messages exchanged between the subjects are concerned with the desert locust invasion and the incalculable crop, pasture, and forest cover losses. The two people quickly share the relevant news or information with others on their way to daily practice. Then the message reaches a large mass of the population within a short period of time. A key informant who is from Hawassa Zuria Woreda equally asserts that Baderi mayii noo is one of the cultural methods to disseminate disaster early warning information to the rest of the Sidama society. Through these locally available and straightforward mechanisms, communities easily recognize the approaching risks, communicate them all the way through their Woreda by way of culturally built strategies, and prepare for the ⁴

Iyyaha (don't let the thief escape) is used by an individual whose cattle went missing or who has lost his or her property. Here, the person will go to a hilly area, speak out loud, and describe the missing animal or lost property, and, if found, he will request the return of them. Then, the one who recovered the lost property or cattle requires the claimant to provide proof of his belongings. If the finder is satisfied with what he has heard, he will return the possessions to the rightful owner. Hence, the Hallale cultural value, the indigenous belief systems, and honesty operating in an integrated manner with the customary communication organizations make losing something among the Sidama no big deal.

Songo and its role in communication The Songo is comparable to the contemporary parliament. Agendas for discussion used to be forwarded by every member of the Songo, and decisions were made by the associates and presented to the Moote for approval (Wansamo, 2007). As per Seyoum (2001), members of the Songo are selected from the body of "wise persons," or hayoo, elected from different clans. These councilors are, mainly but not necessarily, gerontocrats whose job it is to advise the Songo, to represent a person in dispute, to take one's case or appeal to the Songo of the higher order, or to lobby for assorted causes. Moreover, "the Songo councils discuss various community issues, and in the course of their chat members inquire "what is new" and exchange information on their respective localities" (FGD participants of Dikicha Kebele, Arroressa Woreda).



Figure 2. FGD participants of Dikicha Kebele, Arroressa Woreda, and Date: 21-10-2020, 3:18 PM

Summing up, the study has brought into focus the different forms and procedures involved in the indigenous communication systems of the Sidama people. Among such practices, the most prominent ones are Lalallawa, Baderi Mayii Noo, Iyyaha, and the Songo. These indigenous media are still playing a significant role in the day-to-day social existence of rural society. The functions of the institutions of communication are embedded in inter-personal and inter-group relations, the relations of the Sidama with their neighbors, local communities' relations with their natural environment, and also relations with the supernatural.

3.2. Indigenous-modern communication dichotomy

Human beings have evolved through several stages of development in many aspects. One of the evolutions is manifested through the way people communicate with each other, learn their culture, share information, and adapt to their environment. The same holds true for the Sidama, who practiced indigenous means of communication for so long and persisted in using this system up to the present on the one hand and the modern means of communication on the other hand interchangeably and sometimes simultaneously. Repeated contact with modern technology, increased access to the modern education system, and the presence of other “better” channels of communication resulted in choosing between the two systems of communication. However, the situation varies across the study woredas.

For example, in Hawassa Zuria Wereda, individuals prefer to communicate with modern means of communication than the indigenous, mainly because they are prone to the urban way of life and somehow distant from the ICS. On the other side, in Arroressa Wereda, which is relatively remote from Hawassa town and other urban centers, members depend on indigenous communication systems over modern ones. To present a few means of communication, the Fichchee date is announced in rural markets across the Woreda through popular pronouncements known as Lallawa, miking or postering, videos, or social networking. The pronouncer, or ‘village messenger, would notify: “Fichchee will fall on this date. Be prepared

to usher in the New Year and inform those who have not heard! The messenger communicates the messages from the Ayyaantto, Sidama elders, and clan leaders within the community orally, and this is confirmed by the informants. On the other hand, Iyyaha, which is purposeful public shouting, is widely practiced among the Sidama, irrespective of the villages. Besides, Baderi mayii noo, which literally means “what is new?” is exercised in a reasonable number of Sidama villages. However, young people are losing these skills because they spend more time at educational institutions (which are Western-oriented) than with the teachers (elders) in the community. Thus, the preservation of this indigenous knowledge is critical because it ensures the continuation of the community and its knowledge.

The study participants correspondingly use the telephone (cell phone) and social media such as YouTube, Facebook, Google Docs, and Telegram as one means of accessing news and sharing information within the social community in the study area and among wider audiences. Therefore, this all shows how the two means of communication are visible among the Sidama, particularly in the study of Woredas. Moreover, it has been found that the two communication systems sometimes intermingle with each other. Sidama’s cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, is being introduced to members and non-members of the ethnic group through modern-day media such as television, radio, magazines, newsletters, and brochures, besides ICS. The establishment and service of Sidama Radio through the joint collaboration of the Sidama Development Program (SDP) and Irish Aid can be mentioned here. The Sidama radio, which was established in 1997 in Yirgalem town, has a medium wave frequency of 954 kHz. The frequency allocated to the station is 314 MW, and its transmission covers a 188 km radius. Thus, the transmission of the station covers the whole area of Sidama and some adjacent zones of the southern region, such as Wolayita and Gedeo, as well as some parts of the Oromiya region (Getahun, 2006). This modern system of communication is serving as a source of cultural, political, health, and other educational and enlightenment programs for the masses, leading them toward self-actualization and national development. It also gives expression to the cultural activities of the Sidama among neighboring groups of people. On the other hand, there are times when messages, news, and stories from modern media are shared among the Sidama using the local way of sending and receiving information.

3.3. Recognition of the modern state to the Sidama land

With the coming to power of the EPRDF, the Sidama people were under the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional State (SNNPR), entertaining their own group identity. For several years, they demanded to have their own state and were allowed to have a referendum per their constitutional right. Since 2012 E.C., Sidama has become the 10th regional state of the country. Throughout all this time, how Sidama’s ICS be approached should be a concern as an identity marker of the group. Does the modern state guarantee the continuation of its traditional institutions and the communication systems inside them? In both cases, the ruling government allowed the members to keep their culture intact, including the traditional institution that is the principal for ICS, as a mechanism to keep the existence of the ethnic group, their unique assets, and practices at the center of concern for national and international tourists. For example, the government’s effort in collaboration with elders of the group enabled Sidamas New Year Fiche Chambalala to be recognized as one of the world’s intangible cultural heritages by UNESCO. Besides, the fulfillment of statehood for the Sidama helps members work on their various IKS, including their language as a medium of instruction, and enhances the group’s ability to make indigenous communication systems visible to outsiders.

Modern and indigenous institutions for sustainable local development: Conventional communication networks have a limited range and are confined largely to urban households in the developing world. Even the most external channels, such as radio and extension services, fail to reach the masses (Mundy and Laney, 1992). Similarly, FGD participants in the study argued that “early warning alert information regarding impending natural disasters is often disseminated using either mass media (i.e., television or radio) and/or formal institutional structures. Nonetheless, the emergency warnings frequently fail to properly disseminate the information to end-users. This is because the accessibility of the communication channels is mainly constrained by circumstances akin to recurrent power cuts”. Indigenous channels, by contrast, have a much wider audience, reaching those who are outside the reach of external channels. Therefore, development programs can use these channels both to collect and disseminate information. ‘Keeping an ear to the ground’ by consciously tapping indigenous channels can help project officials discover the local situation and get reactions to project initiatives (ibid.). Moreover, the government should adopt and implement legal instruments and strategies, both at the national and regional levels, to work in cooperation with indigenous organizations.

