

Full Length Research Paper

Deviations in the use of English articles by Amharic Speakers and Tigrigna speakers-freshmen of Asmara University: their causes and Pedagogical Implications

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Accepted 23rd March, 2014

This research article investigates the extent of the correct uses of English articles by Amhari speakers and Tigrigna speakers who studied English as a foreign language. Data were collected from 160 students through a test on English articles. The low scores may have been resulted from the unavailability of adequate grammar and supplementary reading books. It is possible to infer that the errors are the results from intralingual interference. The results show the descending order of deviations in the use of „a“, „the“, „an“ to the „null“ article. The Amharic speakers performed better than the Tigrigna speakers in the „null“ article while the Tigrigna speakers outperformed the Amharic speakers in the uses of „the“, „a“, and „an“, articles. The order of difficulties in the use of articles in increasing are: retrospective reference, immediate surrounding, the use of superlative forms and with phrases or clauses. With respect to socio-psychological information, the Tigrigna speakers used more English than the Amharic speakers.

Key Words: Amharic speakers, Tigrigna speakers-freshmen, pedagogical implications deviations, english articles

INTRODUCTION

The use of articles in English is examined on the basis of the responses from 160 students (80 Amharic and 80 Tigrigna speakers) i.e. freshmen from Asmara University 1985/86. A test on definite and indefinite articles was given to these 160 freshmen and their control on articles is examined in relation to the forms and functions of articles. The use of articles in different syntactic structures-on potential places for the „null“ articles is considered, too. The researcher attempted to establish a hierarchy of difficulties, and to classify the errors. The causes of the errors have been examined and their pedagogical implications suggested. Moreover, the influences of the socio-psychological

factors in the use of articles was taken into account. The information about the students and their family background was obtained from the responses of 604 freshmen (including the 160 students) to the questionnaires prepared for this paper.

The researcher attempted to examine the relationship between these socio-psychological factors and the results of the 160 students in the use of articles. The social factors such as radio, television and the cinema; contacts with the written language as provided by reading matter, the home group, community, attitude and the psychological factors such as age, motivation, etc. facilitate second language learning. Their influences on

learning a second language have been expounded by some investigators such as Rivers (1964), Selinker (1972), etc.

This study mainly reflects the description and explanation of errors on English articles in terms of intralingual interference because the investigator is of the opinion that Amharic/Tigrigna and English are not related languages and the errors of these learners of English as a second language are possible causes by intralingual interference. Researches at describing and explaining intralingual errors in learning a second language have been made by some investigators such as Richards (1974), Jain (1974), etc.; likewise, this study attempts to consider the intralingual errors (to some extent) in the Eritrean context.

The purpose and objectives of this study are:

1. to study the nature, cause and source of deviations in the use of articles by freshmen Amharic and Tigrigna speakers from Asmara University 1985/86.
2. to establish hierarchy of difficulties faced in learning English articles.
3. to suggest pedagogical implications.
4. to compare the results of Amharic and Tigrigna speakers in the use of English articles.
5. to understand the influences of socio-psychological factors on the students' results on the test in the use of English articles.

METHOD

Subjects

The sample consisted of equal number of Amharic and Tigrigna speakers (160). They were freshmen in the academic year of 1985-86. Data on the uses of English articles were collected from the students' answers to the test on articles. The students began studying English in grade three as a subject and as a medium of education in grade seven. All in all, they studied English as a foreign language for nearly ten years. They were in the age group of 16-25 years. These students had been exposed to English outside their classrooms.

MATERIALS AND PROCEDURES

1. An essay „my Financial Career“ by Stephen Leacock was prepared for the test. A slight modification which includes deletion of proper names was made in it to suit the Eritrean situation. It was a very interesting passage that includes enough examples of nearly all important uses of articles. The modified text consisted of 532 words and included 73 instances of articles (a, an and

the). 64 articles were deleted. The remaining 9 articles were retained because they were at the beginning of sentences. There were also 30 potential places for the „null“ article. Thus, the text consisted of 94 items to be tested.

