

A Sociolinguistic Study of Asmara University Freshmen 1985/86

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Abstract: This study examines Asmara University freshmen's mother tongue distribution, sex, age group, language background, their families' educational background, languages wished to be learned, attributes of the first three most preferred languages, uses of mother tongue and other Ethiopian and foreign languages in different domains and with different people, these freshmen's attitudes towards English, their motivational reasons for learning English and their degree of control in the four language skills. Finally, the effects of the sociolinguistic items of information and their implications are considered and conclusions have been drawn from the statements discussed in this study.

Key words: mother tongue distribution, language background, motivational reasons for learning English

1. Introduction

Learning a second language depends not only on linguistic factors but also on social and psychological factors. To show the influence of social phenomena in learning a second language Mackey states as follows, "Since language is essentially a social phenomena, the social influence on its acquisition are numerous and interrelated in complex ways. ...; social influences are also responsible for the learning and maintenance of second language." (Mackey, 1965, p. 112).

Among the social factors mentioned by Mackey, we find the important ones such as the non-personal and passive contacts as radio, television, and the cinema; contacts with the written language as provided by our reading matter; the home group, community, time, attitude, pressure, etc.

Some sociolinguistic factors have been expounded by some investigators who have been trying to show the sociolinguistic influences on learning a second language, for example, Fishman (1976), Gardner and Lambert (1972), Khanna (1985), Labov (1972a), Milroy (1980), Richards (1972) and Rivers (1964).

2. Population

The population consisted of 604 freshmen from Asmara University enrolled for the academic year 1985/86. The information about the students and their family background was obtained from their responses to the questionnaire prepared for this purpose.

2.1 Mother Tongue Distribution

Each student was asked to name the language which he/she spoke first as a child. As it was found that the

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students came from two main linguistic groups. Out of the total number (604) 49.17% were students whose mother tongue is Amharic; and 37.42% were students whose mother tongue is Tigrigna, and 6.45% were students whose mother tongue is Oromo. In addition to this, 3.49% were students whose mother tongue is one of the Ethiopian languages other than those mentioned above and 3.47% were students who didn't give their responses. (The mother tongue distribution among the students is shown in Table 1).

Table 1 Mother-Tongue Distribution among Asmara University Freshmen (1986)

Mother tongue	Number	Percentage
Amharic	297	49.17
Tigrigna	226	37.42
Oromo	39	6.45
Gurage	7	1.15
Adere	5	0.83
Siltinga	2	0.33
Agow	2	0.33
Alabigna	1	0.17
Wolamo	1	0.17
Bilen	1	0.17
Soho	1	0.17
Tigre	1	0.17
No response	21	3.47
Total	604	100%

2.2 Mother Tongue, Sex, and Age Group

The students were requested to write their mother tongue, their sex, and age and their responses were examined. So, out of the total number (604), the distribution pattern of mother tongue and sex is as follows: 27.26% male Tigrigna speakers, 9.11% female Tigrigna speakers; 40.94% male Amharic speakers, 6.29% female Amharic speakers; 10.44% male and 0.83% female speakers other than Tigrigna and Amharic but 5.13% did not give any response.

Concerning the age groups, the students were found to belong to three main age groups. When we examine the responses of 475 boys, 98 girls and 31 students who did not give their responses, 67.91% were in the age group of 15–20 years, 16.22% were in the age group of 21–25 years, and 6.46% (excluding the 5.13% no response) were in the age group of 31–35 years

When we take into account both the age and sex, 68.37% of the females and 71.79% of the males were in the age group of 15–20 years, 20.41% of the females and 16.42% of the males were in the age group of 21–25 years, and 7.14% of the females and 6.74% of the males were in the age group of 26–30 years. The remaining percentage of females and males (excluding response) falls in the age group of 31–45 years. More than half of this group were Tigrigna speakers and this may be due the favourable situation of attending extension classes at Asmara university which is situated in Tigrigna speaking area. Mother tongue, sex, and age group of the students is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Mother Tongue, Sex and Age Groups of Asmara University Freshmen (1986)