3.4. Strengths, weakness, and challenges of ICS

Strength: It is important to note that oral media are more highly effective than all other means of communication because they are interactive, interpersonal, combine verbal communications with non-verbal codifications, and are simple, natural, and less expensive. The high content of nonverbal in the oramedia actually makes them more effective because nonverbal communicates the mind more than verbal. When anybody wants to lie, it is non-verbal, which readily contradicts the verbal lies. Hence, the oral and indigenous communication systems have paramount importance in transmitting information between individuals and groups for the local community since the day’s technologies and modern means of communication were not apparent. Its importance highly exhibits the strength of the ICS, and the Sidama people highly rely on it. The most basic strength is that it enhances the continuity of cultural identities, values, and norms to be shared among members over many generations. This form of communication existed for so long, even during these days, that it became the first choice channel for sending and receiving information by the study community over the modern media. Furthermore, FGD discussants claim that “the customary means of disseminating information is very easy to understand because it is very familiar and friendly to the message recipients and transmitted in a way that the locals can catch the message”. Thus, society obeys it and acts accordingly in their routine lives.

In addition, indigenous communication is money-saving for the Sidama and easy to disseminate intended information of various types, such as weather forecasts, natural hazards, epidemics, and any form of catastrophe, for many folks at one time, hence reaching wider audiences. This form of communication is believed to be credible by the locals as it is conveyed by respected individuals such as medicine men, religious fathers, elderly people, and community leaders, thus helping to sustain development interventions made by outsiders and governments. Indigenous means of communication improve laws and order and play a great role in maintaining peace in a community and country at large when the modern means of communication get weak and fail to address societal issues. Moreover, they are fundamental to communicating and looking for solutions for problems that can’t be explained by modern means of communication technologies. Its strength is that indigenous institutions, symbols, and values signify and enrich the transmitted message, making it effective. Therefore, among the Sidama people, the locals

choose to keep this native form of communication, which is very intertwined with their daily lives. It is their means of getting updates and news about their locality.

Weakness: Indigenous communication has been successful for many centuries and has been practiced from one generation to the next. Despite the fact that the indigenous communication system has been playing an indispensable role for communities like the Sidama people until now, it has its own limitations. One of the limitations is that since it is one means of maintaining the cultural identity and practices of one's ethnic group, sometimes there are communication barriers in which messages get distorted when passed from person to person. This is because the transmission of the correct message depends on the trustworthiness of the transmitter, or the one responsible for disseminating the needed information. While communicating, timeliness is one of the basic components that emphasize the significance of the message conveyed. In line with this, indigenous communication takes even more than a month before the information reaches the whole community. On top of this, messages are transmitted to all sections of the community irrespective of age, sex, or status of the message recipient, which leads to the occurrence of misunderstandings and the validity of the message being contested.

Challenges: We now have the new communication culture of the electronic age that perhaps enslaves man on websites and the internet. More and more knowledge is being lost as a result of the disruption of traditional channels of oral communication. Neither children nor adults spend as much time in their communities anymore (for example, some people travel to the city on a daily basis to go to school, to look for work, or to sell farm produce; many young people are no longer interested in or do not have the opportunity for learning traditional methods). This was maintained by key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Hence, it is harder for the older generation to transmit their knowledge to young people. In the past, outsiders (for example, social, physical, and agricultural scientists, biologists, and colonial powers) ignored or maligned IK, depicting it as primitive, simple, static, "not knowledge," or folklore. This historic neglect (regardless of its cause—racism, ethnocentrism, or modernism—with its complete faith in the scientific method) has contributed to the decline of IK systems through a lack of use and application. This legacy is still in evidence. Many professionals are still skeptical. Also, in some countries, official propaganda depicts indigenous cultures and methodologies as backward or out of date and simultaneously promotes one national culture and one language at the expense of minority cultures. Often, formal schooling reinforces this negative attitude. Local people's perceptions (or misperceptions) of local species and of their own traditional systems may need to be rebuilt. Some local people and communities have lost confidence in their ability to help themselves and have become dependent on external solutions to their local problems.

4. CONCLUSION

The Sidama people perform different forms of communication, such as Iyyaha, Lalallawa, Baderi Mayii Noo, and Songo. These indigenous media are still playing a very significant role in the day-to-day social existence of rural society. It is also important to note that traditional media are more effective than all other means of communication because they are interactive, interpersonal, combine verbal communication with non-verbal codifications, and are simple, natural, and less expensive. It is, however, observed that the advent of the new communication culture of the electronic age has its downside for the perseverance of the indigenous knowledge

system in the study area. Repeated contact with modern technology, increased access to the modern education system, and the presence of other “better” channels of communication resulted in choosing between the two systems of communication. Besides, young people are losing their knowledge and skills about the customary systems of communication because they spend more time at educational institutions (which are Western-oriented) than with the teachers (elders) in the community. Thus, the preservation of this indigenous knowledge is critical because it ensures the continuation of society at large and its knowledge.

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7. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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Assessing language use in the translation of legislations in the attorney general of the South Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS)

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Abstract

The study examines language use in the translation of legislation and legal translators' use of the legislative drafting manual of Ethiopia in the Office of the Attorney General of the SNNPRS. Adopting a qualitative approach, data for the study were gathered using document review, KII, and FGD. Thirteen bilingual laws that address issues related to public law, private law, criminal law, and civil law were reviewed, and four key informants and three FGD participants were involved in the data generation. Participants in the KII and FGDs were drafters, judges, prosecutors, attorneys, and legal translators. Data analysis was conducted using notes taken from document reviews and transcripts of FGD and KII. The findings of the study indicated that the translation of legislation in the state experiences various language use problems. While language use problems in the translation of "shall" and "may" and the maintenance of legal equivalence were found to emanate from the low linguistic competence of legal translators, other language use problems were found to emanate from the wrong editing and translation procedures followed, the absence of orientation and on-the-job training for legal translators, and the absence of mechanisms for quality control. It was also found out that legal translators in the state are not using the Ethiopian legislative drafting manual that was meant to support the translation practices of the Attorney General. Given the growing trend of globalization, the Attorney General of the state should foresee the higher need for the English version of legislation and hence pay special attention to the translation of legislation in the state.

Keywords: translation, legal translation, language use problems, legislations

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

Translation is the process of rendering the words of a text written in one language into those of another. As an inter-lingual and intercultural communication, it is used in various contexts. One of the contexts in which translation is applied is the legal system where the process is referred to as legal translation. In the legal context, texts from one legal system are translated into another. Unlike pure science, law remains a national phenomenon, and each national law constitutes an independent legal system with its own terminological apparatus, underlying conceptual structure, rules of classification, sources of law, methodological approaches and socio-economic principles (Sarcevic 1997: 13). This has implications for legal translation when communication is channeled across different languages, cultures and legal systems.

Translation serves an important function in organizations. [Swigart \(2018\)](#) states, “translation is a critical part of language services in many organizations without which they could not provide full service. In this respect, translation of legislations falls under the generic term “legal translation” which covers both the translation of law and other communications in legal settings. In this paper, the focus is mainly on the translation of law. In the SNNPR state Attorney General (AG), translation is a language service organized as a work process under the Directorate for Legislative Drafting. In Ethiopia, the regional states that use the National language (Amharic) as a working language, produce bilingual legislations. The original draft is authored in Amharic and translated into English. In this process, the greatest challenge for translators is to interpret legal concepts in the source language (Amharic) and find appropriate legal terminology in the target language, i.e., English ([Cavoski, 2017](#): 61). In addition, in most cases, impreciseness is observed in the source language legal texts. This often occurs because legal drafting is usually conducted by sector office professionals of various disciplines (subjects) who are not familiar with key legal concepts.

By its very nature, legal translation demands precision more than literary translation. It has its own rules and procedures which have to be added to those already existing in the translation of non-legal texts. Thus, two basic skills are required in translating legal and social science texts ([Lessig, 1993](#)). They are solid linguistic knowledge of both language systems and a thorough knowledge of the subject in the legal or social systems concerned. Furthermore, the issue of language use¹ which is concerned with the way we do things with words, is very important for translation. It is with the words that we think about our use of words in any act of cognition, identification, or recognition ([Yoos, 2009](#)).