The test was given to 160 freshmen (who were selected randomly) in the form of a running text. There were no blank spaces in the text. In this case, the students were expected to locate the 64 potential places for articles and write the articles at the potential place for articles between the lines which were written in double space.

The potential places were: 35 for the definite article „the“, 23 for the indefinite article „a“, 6 for indefinite article. „an“ and 30 for the „null“ article.

2. A questionnaire was prepared to elicit the socio-psychological items of information about each information/student.

ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The responses of 160 freshmen to the test of English articles and the responses of 604 freshmen (including the 160 students) to the questionnaire are discussed below.

Stephen Leacock's insertion of articles in the text tested was taken as the established norm. The students' deviations from the norms are attempted to be categorized and the hierarchy of difficulties established. The possible causes/sources of error are suggested. The pedagogical implications of these deviations have been considered, too.

The responses of the students to the test on articles are categorized in terms of the following categories:

A. Nouns or noun phrases preceded by articles:

1. Insertion of the definite article „the“
2. Insertion of the indefinite article „a“ and
3. Insertion of the indefinite article „an“.

B. Nouns or noun phrases not preceded by any article.

1. Nouns or noun phrases never preceded by any article.
2. Nouns or noun phrases not preceded by any article in certain contexts.

In this analysis, the total number of attempts that could be made for each potential place in each category/sub-category is calculated. Then the percentages of correct and incorrect responses are also calculated in terms of the total number of attempts. The number of attempts is equal to the number of students times the number of potential places for one kind of article or the „null“ article in each sub-category/category. Moreover, the performance or the percentage scores of Amharic and Tigrigna speakers are compared and the influences of the socio-psychological factors on the results of the students on the test in the use of English articles are considered.

Table 1-A: Use of „the“ by Amharic Speakers

Places	the	%	A	%	an	%	Ø	%
the door	61	76.25	10	12.50	0	0.00	9	11.25
that the bank a	48	60.00	13	16.25	0	0.00	19	23.75
the best place	38	47.50	3	3.75	0	0.00	39	48.75
the clerks b	32	40.00	6	7.50	0	0.00	42	52.50
the manager b	44	55.00	17	21.25	1	1.25	18	22.50
the counter	28	35.00	22	27.50	0	0.00	30	37.50
the manager b	61	76.25	9	11.25	0	0.00	10	12.50
the accountant a	54	67.50	1	1.25	6	7.50	19	23.75
the manager b	39	48.75	22	27.50	0	0.00	19	23.75
the way b	21	26.25	13	16.25	0	0.00	46	57.50
the key b	33	41.25	17	21.25	0	0.00	30	37.50
the lock b	14	17.50	8	10.00	0	0.00	58	72.50
the son	13	16.25	28	35.00	2	2.50	37	46.25
the door a	68	85.00	1	1.25	1	1.25	10	12.50
the accountant a	57	71.25	1	1.25	12	15.00	10	12.50
the side	41	51.25	3	3.75	1	1.25	35	43.75
the safe b	20	25.00	9	11.25	0	0.00	51	63.75
the manager a	60	75.00	1	1.25	0	0.00	19	23.75
the other way b	25	31.25	0	0.00	11	13.75	44	55.00
the accountant	51	63.75	2	2.50	4	5.00	23	28.75
the ball	59	36.25	20	25.00	0	0.00	31	38.75
the money a	48	60.00	2	2.50	0	0.00	30	37.50
the sum a	23	28.75	5	6.25	0	0.00	52	65.00
The account a	57	71.25	2	2.50	8	10.00	13	16.25
the bark a	46	57.50	4	5.00	1	1.25	29	36.25
the impression	4	5.00	3	3.75	19	23.75	54	67.50
the cheque a	59	73.75	8	10.00	1	1.25	12	15.00
the clerk a	38	47.50	11	13.75	0	0.00	31	38.75
the whole thing b	40	50.00	1	1.25	0	0.00	39	48.75
the clerk a	57	71.25	0	0.00	0	0.00	23	28.75
the money b	48	60.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	32	40.00
the big door a	38	47.50	13	16.25	0	0.00	29	36.25
the echo	5	6.25	0	0.00	35	43.75	40	50.00
the ceiling	48	60.00	2	2.25	0	0.00	30	37.50
the bank b	50	62.50	5	6.25	0	0.00	25	31.25
Total	1398	49.93	262	9.38	102	3.64	1038	37.07