Age Group	Mother Tongue												Total	
	Tigrigna				Amharic				Other Ethiopian Languages					
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Number	%
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%		
15–20	102	17.0	33	5.46	187	31	33	5.46	53	8.77	1	0.17	410	67.91
21–25	36		14	2.32	36	5.96	4	0.66	6	1	2	0.33	98	16.22
26–30	13	5.96	4	0.66	16	2.65	1	0.17	3	0.496	2	0.33	39	6.46
31–35	8	2.15	3	0.5	5	0.83	-	-	1	0.17	-	-	17	2.82
36–40	5	1.32	1	0.17	2	0.33	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	1.33
41–45	-	0.83	-	-	1	0.17	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.17
No response	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	31	5.13
Total	165	27.26	55	9.11	247	40.94	38	6.29	63	10.436	5	0.83	604	100

2.3 Occupations of Freshmen's Parents

The students were requested to write the occupations of their fathers and their responses show that their fathers are engaged in the following occupations: 25% in farming and serving the churches, 16.23% private business, 10.43% in factories, military service etc., 7.62% in technical work, 6.95% in various rank professions such as teaching, journalism, management etc., 5.97% in some of the top status professions as doctors, managers, lawyers, engineers, and university teachers/lecturers. The above mentioned percentages clearly indicate that most of the freshmen came from families who are engaged in different occupations far from rank or status professions. Moreover, 56.13% of the students' mothers are house wives. In addition to this, 6.79% of the mothers are occupied in farming. It is surprising that 25.16% of the students did not give any response concerning their mothers' occupations and the investigator is inclined to conclude that these mothers are not employed at all and they must be house-wives and farmers. Freshmen parents' occupations are good indications that the students could not receive necessary guidance and encouragement in their education. freshmen parents' occupations are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Occupations of Freshmen's Parents (1986)

Occupation	Father		Mother	
	Number	%	Number	%
Doctors, managers, lawyers, engineers, University teachers	30	4.97	1	0.17
Instructors, (school) directors, journalists, pharmacists, accountants, salesmen, personals	42	6.95	14	2.32
Businessmen, merchants, traders, retailers	98	16.23	22	3.64
Office assistants, dressers, nurses, midwives	19	3.15	10	1.65
Hospital assistants, dressers, nurses, midwives	4	0.66	7	1.16
Mechanics, technicians, electricians, carpenter, weaver, sailor, driver, shoe maker	46	7.62	0	0
Workers- all kinds, soldiers and storekeepers	63	10.43	11	1.82
Farmers, priests	151	25.00	41	6.79
House wives	0	0.00	339	56.13
Miscellaneous (including retired persons)	51	8.44	7	1.16
No response	100	16.55	152	25.16
Total	604	100.00	604	100.00

2.4 Educational Background of Freshmen's Family

The students were asked to write their parents qualification, and their responses show that their fathers have the following educational background: 10.6% non-literate or 0 grade, 38.57% literate or grades 1–6, 22.50%

semi-educated-grades 7–12, 7.78% educated-grades 13–16, and 0.82% highly educated above grade 16. However, 20.69% of the students did not give responses which implies that their fathers did not receive proper education. Nearly half of their fathers are uneducated and this may have strong impact in learning second language. It is unlikely for most of these students to get books probably used by their fathers.

Concerning the students' mothers, 88.58% of them are below semi-educated-grades 0–6. There was no possibility for mothers to help the students in learning English as a second language even in the elementary grades. The students may get moral support and material incentive from their brothers and sisters who are in better positions than their fathers and mothers. Here, 79.12% of their brothers and 68.59% of their sisters are educated or semi-educated who completed-grades 7–16. The complete picture of the educational background of freshmen is shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Educational Background of Freshmen's Family (1986)