In the production of legislations, translation is a process that comes at the end. When we take the context of the SNNPR, first legislative drafts are initiated, mostly by individual sector offices and in a few cases by the AG. The legislative drafts that are initiated by individual sector offices are submitted to the AG for comments and giving legal format. The draft legislations are then submitted to the State Council for approval. It is only after the approval that the legislations are submitted to legal translators for translation. Although editing and translation of legislations is supposed to be completed before they are formally approved by the Office of the Administrative

¹ In the current study the term language use has been used to refer to the communicative meaning of language as used by the legislative drafters and translators in the SNNPRS Attorney General. It differs from language usage, which refers to the rules for making language and the structures we use to make it.

Council, the practice is sending the Amharic version only for approval. Legal translators are given the legislations to translate after they have been approved.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Legislations can be produced unilingually, bilingually or multilingually as the context of users' demands. In the process of producing bilingual legislations, a particular emphasis is placed on the importance of language because each language has its own accepted rules and conventions. Thus, where bilingual legislations are produced, special care is given to the creation of versions of legislations with equal intended legal effects. That means both language versions must convey the same legal meaning.

In Ethiopia, the SNNPRS is one of the regional states which is linguistically the most diverse region hosting about 56 linguistic and cultural groups. Because of this diversity, Amharic, the national language, has been chosen as the working language of the state.² Legislations are produced first in Amharic and then translated into English by legal translators employed by the AG of the state. All proclamations and regulations that are produced in the state are issued in the DEBUB NEGARIT GAZETA in two versions: Amharic and English. From 1995 to 2018, more than 180 proclamations and more than 178 regulations have been issued by the state council. The main reason legislations are translated into English is to make the laws accessible to foreigners who do not understand Amharic. However, the quality with which English version legislation is produced is poor to serve the purpose for which it is intended.

Drafting legislations is the mission of the regional state council which works jointly with the regional AG. Taking into account the challenges involved in drafting of legislations, the Justice and Legal System Research Institute / Justice System Administration Reform Program of Ethiopia prepared a legislative drafting manual in February 2008. The purpose of the manual is to help professionals who are involved in the production of legislations to solve language use problems they experience while producing legislations. The manual which was prepared in both Amharic and English is, in fact, a general guide which does not have detailed description on how language should be used for specific purposes in the production of legislations.

Translation of legislations requires higher level understanding of the disciplines concerned and the source language in which legal texts are originally written and the target language into which the texts are translated. Nevertheless, the attention given to the recruitment of editing and translation professionals, the working conditions, and the institutional policies of the AG are not conducive to the language professionals. Because of these problems, although the AG has been functioning since 1994, it does not have well experienced legal translators. Besides, there is no institutional mechanism to capacitate the language professionals. These factors have the potential to negatively impact the quality of translation of legislations into English.

Despite all these problems, no scientific study has been made so far. Hence, investigating the situation of legal translation in the state will help to understand the language use problems in the legal translation practices and to identify possible solutions to be taken. Moreover, the legal translators, other personnel of the institution who are involved in the production of legislations directly or indirectly, and the external stakeholders can benefit from the findings of the study

² FDRE Constitution, "A Proclamation to Pronounce the Coming into Effect of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Proclamation No. 1/1995," Federal Negarit Gazeta of the FDRE 1st Year No 1, Addis Ababa, 21 August 1995.

when the research report is submitted to the organization, or when it is presented in validation workshops or conferences, or published in proceedings, or journals.

The study was conducted to answer the following questions:

- What is the major language use problem observed in the translation of Amharic legislations into English in the AG of the SNNPRS?
- To what extent are the legal translators of using the LDME to improve their translation practices?
- What are the sources of language use problems observed in the translation of legislations in the AG of the SNNPRS?

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Data sources and methods of data collection

The study adopted mainly a qualitative approach which focuses on the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, and descriptions of things (Berg, 2001: 32). Data for the study were collected from document 3 review taking a sample of proclamations and regulations that were issued in the state from 1997 to 2015. The study used the soft copy of the legislations uploaded on the website (<https://ashamlaws.wordpress.com>) because the soft copies of legislations are convenient for the desired textual analysis. Out of the 72 bilingual legislations, a total of 13 legislations (7 proclamations and 6 regulations) were selected by lottery method for the review. The bilingual legislations were selected so that it will be easier to assess language use in both Amharic and English versions. The focus of the document review was on language use problems relating to grammar, diction, style, punctuation, gender-neutrality and translation.

Additional data were generated from purposively selected professionals, including drafters, judges, prosecutors, attorneys, legal translators, and law instructors, who participated in the FGDs and interviews that were conducted in Hawassa, Arba Minch, and Wolkite. The medium of communication was Amharic. The FGD at Hawassa had 13 participants, while those at Arba Minch and Wolkite had 11 participants each. The tools for FGD were designed by myself and commented on by the research team members. Participants in the FGD were identified from each research site with the help of research assistants. Before the focus group discussions and interviews were commenced, explanations were given to the participants about the purpose of the study and that only interested individuals could participate. The focus of the FGDs was identifying language use problems observed in the state's legislation and obtaining possible solutions they suggested to improve the practices in the future. The KII was conducted with four participants (two legislative drafters and two translators, all of whom are employees of the AG). The interview focused on the perceptions of the practitioners regarding the rationale behind preparing bilingual legislation, the procedure followed in the production of legislation, language use problems they observe in the legislation, their experience of using the LDME, and the mechanism by which quality of language use in the legislation is ensured.

3 The term “document” is used to refer to written texts that serve as a record or piece of evidence of an event or fact, and in modern societies they occupy a prominent position.

The data that were gathered through FGD and kII were first transcribed. The analysis of data was made using transcripts and notes taken from the document review. Themes that emerged from the analysis were categorized in relation to the research objectives.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study indicated that different language use problems are observed in the translation of legislation in the AG of the state. The study also identified different sources of language use problems. Utilizing the LDME was also found to be below expectations. This section will present details of the findings of the study.

Major Language Use Problems Observed in the Translation of Amharic Legislations into English in the Attorney General of the SNNPRS

Translation is a widely used practice in legislative drafting, particularly in multilingual nations (Kielar, 1977). The discussion in this section is devoted to the examination of language use problems in the translation practices of the AG of SNNPRS and related institutional conditions. The study found that non-equivalence in translation, problems in the translation of “shall” and “may”, using gender-based language, and failure to maintain gender neutrality in legislation were the major language use problems observed in the English version of the legislation of the AG of the state.

3.1. Non-equivalence in Translation

Equivalence is a central concept in translation in all contexts. Scholars in the area of applied linguistics and jurislinguistics admit that translating existing legislation into a legally equivalent plain language version has proven difficult to achieve (Tanner, 2006). Maintaining equivalence may also be challenging when a legal / technical concept which does not have an equivalent in the target language is introduced. This could be either because the existing legal term in the target language has a slightly different meaning or because a term does not exist at all (Stefanou and Xanthaki, 2008). The study indicated that the majority of problems of non-equivalence in translations in the SNNPRS legislations are not due to the above two factors. Rather they are related to the linguistic competence of the legal translators in both languages – Amharic and English, respectively. The examples presented below demonstrate this fact.

Example 1: “በኢትዮጵያ ውሃ ሀብት አስተዳደር ፖሊሲ መሠረት የራሱን የኦፕሬሽንና ጥገና ወጪዎች በአጥጋቢ መልኩ እንዲሸፍንና ወጪዎችን ለመመለስ መቻል (to enable to cover operational and maintenance costs in sufficient manner and cost recovery independently according to Ethiopian Water Resources Management Policy) (Reg. 2/2003, Art 5 (2)).”

Example2: “ማንኛውም አርሶ አደር ከራሱ አርብቶ አደርና አርብቶ አደር ቤተሰብ አባል፣ ከቤተሰቡ ስጦታ ወይም በውርስ ወይም አግባብ ካለዉ ባለሥልጣን የገጠር መሬት ሊያገኝ ይችላል (Any person who is a member of a peasant, semi pastoralist and pastoralist family have the right to use rural land that may be obtained from his family by gift or inheritance or from the competent authority (Proclamation 110 Art 5 (11)).”