A. Nouns or noun phrases preceded by articles.

These nouns or nouns phrases are divided into three sub-categories as mentioned above.

1. Insertion of the definite article „the“

In English the definite article has a specifying function. The nouns or noun phrases it precedes may be specified in several ways. Consequently, in the test, there are 35 potential places where the definite article is required. These potential places are specifications due to:

- retrospective reference.
- immediate surrounding.
- the use of superlative degree.
- a phrases or clause.

a. Specification due to retrospective reference

The definite article „the“ is used before a noun which has been used for the second time because of retrospective specification. In the text, there are 13 potential places of these instances. In 62.80% of the attempts, the Amharic speakers inserted the definite article „the“ correctly and in 65.92%, the Tigrigna speakers inserted it correctly.

Here the students tend to insert the definite article „the“ more frequently when the noun in question is the subject of a reporting verb than when it is the object of a verb. There is also slight difference in the correct insertion of the definite article „the“ even in identification environment. This suggests that the students have not completely internalized the rules in the use of the definite article „the“

Table 1-B Use of „the“ by Tigrigna Speakers

Places	the	%	a	%	an	%	Ø	%
the door	59	73.75	14	17.50	0	0.00	7	8.75
that the bank a	51	63.75	9	11.25	0	0.00	20	25.00
the best place	33	41.25	1	1.25	0	0.00	46	57.50
the clerks b	46	57.50	5	6.25	0	0.00	29	36.25
the manager b	50	62.50	17	21.25	1	0.00	13	16.25
the counter	42	52.50	19	23.75	0	0.00	19	23.75
the manager b	60	75.00	7	8.75	0	0.00	13	16.25
the accountant a	65	81.25	1	1.25	6	7.50	8	10.00
the manager b	44	55.00	28	35.00	0	0.00	8	10.00
the way b	14	17.50	14	17.50	0	0.00	52	65.00
the key b	39	48.75	15	18.75	0	0.00	26	32.50
the lock b	4	5.00	13	16.25	0	0.00	63	78.75
the son	11	13.75	33	41.25	0	0.00	36	45.00
the door a	70	87.50	1	1.25	0	0.00	9	11.25
the accountant a	46	57.50	0	0.00	31	38.75	3	3.75
the side	28	35.00	3	3.75	0	0.00	49	61.25
the safe b	21	26.25	16	20.00	0	0.00	43	53.75
the manager a	68	85.00	1	1.25	0	0.00	11	13.75
the other way b	23	28.75	0	0.00	12	15.00	45	56.25
the accountant	58	72.50	0	0.00	10	12.50	12	15.00
the ball	27	33.75	33	41.25	0	0.00	20	25.00
the money a	53	66.25	3	3.75	0	0.00	24	30.00
the sum a	30	37.50	1	1.25	0	0.00	49	61.25
the account a	58	72.50	0	0.00	15	18.75	7	8.75
the bark a	45	56.25	3	3.75	0	0.00	32	40.00
the impression	4	5.00	0	0.00	26	32.50	50	62.50
the cheque a	66	82.50	7	8.75	0	0.00	7	8.75
the clerk a	45	56.25	10	12.50	0	0.00	25	31.25
the whole thing b	49	61.25	2	2.50	0	0.00	29	36.25
the clerk a	61	76.25	1	1.25	0	0.00	18	22.50
the money b	40	50.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	40	50.00
the big door a	28	35.00	20	25.00	0	0.00	32	40.00
the echo	5	6.25	0	0.00	38	47.50	37	46.25
the ceiling	33	41.25	8	10.00	0	40.00	39	48.75
the bank	57	71.25	2	2.50	0	0.00	21	26.25
Total	1433	51.19	287	10.25	138	4.93	942	33.64