Levels	Grades	Father		Mother		Brothers		Sisters	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Highly Educated	above 16	5	0.82	0	0	6	1.25	3	0.82
Educated	13–16	47	7.78	10	1.65	122	25.47	59	16.25
Semi-educated	7–12	136	22.5	59	9.77	257	53.65	190	52.34
Literate	1–6	233	38.57	267	44.2	91	18.99	111	30.58
Non-literate	0	64	10.6	138	22.85	6	1.25	3	0.82
No response		125	20.69	120	19.86	-		-	0.82
Total		604	100.99	604	98.33	479	100.61	363	100.79

3. Language(s) Wished to be Learnt by Asmara University Freshman

The students were asked to list, in order of preference, those languages which they wished to learn. Of the 604 students, 67.05% showed that their first preference was English, 37.58% showed that their second preference was French, and 20.20% showed that their third preference was Italian. 19.54% of the students were also in favour of Arabic as the third language to be learnt. In addition to these four languages, about 10 Ethiopian and 11 foreign languages wished to be learnt were listed as first or second or third preference. The complete data on language wished to be learnt by the students is shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Language Wished to be Learnt by Asmara University Freshmen (1986)

Language	Preferences						Average %	Ranking
	1st		2nd		3rd			
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%		
English	405	67.05	47	7.78	29	4.80	26.54	1
French	85	14.07	227	37.58	111	18.38	23.34	2
Italian	25	4.14	90	14.90	122	20.20	13.08	3
Arabic	12	1.99	85	14.07	118	19.54	11.87	4
Tigrigna	23	3.81	48	7.95	43	7.12	6.29	5
*Other Foreign Languages	18	2.98	36	5.96	59	9.77	6.24	6
Amharic	13	2.15	41	6.79	30	4.97	4.64	7
Oromo	2	0.33	10	1.66	23	3.81	1.93	8
Other Foreign Languages	2	0.33	3	0.50	11	1.82	0.88	9
No response	19	3.15	17	2.81	58	9.60	5.19	
Total	604	100	604	100	604	100	100	

*Greek, Spanish, German, Latin, Dutch, Russian, Chinese, Hindi, Somali, Swahili & Swedish.

+ Tigre, Alabigna, Siltigna, Adere, Gurage, Kanbetta, Geez

4. Attributes of the First Three Most Preferred Language

The students were asked to indicate which of the ten qualities they recognize in the first three languages of their preference as the most important (see No. 10 and 16 in the questionnaire). In number 10, the list of attributes is given. In number 16, eight statements-four positively and four negatively worded statements were given to elicit the responses of the students. These statements are followed by a 5-point scale ranging — from complete agreement to complete disagreement. The students were asked to write 1–5 in the appropriate place on the scale. So, the main qualities which are recognized in the first preference of their second language learning, i.e., English are as follows: useful for receiving education in Eritrea 9.16% out of 26.50%, useful to pursue studies outside Ethiopia 8.11% out of 26.50%, and useful for getting a job 1.45% out of 26.50%.

The main qualities which are recognized in the second preference, i.e., French are as follows: useful to pursue studies outside Eritrea 8.66% out of 23.28%, sweet 2.53% out of 23.28%, and pleasant 2.15% out of 23.28%.

The main qualities which are recognized in the third preference, i.e., Italian are as follows: useful to pursue studies outside Ethiopia 2.75% out of 13.02%, sweet 2.53% out of 13.02%, and pleasant 1.71% out of 13.02%.

From the data given above, we can infer that the first preference, i.e., English is learnt mainly for its instrumental motivational reasons while the second and third preferences, i.e., French and Italian respectively are learnt for instrumental as well as integrative motivational reasons. The data concerning the attributes of the first three most preferred languages is shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Attributes of the First Three Most Preferred Language by Asmara University Freshmen 1986