From example 1 above, we can see that there is language use problem in the source language (Amharic) version itself. “የአፕራሽንና ጥገና ወጪዎች በአጥጋቢ መልኩ እንዲሸፍን” and “ወጪዎችን ለመመለስ መቻል” are semantically the same. The redundancy the drafter made was also repeated in the translation. Apart from this, the translation has syntactic and mechanics errors. It should have been translated as “To be able to effectively cover its operational and maintenance costs as per the Ethiopian Water Resources Management Policy”. In this regard, the translators expressed that they translate things as they are because they translate the legislations after they had been approved. Whether an apparent language use problem in the approved Amharic version should be maintained or it should be corrected has to get a clear decision. It is obvious that the source of the problem is the procedure followed as it was discussed in section 3.3.

In the second example, the phrase “ማንኛውም አርሶ አደር ከፊል አርብቶ አደርና አርብቶ አደር ቤተሰብ አባል” was translated as “Any person who is a member of a peasant, semi pastoralist and pastoralist family”. The equivalent of the Amharic version should have been “Any member of a peasant, semi pastoralist and pastoralist family” because the two are grammatically not equivalent. It is not appropriate to say “any person” while the intention is to talk about any member of the families specified. “Any person” is general and may relate to all human beings, but “any person who is a member of . . .” is specific to the families in question. There are many instances of such language use that affect equivalence. The language use problems in the examples relate to the linguistic competence legislative drafter and translators.

3.2. Problems in the Translation of “shall” and “may”

The modal auxiliaries “shall” (አለበት) and “may” (ይችላል) are widely used in legislations. Proper use of these terms needs much care on the part of legislative drafters and legal translators. Most legislative drafting manuals also insist that care should be taken with the use of these terms. The LDME instructs drafters to use “shall” to express a duty, obligation, or condition precedent, and to use “may” to confer a discretion, privilege, or right (The Justice and Legal System Research Institute, 2008: 48). By implication, this could also apply to legal translators who change legal texts from local languages to a foreign language, in the case of Ethiopia, English. As to the meaning of these terms, while “shall” is construed as imperative, “may” is construed as permissive and empowering (The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, 2000). The negative forms of these modal verbs are also widely used in legislations. Regarding the function of the negative forms of “shall” and “may”, the legislative drafting manual of Ethiopia states this, “ክልከላን ለመግለጽ “የለበትም” የሚለውን ተጠቀም፤ “አይችልም” የሚለውን አትጠቀም። ይህ ቃል በኢትዮጵያ ላሉ የሕግ ባለሙያዎችም ባይሆን ለብዙ የሕግ ባለሙያ ላልሆኑ ሰዎች ግራ የሚያጋባ መሆኑ ተረጋግጧል። “የለበትም” ከሚለው የበለጠ ጠንካራ መሆኑ ይታመናል ለማንኛውም በማርቀቁ ሂደት ውስጥ አትጠቀምበት (Use “shall not” to express a prohibition. Don’t use may not”. This phrase has proved confusing for most non-lawyers, if not for lawyers in Ethiopia. It is often believed to be stronger than “shall not”. Avoid it any way during drafting).”

In this respect, the practice of legal translation in the SNNPRS exhibits problems, especially in the use of the negative forms to the modals “shall not (የለበትም)” and “may not (አይችልም)”.

3.3. Confusing the translation of “shall not” and “may not”

One of the problems that are observed in the translation of legislations is confusing the negative forms of modals “shall not” and “may not”. Because of such use, in many cases “may not” was used to express prohibition instead of “shall not”. The term “shall not” must be used for

prohibition, whereas “may not” must be used for non-conference of power so as to avoid the confusion (see አዋጅ ቁጥር ፻፵፯ /፪ሺ፬ ጳፂ (፩), አዋጅ ቁጥር ፻፵፯ /፪ሺ፬ ጳፂ (፪), ደንብ ቁጥር 29/1997 አንቀጽ 17 (2), ደንብ ቁጥር 29/1997 አንቀጽ 18 (3), and ደንብ ቁጥር ፱/፱ ሺህ ፱ አንቀጽ ፶፯ (፭)).

Example 1: “በንዑስ አንቀጽ ፫ የተቀመጠው ቃለ መሀላ ሳይፈጽም ማንኛውም ተ ሚ ሥራ መጀመር አይችልም” (Any appointee shall not commence his duty before he undertaken the oath specified under sub article 3 above.):” (Reg. 16/2015 Article 97 (5))”

Example 2: “በዚህ አንቀጽ ንዑስ አንቀጽ /2/ የተጠቀሰው እንደተጠበቀ ሆኖ፤ የሕግ ትምህርት ወይም ሥልጠና እና ልምድ የሌለው በሕግ ጉዳይ ፀሐፊነት ሊቀጠር አይችልም” (Without prejudice to provisions of Article (2) of this Article, a Person who has no legal education, training or experience may not be employed as a law clerk.)” (Reg. 29/2004 Article 18 (3))”

Example 3: “ማንኛውም ባለሀብት የመሬት ርክክብ ከተደረገበት ጊዜ አንስቶ በአንድ ዓመት ጊዜ ውስጥ በውሉ መሠረት የኖርጀክቱን ሥራ መጀመር አለበት” (Any investor shall commence to implement his project within one year from the delivery of the land) (Sub-article (2) of Article 11, Reg. 2/1997)

In the above examples, the term “አይችልም” was translated into both as “shall not” and “may not”. Such indiscriminate use of the term avoids the difference between obligation and the conference of power. As a result, it affects the legal force of the sentences in the legislations. This problem is wide spread in the legislations of the SNNPRS.

Introducing “shall” or “shall not” in the target text

The other problem that is observed in the translation of legislations of SNNPRS is introducing “shall” or “shall not” while they are not there in the source text. In the source texts, drafters omit the modals and use only main verbs to express the intention, whether it is of positive or negative sense, but legal translators introduce the modals. This kind of problem is observed in አዋጅ 161/2015 አንቀጽ 4 (1), አዋጅ 135/2010 አንቀጽ 13 (4), ደንብ ቁጥር ፪/፲፱፻፺ አንቀጽ 3, ደንብ ቁጥር ፪ ፲፱፻፺ አንቀጽ 7 (1), etc.

Example 1: “በዚህ አዋጅ ውስጥ ያልተመለከቱ ሌሎች የክልሉ መንግሥት አስፈጻሚ አካላት በማቋቋሚያ ሕጎቻቸው መሰረት ስራቸውን ይቀጥላሉ፡፡” (Other regional government executive organs which are uncovered by this proclamation shall carry on their functions by their establishment laws”) Proc. 161/2015, Article 4, sub-Art (1)),

Example 2: “የሚከተሉት የመስተዳድር ምክር ቤት አባላት ናቸው፡ (Administrative council shall have the following members:”) አዋጅ 161/2008 Art. 5, sub-art 1)

Example 3: “በዚህ አንቀጽ ንዑስ አንቀጽ /፩/ የተደነገገው በወንጀል ፍርድ ቤት በሚታይ ክርክር በማሰረጃነት የሚቀርቡ ሰነዶችን አይመለከትም፡፡” (Sub-Article/1/ of this Article shall not affect the Validity of the instrument when submitted has evidence in any proceeding in a criminal court).” አዋጅ 135/2010 Art. 13, sub-art 2)

As we can see from the above examples, the source texts in which modals “shall” or “shall not” were not used do not have the flavor of legal language they should have and the legal force they should hold. Thus, although the introduction of the modals help to elevate the statements from the level of everyday language to that of legal language and make the target texts possess the

flavor of legal language and make them have the legal force, the equivalence of the translation may be questioned. If translation makes such change in the quality of the text, it may lead one to question the loyalty of the legal translator. As it was discussed in section 3.3.1, the legal translators claimed that they translate legislations as they are in the source text, even if it has problems, since they conduct translation after they have been approved.