Potential places = 2800

when the specification is due to retrospective reference. These nouns or noun phrases are in Table 1-A and B marked „a“.

b. Specification due to immediate surrounding

The definite article „the“ is used before a noun which represents only one particular thing because of its locality. The noun is specified in the immediate surrounding. There are 12 potential places in this sub-category.

The average percentage of correct insertion of the definite article „the“ are 44.48 and 46.56 for Amharic and Tigrigna speakers respectively. The nouns or noun phrases are in Table 1-A and B marked „b“.

The percentages of inserting „the“ correctly before nouns as 17.50 in the lock“ and 26.25 in „led the way“ by Tigrigna speakers are very low. In this case, there was a tendency of omitting the definite article.

Generally speaking, the low percentage scores in this sub-category seem to indicate the students“ less exposure to English literature and grammar.

c. Specification due to the use of superlative degree

In English the definite article is used before superlatives as in „the finest“, „the most beautiful“ „the highest“ etc. In the test passage, „the bank was the best place for it“ is the only superlative form. The students have learned this rule for several years but the correct insertions were 47.50% and 41.25% for Amharic and Tigrigna speakers respectively. The Amharic speakers did not insert any article in 48.75% of the attempts while the Tigrigna speakers did not insert any article in 57.50% of the attempts. These results suggest that these students have not internalized the rule on the use of the definite article before superlative forms. Here, the results of the

Table 2A: Use of „a“ by Amharic Speakers

Places	the	%	A	%	an	%	Ø	%
a bank	28	35.00	0	0.00	20	25.00	32	40.00
a month	62	77.50	0	0.00	0	0.00	18	22.50
a person	39	48.75	0	0.00	6	7.50	35	43.75
a tall old fellow	16	20.00	0	0.00	2	2.50	62	77.50
a crewed up ball	19	23.75	0	0.00	4	5.00	57	71.25
a terrible secret	45	56.25	0	0.00	3	3.75	32	40.00
a private room	25	31.25	0	0.00	11	13.75	44	55.00
a detective	39	48.75	0	0.00	2	2.50	39	48.75
a detective	39	48.75	0	0.00	5	6.25	36	45.00
a detective	37	46.25	0	0.00	4	5.00	39	48.75
a Rich man	38	47.50	0	0.00	5	6.25	37	46.25
a room	7	8.75	0	0.00	52	65.00	21	26.25
a sudden, quick movement	30	37.50	0	0.00	1	1.25	49	61.25
a trick	36	45.00	0	0.00	5	6.25	39	48.75
a piece of paper	37	46.25	0	0.00	2	2.50	41	51.25
a book	33	41.25	0	0.00	30	37.50	17	21.25
a hollow voice	35	43.75	0	0.00	2	2.50	43	53.75
a cheque	53	66.25	0	0.00	22	27.50	5	6.25
a cheque	26	32.50	0	0.00	39	48.75	15	18.75
a little window	32	40.00	0	0.00	12	15.00	36	45.00
a millionaire	36	45.00	0	0.00	5	6.25	39	48.75
a roar	15	18.75	0	0.00	3	3.75	62	77.50
a unique experience	50	62.50	3	0.00	1	1.25	26	32.50
Total	777	42.23	3	0.163	236	12.83	824	44.78
Potential	places=1840							