Attributes	English		French		Italian	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Refined	15	0.82	4	0.22	2	0.11
Sweet	7	0.38	46	2.53	46	2.53
Precise	8	0.44	11	0.60	8	0.44
Prestigious	12	0.66	8	0.44	7	0.38
Rich	16	0.88	10	0.55	7	0.38
Pleasant	10	0.55	39	2.15	31	1.71
Poetic	4	0.22	13	0.71	4	0.22
To impress others	6	0.33	17	0.93	11	0.16
Useful for getting a job	26	1.43	36	1.98	14	0.77
Useful for receiving education in Ethiopia	166	9.16	22	1.21	13	0.71
Useful to pursue studies outside Ethiopia	147	8.11	157	8.66	50	2.75
Miscellaneous	61	3.36	52	2.86	26	1.43
No response	3	0.16	8	0.44	18	0.99
Total*		26.50		23.28		13.02

*Use of Mother tongue, English and other Ethiopian and Foreign languages in different domains

The students were asked to write the language they use in various activities. When the investigator examined the languages used in various activities by Tigrigna speakers, Tigrigna as a mother tongue prevails mainly in shopping, sports, prayer, conversation, and letter writing. Tigrigna speakers used English mainly for films, general

reading, and reading English novels. Tigrigna speakers also used Amharic in sports, generally in reading because there are more publications available in Amharic than in Tigrigna. When the investigators examined the language used by Amharic speakers, Amharic prevails in most of the activities. Amharic and English are used mainly in reading newspapers and magazines, reading novels, in general reading, and in songs.

When the investigator examined the languages used by Tigrigna speakers and Amharic speakers in the various activities, Tigrigna speakers use English more than the Amharic speakers. In addition to this, Amharic speakers make more use of mother tongue and English (MTE) than the Tigrigna speakers.

Concerning the use of other Ethiopian languages than Amharic and Tigrigna, the speakers used Amharic like Amharic speakers in almost all activities. They also used English mainly in watching films, reading newspapers and magazines, conversation and songs. According to the students' responses to watching films, and reading newspapers and magazines, they used English more than Tigrigna and Amharic speakers. Moreover, Tigrigna speakers seemed to prefer English to Amharic while speakers of other Ethiopian languages, than Amharic and Tigrigna preferred Amharic to English if Amharic was considered as a second language for both groups.

Other foreign languages and Ethiopian languages are used more by Tigrigna speakers while other Ethiopian languages are used by Amharic speakers.

Generally speaking the students were not having much exposure to English outside the classrooms. The information in language use is shown in Table 7.

Table 7 Use of Mother Tongue, English and Other Ethiopian Foreign Languages in Different Domains by University Freshmen, 1986 (in percentage)

	Tigrigna Speakers (226)											Amharic Speakers (297)											Other Ethiopian Language Speakers (60)													
Language(s) Used	Sports		Shopping	News	Prayer	Novels	Films	Songs	Conversation	Newspaper/Magazines	Letters	General Reading	Sports		Shopping	News	Prayer	Novels	Films	Songs	Conversation	Newspaper/Magazines	Letters	General Reading	Sports		Shopping	News	Prayer	Novels	Films	Songs	Conversation	Newspaper/Magazines	Letters	General Reading
	MT	38	62	6	48	7	2	15	33	3	32	7	77	7	29	63	21	5	37	51	20	57	22	2	5	3	10	0	0	7	2	2	2	0		
MTAE	23	21	24	11	8	1	22	21	14	19	9												0	3	2	3	9	2		8	5	2	2	0		
A	23	9	10	7	8	2	6	8	11	9	10												57	58	43	57	25	13	35	53	27	53	43			
T												9	15	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0		
NTAE	3	2	34	2	26	3	24	13	28	11	20	1	1	4	0	1	1	4	1	2	1	1	0	2	10	0	2	0	3	5	3	5	2			
MTE	2	1	3	3	3	0	4	5	3	10	4	10	6	53	5	56	12	40	32	65	35	50										-	-			
EA	3		10	1	15	2	8	6	19	8	15												3	3	27	0	55	12	27	13	45	22	30			
EA	2		11	1	23	56	12	4	12	3	24	1	1	7	3	18	63	10	7	8	3	19	0	0	2	0	7	57	7	7	8	3	12			
OF & EL	2		2	23	7	27	9	4	7	5	3	1	2	1	11	1	15	4	3	2	2	1	3	18	12	14	5	15	12	13	12	10	7			
No response	4			4	3	7		6	3	3	8	-	-	4	16	3	4	4	4	3	1	7	2	-	-	-	4	1	1	-	1	1	6			