3.4. Using gender-based language

Gender-based language use in legislative drafting has been an issue of debate by scholars for decades. Legislative drafters are often advised to use gender-neutral language, which is, like plain language, the signpost for legislative drafters (Hauerstein, 2016). Gender-neutral language is a tool for accuracy, since it promotes gender specificity in drafting. Hence, legislative drafters should primarily pursue quality in legislations. To ensure quality of legislations, one area to address is gender neutrality. The legislative drafting manual of Ethiopia prescribes that drafters should not use gender-based pronouns: “አንድ አርቃቂ የታን መሀረት ያደረገ ተውላጠ ስሞች መጠቀም የለበትም” (A drafter should not use gender-based pronouns) 4. Despite this instruction, there are legislations in which gender-neutrality was not maintained. Although using pronouns is not observed in the Amharic version laws as it is in the English versions, gender-based language is still apparent in the Amharic versions. One may ponder as to why the Amharic version laws demonstrate gender-based language while gender-based pronouns are not used. The mystery is that in Amharic gender is not marked by pronouns only. It is also reflected in other grammatical categories of the language. Thus, avoiding pronouns alone would not make the language gender-neutral. The following examples demonstrate how gender-neutrality is affected in the two versions of the laws:

Example 1: “ማንኛውም ባለሀብት የተከራየውን መሬት እና በመሬት ላይ የሚገኙትን የተፈጥሮ ሃብቶች የመንከባከብ ግዴታ አለበት፡፡ በተለይም፡- ሀ/ ለእርሻ ሥራ አመቺ ለማድረግ በማመነጠሩ 5 ዛፎች ምትክ ሌላ ዛፎችን መትከል (Any investor shall be obliged to protect and preserve the natural resources of the land and in particular, he shall plant suitable species of trees to replace trees) (Sub-article (1) of Article 11, Reg. 2/1997).

Example 2: “ግለሰቦች በራሳቸው ጥረት ለማገድ፣ ለኮንስትራክሽን ለሌሎች የደን ጥቅምት የሚሆኑ ደኖችን ሲያለሙ በሚመቻቸውና አግባብ ባው መልኩ ስያሜ የመስጠት መብት አላቸው * (Private individual may, while developing fore on his effort for the purpose fire wood construction and other uses, have the right designate based on his will and properly thereof*) (Sub-article (3) of Article 13, Proc. 147/2012,)

Example 3: “የጥብቅና ፈቃድ ያለው ማንኛውም ሰው በዚህ አንቀጽ ንዑስ አንቀጽ 1 የተገለፁትን የሚያሟላ ከሆነ ልዩ የጥብቅና ፈቃድ ሳያስፈልገው አገልግሎት መስጠት ይችላል፡፡ ነገር ግን ይህን አገልግሎት ከመስጠቱ በፊት ለቢሮው ማሳታወቅ አለበት (Any person who has an advocacy license and meets the requirements specified in the provisions of sub- article (1) of this Article may render advocacy services without as special advocacy license. However, he shall notify the bureau before rendering such a serves.) (Sub-article (2) of Article 13, Reg. 29/2004)

The above examples show what the gender-based language in the two language versions of the legislations look like. In the Amharic version, gender-based language is not reflected in

4 የፍትሕና ሕግ ሥርዐት ምርምር ኢንስቲትዩት/ የፍትሕ ሥርዐት አስተዳደር ማሻሻያ ኘርግራም፡ የኢትዮጵያ የሕግ አረቃቀቅ መመሪያ፡ አዲስ አበባ (2002)

5 All typographical errors in both Amharic and English versions are those in the original

the pronoun as it does in the English version. In fact, in Amharic sentence we may have more words that indicate gender-bias than its equivalent in English. For instance, in example 4, there is only one word (pronoun “he”) that indicates gender-bias in the English version, but in the Amharic version of the same Article there are seven words (“ያለው”, “የሚያሟላ”, “ከሆነ”, “ሳያስፈልገው”, “ይችላል”, “ከመስጠቱ”, and “አለበት”) that indicate gender-bias. The variations in the nature of the two languages imply that the strategies to handle the problem of gender-bias may also differ. As a result, we should look for strategies that fit best to the specific nature of the languages in question. Below we will see the various strategies to maintain gender-neutrality in the legislations. In this respect, using plural form seems to be the best option to maintain gender-neutrality in Amharic legislations (see example 2 above). The section below will discuss different strategies of maintaining gender gender-neutrality.

3.5. Failure to maintain gender-neutrality in legislations

Different strategies can be used to maintain gender-neutrality in legislations. One of these is omitting the use of personal pronoun, while the other one is repeating the noun in question instead of the pronoun (The Justice and Legal System Research [Institute, 2008](#): 48). In addition to this, it is possible to use the plural form of the pronoun, or the passive construction if the actor is clear (Counsel to the Massachusetts Senate (3rd ed.), 2003). For example, in the case of English, drafters and legal translators must avoid the use of he or she (and his or her) when referring to a person affected by a statute (Legislative [Council, 2021](#): 92). Gender-neutrality can also be achieved by using gender-neutral words, such as “applicant, applicant’s, candidate, candidate’s, commissioner, commissioner’s, individual, individual’s, person, person’s, etc. Corresponding gender-neutral words can also be used in Amharic legislations”.

The study revealed that there is low sensitivity to gender-based language in the legislations of the state. Some of the FGD participants argued that there is no convincing reason, on the part of the drafters, that prohibits them from using gender-neutral expressions. On the contrary, others argued that the conventional gender-based language use does not have any problem. For example, one participant of FGD said this, “በወንድ ጾታ መደንገግ እና በወንድ ጾታ የተገለጸው የሴት ጾታን ይጨምራል ወይም ሴትንም ያካትታል የሚል ድንጋጌ ስለሚቀምጥ ለሱ ችግር ያለው አይመስለኝም” (I don’t think drafting using masculine and, declaring “what has been expressed in masculine also works for feminine” has any problem. (FGDH, 7 Dec., 2019). That kind of view indicates that there is apparent insensitivity to gender-based language among the practitioners.

Moreover, document review showed that there are many legislations of the state in which gender-based language is used (see Reg. 2/1997 Art. 11 (2, 3 & 5), 13 (1 & 3), 14 (1 & 3), and 15 (1); Reg. 8/2003, Art. 2 (1), 17 (2), 19 (2 & 3), 20 (2), 51(1), etc., and Proc. 161/2015 Art. 9 (2c), 10 (2), 13 (19), & 36 (2); Proc. 147/2012, Art. 13 (3), 16 (3), 22 (4), and 25 (1)). This problem is reflected equally in both Amharic and English versions.

Table 2: How to apply gender-neutrality strategies in the legislations in two languages

Strategy adopted	GNL- Amharic	GNL- English
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Using the plural form	የመሬት ኪራይ በዚህ አንቀጽ ንዑስ አንቀጽ ፩ መሠረት በወቅቱ ካልተከፈለ የሰላላቶች የይዞታ መብታቸውን ሊያጡ ይችላሉ፡፡	If the rent to the leased land is not paid at the time specified in sub Article (3) of this Article, investors may lose the right of possession.
Using the passive voice	የመሬት ኪራይ በዚህ አንቀጽ ንዑስ አንቀጽ ፩ መሠረት በወቅቱ ካልተከፈለ የሰላላቶች የይዞታ መብት ባለቤትነት መብት ሊታጣ ይችላል፡፡	If the rent to the leased land is not paid at the time specified in sub Article (3) of this Article, the right of possession to the land may be denied.
Omitting the use of a pronoun		If the rent to the leased land is not paid at the time specified in sub Article (3) of this Article, an investor may lose the right of possession.
Repeating the noun		If an investor fails to pay the rent to the leased land at the time specified in sub Article (3) of this Article, the investor may lose the right of possession.