Table 2B: Use of „a“ by Tigrigna Speakers

Places	the	%	an	%	the	%	Ø	%
a bank	31	38.75	0	0.00	25	31.25	24	30.00
a month	60	75.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	20	25.00
a person	40	50.00	1	1.25	11	13.52.50	28	35.00
a tall old fellow	10	12.50	0	0.00	2	2.50	68	85.00
A screwed up ball	22	27.50	0	0.00	3	3.75	55	68.75
a terrible secret	50	62.50	0	0.00	0	0.00	30	37.50
a private room	26	32.50	0	0.00	22	27.50	32	40.00
a detective	44	55.00	0	0.00	2	2.50	34	42.50
A detective	42	52.50	0	0.00	8	10.00	30	37.50
a detective	43	53.75	0	0.00	8	10.00	29	36.25
a rich man	42	52.50	0	0.00	9	11.25	29	36.25
a room	6	7.50	0	0.00	54	67.50	20	25.00
a Sudden, quick movement	35	43.75	0	0.00	0	0.00	45	56.25
a trick	44	55.00	0	0.00	2	2.50	34	42.50
a piece of paper	43	53.75	0	0.00	1	1.25	36	45.00
a book	33	41.25	0	0.00	36	45.00	11	13.75
a hollow voice	45	56.25	1	1.25	2	2.50	32	40.00
a cheque	57	71.25	0	0.00	11	13.75	12	15.00
a cheque	30	37.50	0	0.00	38	47.50	12	15.00
a little window	30	37.50	0	0.00	14	17.50	36	45.00
a millionaire	50	62.50	0	0.00	1	1.25	29	36.25
a roar	10	12.50	0	0.00	3	3.75	67	83.75
a unique experience	51	63.75	5	6.25	8	10.00	16	20.00
Total	844	45.87	7	0.38	260	14.13	729	39.62

Table 3A: Use of „an“ by Amharic Speakers

Places	an	%	a	%	the	%	Ø	%
an irresponsible fool	42	52.50	0	0.00	1	1.25	37	46.25
an idea	45	56.25	1	1.25	4	5.00	30	37.50
to open an account	44	55.00	2	2.50	3	3.75	31	38.75
an honest and calm man	31	38.75	1	1.25	3	3.75	45	56.25
to open an account	51	63.75	2	2.50	5	6.25	22	27.50
to open an account	56	70.00	0	0.00	9	11.25	15	18.75
Total	269	56.04	6	1.25	25	5.21	180	37.50

Potential Places 6x80 = 480

Table 3B: Use of „an“ by Tigrigna Speakers

Places	an	%	A	%	the	%	Ø	%
an irresponsible fool	48	60.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	32	40.00
an idea	51	63.75	0	0.00	5	6.25	24	30.00
To open an account	45	56.25	0	0.00	1	1.25	34	42.50
an honest and calm man	40	50.00	3	3.75	2	2.50	35	43.75
to open an account	59	73.75	0	0.00	5	6.25	16	20.00
to open an account	61	76.25	0	0.00	7	8.75	12	15.00
Total	304	63.33	3	0.63	20	4.17	153	31.88

Potential Places = 480

Here, we can safely conclude that the students have internalized the few rules of using articles with singular nouns that start with vowel sounds.

Amharic speakers is better than that of the Tigrigna speakers.

d. Specification due to a phrase or clause

The definite article is used before a noun particularized by the addition of a phrase or clause as in „the ceiling of the bank“ , „the counter“ (which is/was) marked „Accountant“ etc. There were 7 instances of nouns modified by a phrase and 2 instances of nouns modified by a clause as shown in Table 1-A and B.

In this case, 38.78% and 37.08% of the attempts by Amharic and Tigrigna speakers respectively were correctly filled in with the definite article „the“. 75.25% correct insertion in „the door of a bank“ by Tigrigna speakers is higher when compare with the 5% and 6.25% correct insertions of „the“ in „the impression that“ and in „the echo of a roar“ respectively by both groups. The higher percentage score may be described to the repetitive practice at the early stages of learning in saying like „open the door“, „close the door“ etc. but the least

percentage score in „the impression that...“ may be due to incomplete knowledge of what a clause is.