Symbols Used: MT = Mother Tongue, T = Tigrigna, MTE = Mother Tongue & English, MTA = Mother Tongue & Amharic, MTEA = Mother Tongue & Amharic and English, EA = English & Amharic, A = Amharic, E = English

5. Use of Mother Tongue, English and Other Ethiopian and Foreign Languages with Different People

The students were asked to list the language/s they used with different people. Tigrigna speakers used their mother tongue with different people in the following decreasing order of frequency: mothers; older relatives, father, younger relatives, generally at home, close friends, local teachers and strangers. Moreover, speakers other than Tigrigna and Amharic used their mother tongue with different people in the following decreasing order of frequency: older relatives, mother, fathers, generally at home, younger relatives, close friends, strangers, and local teachers.

It can be inferred safely therefore that the students used mainly their mother tongues. Speakers of Ethiopian languages other than Tigrigna and Amharic used Amharic more than Tigrigna speakers. The responses of the students show that the students used English with strangers, local teachers and close friends in this decreasing order of frequency; however, they used rarely other foreign and Ethiopian languages. This is a good indication that the students were having little exposure to English outside the classrooms. Use of languages with different people is shown in Table 8.

Table 8 Use of Mother Tongue, English and other Ethiopian and Foreign Language with Different People by University Freshman, 1986 (in percentage)

Language(s) used	Tigrigna Speakers (226)								Amharic Speakers (297)								Other Ethiopian Languages							
	Mother	Father	Older Relatives	Younger Relatives	Close Friends	Local Teachers	Strangers	Home	Mother	Father	Older Relatives	Younger Relatives	Close Friends	Local Teachers	Strangers	Home	Mother	Father	Older Relatives	Younger Relatives	Close Friends	Local Teachers	Strangers	Home
MT	95	89	91	80	51	16	15	75	88	81	77	84	69	36	33	73	55	55	58	35	17	2	5	36
MTA	3	4	4	10	19	17	10	13	2	3	7	2	2	2	2	7	24	24	24	24	22	3	7	53
A	2	1	1	4	3	18	8	2									8	8	3	33	41	48	35	2
T									3	5	5	1	3	0		1				2		3		
MTAE		1	2	3	10	13	7	2					1	1	1						3		5	2
MTE		1		2	7	7	1	1		2	1	8	17	35	12	5					8			
EA						12	4												3		25	10		
E					2	15	38			1		1	3	25	40						2	17	30	
OF & EL		3	2	1	4	1	8	6	7	7	9	4	5		3	12	3	3	5	3	7	2	3	7
No response		1				1	9	1		1	1			1	9	2							5	

Symbols used: MT = Mother Tongue, T = Tigrigna, MTE = Mother Tongue & English, MTA = Mother Tongue & Amharic, MTEA = Mother Tongue Amharic, EA = English & Amharic, A = Amharic and English, E = English, OF & EL = Other Foreign Ethiopian Language

6. Asmara University Freshmen's Attitude towards English

The students were asked to indicate their views about English by showing their agreement or disagreement with the eight-four positively and four negatively worded statements. Here, some linguistic attributes of English like-sweet, pleasant, precise, rich, etc., including the usefulness of English were given. Eight statements which

were followed by a 5 points scale — ranging from complete agreement to complete disagreement were given to the students. The students were requested to write 1–5 in the appropriate place on the scale (see No. 16 in the questionnaire).

Scoring for the positive and the negative statements was done as follows:

Statements	Positive	Negative
Strong agree	5	1
Agree	4	2
Neither agree nor disagree	3	3
Disagree	2	4
Strong disagree	1	5

81.29% of the students indicated their complete agreement that English is a useful language.

60.76% of the responses showed that English is a pleasant language. 59.44 of the responses also indicated complete agreement with English as a rich language.