As it is presented in Table 2 above, there are more options for translators who use English than there are for the drafters who use Amharic to apply GNL. This is related to the linguistic nature of the respective language. This means that languages do not lend themselves equally to apply different strategies to maintain gender-neutrality. Among the strategies listed in the table above, using the plural form seems to be already in practice among legislative drafters in the SNNPRS. For example, sub Article (1) of Article 28, Reg 16/2015, says, “በጉባኤ ወቅት የሚመደቡ ሠራተኞች የምክር ቤቱን ጉባኤ በማያውክ ሁኔታ ስራቸውን ማከናወን አለባቸው” (Support staff members that are in duty during sitting of the council shall perform their duties in a manner that does not disturb the sitting). Other Articles in which the same strategy was used include Proc. 147/2012 Article 13 (2), and Proc. 161/2015 Article 33 (1). This means legislative drafters can capitalize on using the plural form to avoid gender-based language which is widely observed in Amharic version legislations. The other two strategies, omitting the use of a pronoun, and repeating the noun do not appear relevant to the Amharic legislations.

3.6. The Extent to which Legal Translators of the AG Use the Legislative Drafting Manual of Ethiopia (LDME) to Improve Their Practices

In many nations, governments commit time and resources for the preparation of laws so that the resulting laws comply with the international standards and with local norms. Developing legislative drafting manual (LDM) facilitates consistency and uniformity of a country's laws and assists officials in the process of drafting and adopting legislations.⁶ In Ethiopia, a LDM was designed for the first time in 2008 with the purpose of providing drafters with the necessary minimum standards, rules, techniques, styles, and procedures of drafting legislations.⁷ Based on this, the current study tried to examine the extent to which the manual has contributed to improve language use in the legislative drafting and translation of legislations in the SNNPRS. The study focused on exploring the perception of legislative drafters and legal translators about the role of LDM, and understanding the extent to which they utilize it. It was learnt that: (1) The existing LDME is not being used by law professionals. For instance, one of the drafters

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mentioned lack of LDM as a major problem. When I asked him if he knows about the LDM by Ethiopian Justice System, he said, “when I joined this office, the owner of the work process said there is one, but he didn’t give, and neither did I ask him again.” (2) The production of LDM alone cannot guarantee success in addressing the language use problems observed in the legislations in the region unless a strong mechanism is put in place to promote the manual and raise awareness about its role to improve the quality of legislations. The problem seems to be associated with the knowing what LDM is and lack of awareness about the role of LDM in the production of legislations.

3.7. Perception of practitioners about LDM

There is a general consensus that laws should be written in a simple and clear language and direct style, using complete sentences phrased for the common reader as well as for the political or legal experts. This is because language is the instrument using which the intent of the legislature is externalized and reaches the subjects of the law. In order to impart the message as intended by the law maker, it is imperative to use the language properly⁸. The study indicated that the practitioners recognize the importance of a manual to guide language use in the legislative drafting and translation of drafts. Moreover, legislative drafters and translators expressed that using the drafting manual is imperative to make the way language is used prudent and helps the law they make to say what they mean. According to them, the manual, which defines the rules drafters need to follow to achieve their goals, is critical to the success of the legislations. One of the FGD participants explained the need for LDM as follows:

ሕጎች ተደራሽ መሆን ስለሚገባቸው፣ ወርደው ተግባራዊ መደረግ ስለሚገባቸው መርሁ ቀጥተኛ፣ ቀላል፣ አጭርና ትክክለኛ ቃላት መጠቀም የሚለው የሚገዛን ይመስለኛል። ሁለተኛ ይኸ ሆኖ እያለ እነዚህን ስንጠቅም በመመሪያ የታገዘ ቢሆን ኖሮ ያሉትን ችግሮች የሚፈታ ይመስለኛል። . . . አንድ ቃል ስተረጎም የሚዛባ ከሆነ ሰውየውን የሚያድን ወይም የሚያጠፋ ልሆን ይችላል (because laws should be accessible and implemented in the day-to-day lives of the people, I think the principle that the words we use should be direct, simple, precise and appropriate is binding. Secondly, I think when we use this, it will solve the problems if it is guided by manual. . . . If a word is interpreted wrongly, it could either save him or destroy him) (FGDH, 7 Dec., 2019).

From this we can see that the practitioners need a manual very much to accomplish their professional duties effectively. In fact, practitioners need not only LDM. Some countries have, in addition to LDM, a counsel that provides support to drafters in various drafting and translation related issues.

3.8. Awareness about and utilization of the LDM

Legislative drafting manual outlines guidelines drafters and legal translators should follow. An attempt was made to assess the extent to which the practitioners are aware of the existing LDME. In this regard, although the Justice and Legal System Research Institute of Ethiopia produced the manual in 2008, the majority of the practitioners are not aware about its existence. Those who do not know the existence of the manual say:

(1) “በሕግ አረቃቀቅ ላይ ሊመራ የሚችል መመሪያ የለም። አረቃቀቁም በግለሰብ ደረጃ በራሱ በግል እሳቤ በመመራት ነው የሚሄደው። ይህ ደግሞ ክፍተት ይፈጥራል” (there is no directive to guide on legal

drafting. The drafting is conducted based on the ideas of an individual. This creates a gap) (FGDH, 7 Dec., 2019).

(2) በህግ አረቃቀቅ ላይ የቋንቋ አጠቃቀምንና አጠቃላይ የህግ መዋቅርን ጭምር የያዘ መመሪያ ልኖረን ይገባል (we need to have a directive on drafting and it shall cover the issue of language usage and overall structure of the laws). (FGDW, 11 Jan 2020)

According to these FGD participants, when drafting is done only depending on the experience and reading of each practitioner, it is difficult to bring about uniformity. They attributed the absence of a guideline on language use as a factor for a wide gap observed between the drafts produced in the region. Besides, they said that absence of tailored training to the practitioners of legislative drafting is also a factor that contributes to the problem. These factors resulted in poorly drafted legislations that exhibit different problems of clarity. In spite of these inhibiting factors, these participants admitted that there are legislations that are of high quality and can serve as a model in terms of their language use. The practitioners also acknowledged that the LDM contains some details regarding how the language should be used during drafting.

On the other hand, the practitioners who are aware of the existence of the manual complained that the manual has not been communicated well to the practitioners. In relation to this, one of the participants said:

ከፍተኛ የማስገንዘብ ችግር አለ። የቋንቋ ክፍተት በተመለከተ በተግባር ለማስተካከል አስቀድሞ የማስገንዘብ ሥራ ሊሰራ ይገባል የሚል ነገር ነው ያለኝ። የቋንቋ አጠቃቀምንም በተመለከተ መመሪያዎች ላይ ግሶችን፣ ቅጽሎችን እንዴት መጠቀም እንዳለብን ያስረዳሉ። ይህንንም በደምብ ያለማሳወቅ ችግር ይፈጥራል” (there is much problem in terms of raising awareness. To address language use problems in practice, I personally feel that awareness raising should be done first. The guidelines on language use explain how we should use verbs and adjectives. Failing to make this known well causes problems) (FGDH, 7 Dec., 2019).

From this we can understand that producing a LDM is just one step to address the problem observed in the legislative drafting practices. The manual has to be communicated effectively to the practitioners to achieve the intended goals. The existence of the manual cannot bring about improvement in the practice if the practitioners do not make use of it in their everyday practices.

Some participants associated the lack of sensitivity to language use issues in the judicial system to the level of understanding law professionals have to the very science of legislative drafting. They argued that individuals who have not been trained in legislative training at higher level cannot appreciate well the role of language use in legislative drafting. According to them, there should be an LMM program in the country on legislative drafting. Then language use issue can get more attention because such professionals can be more aware and sensitive to the issue of language use than those with training in law at first degree level.

3.9. Sources of Language Use Problems Observed in the Translation of Legislations in the AG of the SNNPRS

A number of sources contribute to the language use problems observed in the legislations of the SNNPRS. This section is devoted to describing these sources.