2. Insertion of the indefinite article „a“

The indefinite article „a“ is used before countable singular nouns or noun phrases; moreover, it is used in a number of phrases such as „it is a pity“ „...keep a secret“ „all of a sudden“ etc. There were 23 potential places where the indefinite article „a“ is required in the test. Of the 23 potential places for the indefinite article „a“, 20 potential places are preceded by countable singular nouns and the remaining 3 are preceded by uncountable nouns. The percentage scores for the correct insertion of „a“ before countable singular nouns or noun phrases and uncountable nouns are 42.19 and 42.50 respectively by Amharic speakers and 45.06 and 51.25 respectively by Tigrigna speakers.

The nouns other than the uncountable nouns- „a sudden, quick movement“, „a piece of paper“ and „a hollow voice“ are countable. The percentages of inserting „a“, „an“,

„the“ and „Ø“ in the potential places for the indefinite article „a“ are shown in [Table-2 A and B](#).

In the case of „of a bank“, „birr a month“, is a screwed up ball“, „had a terrible secret“, „to a private room“, „of a rich man“, „in a book“, „in a hollow voice“, „draw a cheque“, „me a book“, „through a little window“ and „of a roar“ the indefinite article „a“ is required because „a“ is generally used with the meaning of „one“ but it does not matter which. In the case of „that a person“ „a“ is required because it is used with the meaning of „any“. I was a detective“, „I am a detective“, as if I were doing a trick“, that I was a millionaire“, it was a unique experience“ „a“ is required because „a“ is used with a noun complement but this rule seems to have been partially understood by both groups.

Although the total performance was not bad, their scores would be improved if the students were given enough practice and were exposed to all the rules concerning the use of articles.

3. Inserting of the indefinite article “an”

The indefinite article „an“ is used before singular countable nouns that start with vowel sounds including the sound of mute „h“. There were six potential places where the indefinite article „an“ is required in the test. In this case, the percentages of correct insertions are 56.04 and 63.33 by Amharic and Tigrigna speakers respectively. These were the highest of all the percentage scores in the test on English articles as is shown in [Table 3 A and B](#).

Here, we can safely conclude that the students have internalized the few rules of using articles with singular nouns that start with vowel sounds.

In the case of „had become an irresponsible fool“ „had an idea“, „ looked an honest and calm man“ „an“ is required because it is used with noun complements after link verbs. In the case of „an honest and calm man“ the lowest percentages of correct scores may be due to the complexity of the noun phrases in which the noun is preceded by two adjectives.

As is shown in [Table 3](#), the percentage of correct attempts is relatively higher when the noun is not preceded by any adjective but slightly less when, the noun is preceded by one adjective and still less when the noun is preceded by two adjectives. In the case of complex noun phrases, the students were often confused with where to insert the indefinite article „an“. The percentages of dropping this article increases as the complexity of the sentence structure increases.

Nouns or noun phrases not preceded by any article

In this category, there are two sub-categories. They are:-

1. Nouns or noun phrases that are never preceded by any article and
2. Nouns or noun phrases not preceded by any article in certain contexts.

1. Nouns or noun phrases that are never preceded by any article

There were 30 potential places for the „null“ article in the text. Of these 30 potential places, 14 nouns or noun phrases are never preceded by any article because these nouns are tables, greetings, names of unique objects or nouns preceded by a member of a close set (adjective). This sub-category is also divided into : two. The first group consists of four nouns or noun phrases. They are: marked „accountant“, „home“, „good morning“ and „God“. In this case, the average percent of correct scores were 97.81 and 93.44 by Amharic and Tigrigna speakers respectively.

The second group consists of the ten nouns or nouns phrases preceded by a number of a close set as is shown in Appendix 1-A and B. The average percentage of correct scores were 99.62 and 98.87 by Amharic and Tigrigna speakers respectively.

2. Nouns or noun phrases not preceded by any article in certain contexts.

Of the 30 potential places for „null“ article in the test passage, 16 nouns or noun phrases are not preceded by any article because the nouns are used in unspecified sense. They are divided into three groups.