In addition to this, 51.65% of the responses showed complete agreement with English as a sweet language.

Generally speaking, in all the eight statements the students showed their positive attitude towards English as is shown in Table 9.

Table 9 Asmara University Freshmen's Attitude towards English

Attributes	Complete Agreement		Agreement		Neutral		Disagreement		Complete Disagreement		No response		
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
Sweet	312	51.65	214	35.43	44	7.28	13	2.15	10	1.65	11	1.82	99.98
Pleasant	367	60.76	113	18.71	39	6.46	31	5.13	19	3.15	35	5.79	100
Precise	237	39.24	243	40.23	64	10.6	29	4.8	20	3.31	11	1.82	100
Rich	359	59.44	149	24.67	38	6.29	28	4.64	25	4.14	5	0.83	100
Poetic	207	34.27	221	36.59	100	16.6	41	6.79	22	3.64	13	2.15	100
Useful	491	81.29	81	13.41	16	2.65	3	0.5	12	1.99	1	0.17	100
Prestigious	260	43.05	137	22.68	101	16.7	56	9.27	33	5.46	17	2.81	99.99
Refined	212	35.10	223	36.92	83	13.74	39	6.46	31	5.13	16	2.65	100

7. Asmara University Freshmen's Motivational Reasons for Learning English

The students were asked to indicate their motivational reasons for learning English. 12 statements (8 in section “A” and 4 in section “B”) were given to the students. The students were asked to indicate their reasons in order of preference by writing “1”, “2”, “3” against their reasons (see No. 15 in the questionnaire); Section “A” consists of mainly instrumental motivational reasons while section “B” consists of integrative motivational reasons.

On the average the main reasons in section “A” are as follows: first 20.64% of the responses show that the students wanted to learn English because “the educational system requires it”. The second main reason is that English is an international language is shown by 18.21% of the responses. The third main reason for learning English is that the students wanted to read magazines/newspapers written in English and see English films etc., which is shown by 14.18% of the responses.

In section “B”, the main reasons for learning English are: to understand the English and American people and

their way of life is shown by 23.12% of the responses, to be welcomed by the American or the British people 11.81%, to live like the Americans or the Britishers — 8.00%. In this section more than half of the students did not give their responses. The results of the responses in sections “A” and “B” clearly show that English is studied in Eritrea mainly for its instrumental motivational reasons.

Table 10 Asmara University Freshmen’s Motivation Reasons for Learning English

Motivation Reasons	Preferences						Average	Ranking
Instrumental	1st		2nd		3rd			
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%		
“educational systems requires it”	254	42.05	90	14.90	30	4.97	20.64	1
“to make my stay easy when I visit some English speaking countries”	34	5.63	69	11.42	61	10.10	9.05	4
“to appear smart”	21	3.48	16	2.65	18	2.98	3.00	7
“to impress the members of the other sex”	18	2.98	13	2.15	19	3.15	2.76	8
“to get a better job”	35	5.79	65	10.76	48	7.95	8.17	5
“to read magazines/newspapers writing in English & see English films”	58	9.6	102	16.89	97	16.06	14.18	3
“to study English literature”	38	6.29	49	8.11	41	6.79	7.06	6
“an international language”	135	22.35	122	20.2	73	12.09	18.21	2
No response	11	1.82	78	12.91	217	35.93	16.89	3
“to live like the Americans or the Britishers”	38	6.29	66	10.93	41	6.79	8.00	
“to be welcomed by the American or the British people”	39	6.46	130	21.52	45	7.45	11.81	2
“to marry someone from an English speaking country”	14	2.32	37	6.13	19	3.15	3.87	4
“to understand the English & American people& their way of life”	333	55.13	66	10.93	20	3.31	23.12	1
No response	180	29.80	305	55.50	479	79.30	53.20	

8. The Degree of Control in the Four Language Skills

The students were asked to name the languages they know and to indicate the skills they have in these languages by writing 3 for “very good”, 2 for “good”, 1 for “so-so”, and 0 for only a few words. So, English was one of the languages named by 562+10 = 572 students out of total number 604.562 students gave almost full response but ten students named English but did not write the degree of control in it.