3.9.1. Editing and translation procedures of the AG

In the study, effort was made to explore the sources of language use problems observed in the AG of the state. Accordingly, the researcher looked into the procedures that are followed to carry out editing and translation of legislations in the region. Basically, as the BPR document stipulates, editing and translation works are carried out after drafting is completed (ፍትህ ቢሮ፣ በደብዳቤ መሆን ጥናት፣ ማርቀቅና ማስረጃ ዋና የስራ ሂደት የክለሳ ጥናት ሰነድ, 2008 E.C). The interviewees with legislative drafters and legal translators indicated that the Amharic version drafts are first sent directly to the Regional Administration Office for approval. Then, the approved drafts are given to the legal translators. Consequently, legislations with glaring grammatical or typographical errors are approved and implemented, but the faults are always attributed to legal translators. Hence, the legal translators complain that getting the Amharic version drafts after they have been approved is not appropriate.

Their complaint seems to be valid because the BPR document instructs drafters to send the final draft directly to the Regional Administration Office for approval instead of submitting it to legal translators for editing and translation (see the BPR document, page 62). Sub-Article (8d) of Article 50 of Reg. 16/2015 of the state stipulates that a draft law that is initiated by anybody shall be presented in Amharic and English copies. Therefore, the procedural problem needs to be resolved so that drafting, editing and translation works may result in drafts as prescribed by Regulation 16/2015 Article 50 (8d).

In the FGD, one participant expressed the procedural problem they experience as follows:

ፈቂድ ሕግ ስዘጋጅ ዐቃቤ ሕግ አዘጋጅቶ ያመጣል። ከዛ በኋላ ሄዶ ከጸደቀ በኋላ ነው ለእኛ ለትርጉም የሚመጣው። ከፀደቀ በኋላ ቋንቋ የማየት እድል ዝግ ነው። ስለዚህ የመናበብ እና አብሮ የመስራት ሁኔታ ስለሌለ ክፍተት ያመጣል። ያ ክፍተት ይዘቱንም እስከመቀየር ድረስ የሚያደርስ ሁኔታ ተፈጥሯል። በመመሪያ ወይም በወይይት የመደገፍ ነገር የለውም። የቋንቋ ባለሙያ የመጣውን ተቀብሎ ትርጉሙን ብቻ ሠርተው የመስጠት ሁኔታ ነው ያለው። ስለዚህ ክፍተት አለ (In the process of legislative draft preparation, a drafter submit the draft. It is after it has been approved that it is given to us for translation. After approval there is no room to address language use problem. Such gap caused even changing the content of the legislation. It is not supported by directive or discussion. The practice is that a language professional only translates what is given to him and submits. So, there is a gap) (FGDH, 7 Dec. 2019).

The point the above participant raised indicates that there is systemic source for language use problems that negatively affect legal translation practices in the AG of the state. This needs serious attention of the management. Overall quality in the legislations can be achieved only if systemic problems of the institution and technical skills of the practitioners are addressed properly.

3.9.2. Absence of capacity building efforts in the AG of the SNNPRS

Capacity-building plays an important role in improving an organization's ability to fulfill its mission. It combines sound management, strong governance, and dedication to assessing and achieving results. In this respect, legal translators in the AG of the SNNPRS who participated in the interview complained that absence of proper orientation to new employees joining the organization as editing and translation professional is affecting the practice of legal translation. A new employee is left to learn things through trial and error. For example, one of the legal

translators explained that he didn't know the difference between "will" and "shall" in the legal context, and therefore was using "will" instead of "shall" until one of the legislative drafters explained to him that in legal language "shall" has different effect than "will". This interviewee explained that he was using "will" instead of "shall" because in the school he had been teaching his students to use "will" rather than "shall". He said he would not have made that mistake if he had received proper orientation when he joined the organization (Inter. 3, 10/11/12 E.C). Absence of on-job training to build their capacity was also raised as a source of the problem.

In addition, the legal translators expressed that they are not made to participate in the drafting process from the outset. They argued that since they are not involved that way, at times they find it difficult to comprehend the intention of law makers (Inter. 2 and 3, 10/11/12 E.C). Moreover, they said they come across ambiguous language use in the drafts and need explanations from the drafters to understand their intention, but in many cases it is difficult to trace the professionals who drafted the legislations. Hence, they argued that most of the language use problems which are observed in the legislations could have been corrected if they had been made to participate in the drafting process. However, one of the legislative drafters who participated in the interview explained that legal translators are not involved in the drafting process due to two factors:

About 90% of the drafts are initiated in sector offices and finalized there. The drafts are sent to them only for professional comments concerning its compatibility to other laws. Even though we check major language use issues, we do not address every aspect of language use. Due to this, legislative drafters do not have control over the entire drafting process of legislations initiated by sector offices.

The legal translators are graduates of English language who are mainly supposed to do the translation from Amharic into English. As a result, there is a general feeling that their competence in Amharic would not be much different from that of the drafters. Consequently, they are not involved in the 10% of the legislations which are initiated by the AG of the region (Inter. 4, 10/11/12 E.C).

The argument of the legislative drafter does not seem to be convincing because: a) even though the draft legislations may be initiated by sector offices, they are necessarily sent to the AG for comments and fulfilling all legislative requirements. If language use is considered an important element of legislative drafting practices, translators could have been made to check the language at this phase. b) Although the legal translators may have their own limitations, it is still these people who are responsible to handle language related matters, be it in the source language (Amharic) or in the target language (English). This seems to imply problems of perception about and attitude towards legal translators on the part of legislative drafters pertaining to the linguistic competence of the language professionals. This in turn seems to have negatively influenced the contribution language professionals might have made in improving the quality of the legislations of the region. A similar finding was reported by Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2018) in Kosovo, a country with bilingual legislations.

3.9.3. Absence of a mechanism for quality control

Another source of language use problems in the legislations of the states appears to be absence of a mechanism that controls quality of the legislations. The majority of legislations issued by the SNNPRS contain many language use problems which could be managed by establishing a

mechanism for proper quality control. Language use problems are observed in both Amharic and English versions of legislations. Although the participants expressed that language use problems are corrected using the internal readings and discussions made within their work process in the directorate for legislative drafting to maintain quality of the work, there are outstanding language use problems in the legislations. There is no individual or office is responsible to language use problems in the legislations.

3.9.4. Low attention to language services in the organization

Compared to other work processes in the organization, language services has been given less attention. The poor provision of resources such as office, computers, dictionaries, etc. is an indication of the low attention. For example, one of the legal translators who has served for two and half years said he still does not have a lap top, even a desk top computer for his daily work. He does his work by borrowing computers from others,

3.9.5. Failure to adhere to the accepted performance management strategies

Adhering to the strategies an organization adopts is necessary to achieve the desired goals. Although it is explicitly stated in the BPR document of the organization (page 64) that every legislative draft has to be edited before it is sent to the Regional Administration Office for approval, that is not being practiced. Drafts are directly sent to the approving body before they are edited and translated. The editing and translation professionals notice language use problems in the Amharic version only when they begin translating them into English. They can make no change at this stage since the drafts have already been enacted as laws. Similarly, it is stipulated in the BPR document that every proclamation has to be presented in both Amharic and English versions for approval, but the practice is approving only the Amharic version.

In the light of these practical challenges the practice of legal translation is facing in the region, it is imperative to look for feasible solutions. These problems can be mitigated only by establishing a responsible body comprising people with legal qualification and linguistic skills who could take care of language use problems in the legislations (Constantin, 2008). To this end, linguists in respective countries are also invited to develop aspects of gender-neutral language, as well as plain language to help improve the legislative drafting practices of their country (Hauerstein, 2016). For an institution entrusted with the production of legislations, it is critical to have a mechanism that ensures that every legislative draft is properly edited, as part of quality control, for content and language before it is approved. The quality of legal translation also needs the attention of authorities.