52.49% of the students claimed that their understanding of English is “good”; 43.95% of them claimed that their understanding of English is “very good”.

68.33% of them claimed that their ability in speaking English is “good”; 15.12% of them claimed that their ability is speaking it is “so-so”, and 13.17% claimed that their ability in speaking it is “very good”.

64.06% of them claimed that their reading skill in English is “very good”, and 32.21% claimed that their skill in it is “good”.

53.74% of the students claimed that their writing skill is “very good”, and 39.68% of them claimed that their writing skill is “good”.

According to the claimed degree of control in the four language skills, the investigator can put the students’ skills as follows in preference of the claimed degree of control: reading, writing, understanding, and speaking as shown in Table 11.

Table 11 The Degree of Control of Each Skill in English

	Understanding				Speaking				Reading				Writing			
	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Total responses 562	1	14	295	247	2	85	384	74	1	10	181	360	2	26	223	302
No complete response 41	-	4	-	1	-	4	3	10	-	3	2	5	-	2	-	7
Total percentage	0.18	2.49	52.49	43.95	0.36	15.12	68.33	13.17	0.18	1.80	32.21	64.06	0.36	4.63	39.7	53.41
Percentage of no response	-	0.71	-	0.18	-	0.71	0.53	1.8	-	0.53	0.36	0.89	-	0.36	-	1.25

NB. One student did not give any response.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

Concerning the socio-psychological data, 604 students gave their responses to the questionnaire although some of them did not give full responses.

As far as mother tongue distribution is concerned, it was found that most of the students came from two main linguistic groups namely Amharic and Tigrigna. It was also found that most of the students were in the age group of 15–20 years which seems appropriate age group to the students' level of education. Regarding occupation, almost one-fourth of the students' fathers were farmers and churchmen and 56.13% of their mothers were house wives. The occupation of the students' parents may possibly influence or affect their results in the use of English articles. When we examine their families' educational background, most of their fathers are above grade three although 88.58% of their mothers are below semi-educated-grades 0–6. Moreover, more than half of their brothers and sisters are educated or semi-educated. In this case, it might be possible that some of these students used some reading materials of their families.

Regarding the language the students wished to learn, English was their first preference. The three main qualities recognized in it in the decreasing order of responses are: useful for receiving education in Eritrea, useful to pursue studies outside Eritrea and useful for getting a job.

When the investigator examined the languages used by the students, they found that these students used mainly their mother tongues in various activities and with different people. However, speakers of Ethiopian languages (other than Amharic and Tigrigna speakers) used English more than Amharic speakers and Tigrigna speakers. When we compare Amharic speakers and Tigrigna speakers in using English, the Tigrigna speakers used more English than the Amharic speakers; however, the Amharic speakers used more mother tongue and English (MTE) than the Tigrigna speakers.

Generally speaking, speakers of Ethiopian languages (other than Amharic and Tigrigna) and the Tigrigna speakers showed a tendency of using English more than the Amharic speakers. In addition to this, most of the students showed a favourable attitude towards English as a useful and pleasant language.

Concerning motivational reasons for learning English as a second language, the percentage score of the main reason as the integrative motivational reason is higher than the percentage score of the main reason as the instrumental motivational reason because of the design of question number 15. Question number 15 in the questionnaire consists of section A or instrumental reasons consisting of eight choices and section B or integrative motivational reasons consisting of four choices. Had there been equal number of choices in section A and section B, the percentage score of the main reason as instrumental motivation reason would have received the highest

responses. On the basis of the above explanation, we can safely say that the main reason for learning English is the instrumental motivational reason. Moreover, the claimed degree of control in the four language skills in decreasing order of proficiency is reading, writing, understanding/listening and speaking. This may be due to their less exposure to English outside their classrooms.

Thus, the investigator is of the opinion that the situation may improve if the pedagogical implications suggested above are incorporated in the remedial courses for the students.

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