The other issue that seeks attention is ensuring the production of bilingual legislations across laws. The very reason legislations are translated into English is to make the laws accessible to foreigners who do not understand Amharic (Inter. 2, and 4, 10/11/12 E.C). If that is the case, no legislation should be left not-translated into English, and the quality of English in which legal translation is made should meet the minimum expected standard if it is to serve the purpose.

3.9.6. Low linguistic competence of editing and translation professionals

Given the practices in the language services in the AG of the state, although language use problems observed in the Amharic version could not be attributed to the editing and translation professionals, those in the English version clearly show the low level of linguistic competence

of the practitioners. The current global trend is making multilingualism flourish more than ever before. Even the changing socio-political situations in Ethiopia is making the country confront the changing reality in which regional states are producing legislations in regional languages. This scenario suggests that the demand for language services in the justice system will be higher in the immediate future, not only for the interest of foreigners but also for that of the citizens of the country from different regions. Thus, the justice system needs to design an enabling organizational structures that can attract competent language professionals who can meet the demands the profession entails.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Conclusion

The current study focused on assessing the status of language use in the attorney general's office of the SNNPRS of Ethiopia, where legislation is translated from Amharic into English. The study indicated that language use problems in the translation of Amharic legislation into English affected the equivalence of texts in the target language, caused confusion in the way "shall" and "may" and their negative forms are translated, and led to the use of gender-based language. Some of the sources of the language use problem were found to be low attention given to the translation activity in the AG of the state, lack of required facilities for legal translators, low linguistic competence of legal translators, and wrong procedures followed in the production of translated versions. Lack of a culture of orienting legal translators who join the organization as new employees about the context-based nature of the work, their roles and duties, the facilities they have, and the absence of on-the-job and short-term training to build their capacity were also found to have their own impact on the translation of legislation. The various typographical, clerical, and spelling errors in the English version of the state's legislation clearly suggest that quality control mechanisms are highly needed in the AG of the state. Editing and translation work requires a working environment that is free of noise and equipped with the necessary facilities like computers, dictionaries (hard and soft copies), and internet connectivity. The poor supply of these facilities indicates the organization's low attention to legal translation.

The procedures that are followed in the production of English-language legislation, as outlined in the BPR document, were found to be one of the sources of language use problems in the Directorate for Legal Study, Drafting, and Awareness Creation of the AG. Because of this procedure, legislative drafts are sent directly for approval before they are edited and translated into English. A lack of a responsible body that maintains the standard set for the practices of the institution was also found to be negatively affecting the quality of the legal translation service.

Although the Ethiopian Justice System developed an LDME in 2008, sadly, it is not being used by legal translators. It seems the manual has not been promoted to the level it deserves. Some of the language use problems observed in legal translation practices could have been resolved if the LDME had been used properly.

4.2. Recommendation

As the quality of legislation requires a high level of competence in the languages in which bilingual legislation is produced, the AG should pay special attention to the issue of language use on the part of both legislative drafters and legal translators. Proper orientation should be provided when new employees join the institution, and relevant short-term and on-the-job

training should be offered to the practitioners in order to help them enhance their capacity for the day-to-day activities.

In the legislation, gender neutrality is reflected in different ways in the two versions of the legislation. While avoiding gender-based pronouns can be used as a strategy to maintain gender neutrality in English, it may not work for Amharic legislation because gender bias in Amharic is embedded in other grammatical categories, too. In both languages, using the plural form should be emphasized as a strategy to avoid gender-based language.

A conducive working environment is a prerequisite in all organizations. The problems language professionals experience in terms of materials like computers and other facilities need to get the attention of the institution. It is not fair to expect employees to deliver quality service without providing them with basic inputs for the work.

The procedural bottleneck indicated in the BPR document should be resolved as quickly as possible so that language professionals may edit and translate the legislation before it is sent for approval.

There should be a responsible body for assessing the quality of drafting and that of editing and translation services and for suggesting solutions to the problems the practices encounter. Violations of procedures and quality standards, as well as inconsistencies that are observed in the production of legislation, should be taken care of by this body. Proper implementation of guidelines and strategies, as well as raising awareness about them, should also be conducted by this body.

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Author Guideline

Submission Preparation Checklist

As part of the submission process, authors are required to check off their submission's compliance with all of the following items, and submissions may be returned to authors that do not adhere to these guidelines.

1. The submission has not been previously published, nor is it before another journal for consideration (or an explanation has been provided in Comments to the Editor).
2. The submission file is in OpenOffice, Microsoft Word, or RTF document file format.
3. Where available, URLs for the references have been provided.
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5. The text adheres to the stylistic and bibliographic requirements outlined in the Author Guidelines.

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Authorship of papers represents authors' (Faculties, Researchers, and Ph.D. Scholars) scholarly contributions in different scope and domain as per their field and relevancy. The authors' names, affiliations, and e-mail addresses along with contact numbers of all authors (corresponding, principal, & co-authors) of manuscript have to be mentioned on first page. Furthermore, authors are encouraged to include their ORCID.

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The anonymized manuscript should contain the main body of your paper including:

- References
- Figures
- Tables
- Declaration of Interest statement

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We recommend that you use tables sparingly, ensuring that any data presented in tables is not duplicating results described elsewhere in the article.

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You are required to include the following details in the title page information:

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You are required to provide a concise and factual abstract which does not exceed 250 words. The abstract should briefly state the purpose of your research, principal results and major conclusions. Some guidelines:

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Keywords

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The introduction should clearly state the objectives of your work. We recommend that you provide an adequate background to your work but avoid writing a detailed literature overview or summary of your results.

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The methods section should provide sufficient details about your materials and methods to allow your work to be reproduced by an independent researcher. Some guidelines:

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Results should be clear and concise. We advise you to read the sections in this guide on supplying tables, figures, supplementary material and sharing research data.

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The discussion section should explore the significance of your results but not repeat them. You may combine your results and discussion sections into one section, if appropriate. We recommend that you avoid the use of extensive citations and discussion of published literature in the discussion section.

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The conclusion section should present the main conclusions of your study. You may have a stand-alone conclusions section or include your conclusions in a subsection of your discussion or results and discussion section.

Abbreviations

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- We ask you to use the following format for appendices:
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References

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This journal does not set strict requirements on reference formatting at submission. Some guidelines:

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Reference to a book:

Strunk, W., Jr., & White, E. B. (2000). *The elements of style* (4th ed.). Longman (Chapter 4).

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Mettam, G. R., & Adams, L. B. (2020). How to prepare an electronic version of your article. In B. S. Jones, & R. Z. Smith (Eds.), *Introduction to the electronic age* (pp. 281–304). E-Publishing Inc.

Reference to a website:

Powertech Systems. (2022). Lithium-ion vs lead-acid cost analysis. Retrieved from <http://www.powertechsystems.eu/home/tech-corner/lithium-ion-vs-lead-acid-cost-analysis/>. Accessed January 6, 2022.

Reference to a dataset:

Oguro, M., Imahiro, S., Saito, S., & Nakashizuka, T. (2015). Mortality data for Japanese oak wilt disease and surrounding forest compositions [dataset]. Mendeley Data, v1. <https://doi.org/10.17632/xwj98nb39r.1>.

Reference to a conference paper or poster presentation:

Engle, E.K., Cash, T.F., & Jarry, J.L. (2019, November). The Body Image Behaviours Inventory-3: Development and validation of the Body Image Compulsive Actions and Body Image Avoidance Scales. Poster session presentation at the meeting of the Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Therapies, New York, NY.

Reference to software:

Coon, E., Berndt, M., Jan, A., Svyatsky, D., Atchley, A., Kikinzon, E., Harp, D., Manzini, G., Shelef, E., Lipnikov, K., Garimella, R., Xu, C., Moulton, D., Karra, S., Painter, S., Jafarov, E., & Molins, S. (2020). Advanced Terrestrial Simulator (ATS) (Version 0.88) [Computer software]. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3727209>.

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