The first group consists of 3 mass nouns – water, money and paper. The average percentages of correct responses for these mass nouns are 96.25 by Amharic speakers and 92.92 by Tigrigna speakers.

The second group consists of 4 abstract nouns-business, surprise, misery and laughter. The average percentages of correct responses for these abstract nouns are 81.56 by Amharic speakers and 73.69 by Tigrigna speakers. In this case, the average percentages of correct responses are relatively low. In the case of „business“ the percentages of incorrect responses are very low. In 28.75% attempts, the Amharic speakers inserted the indefinite article „a“ and in 35.00% attempts, the Tigrigna speakers inserted the indefinite article „a“. These reflect that the students from both linguistic groups perceived this noun as specified. When we compare the percentages of the correct responses in the unspecified abstract nouns with the specified abstract nouns, we conclude that the students don’t seem to understand the use of articles with unspecified and specified abstract nouns. The students also show a tendency of inserting or omitting definite article indiscriminately with these nouns. Generally speaking, in the case of the 4 unspecified abstract nouns, the students tend to insert the indefinite article „a“ incorrectly.

The third group consists of 9 unspecified plural nouns or noun phrases. They are six hundred birr, dragging feet, six hundred Birr, six hundred and five birr, six hundred birr, six hundred and five birr, chairs, tables and books.

Table 4: 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

The average percentages of correct responses are 94.44 by Amharic speakers and 87.22 by Tigrigna speakers. In the case of „dragging feet“ the Amharic speakers inserted the indefinite article „a“ in 33.75% of the attempts while the Tigrigna speakers inserted „a“ in 42.50% of the attempts. In this case, the students either didn't understand that dragging is a verbal adjective that qualifies feet or didn't eternalize the rule of the use of article „a“ which states that the indefinite article „a“ is used before singular countable nouns. The percentage of inserting „a“, „an“, the and „Ø „ article in the potential places for the „null“ article are shown in [Appendix 1-A and B](#).

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.

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 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 [Appendix-3](#)).

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

Table 5: 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

Table 6: Use of Mother Tongue, English and Other Ethiopian Foreign Languages in Different Domains by University Freshmen, 1986 (in percentage)

Language(s) Use	Tigrigna Speakers (226)											Amharic Speakers (297)											Other Ethiopian Language Speakers (60)										
	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			
Used																																	
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	1	5	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	3	2	3	9	2	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	2	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	1	10	1	15	2	8	6	19	8	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	27	0	55	12	27	13	45	22	30	
EA	2	1	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	1	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	2		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
 MTA = Mother Tongue & Amharic
 A= Amharic
 T = Tigrigna
 MTEA = Mother Tongue & Amharic and English
 MTE = Mother Tongue & English
 EA = English & Amharic
 E = English
 OF & EL= Other Foreign & Ethiopian Language

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 Appendix-2).

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 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 5](#).

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 [Appendix-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 [Appendix-5](#).

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

Table 7: 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 Ethiopia					
	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
MT	95	89	91	80	51	16	15	75	88	81	77	84	69	36	33	73	55	55	58	35
MTA	3	4	4	10	19	17	10	13	2	3	7	2	2	2	2	7	24	24	24	24
A	2	1	1	4	3	18	8	2									8	8	3	33
T									3	5	5	1	3	0		1				2
MTAE		1	2	3	10	13	7	2					1	1	1					
MTE		1		2	7	7	1	1		2	1	8	17	35	12	5				
EA						12	4													3
E					2	15	38			1		1	3	25	40					
OF & EL		3	2	1	4	1	8	6	7	7	9	4	5		3	12	3	3	5	3
No response		1				1	9	1		1	1			1	9	2				

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

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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 6](#).

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

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

Table 8: Asmara University Freshmen's Motivation Reasons for Learning English

Motivation Reasons	PREFERENCES						Average	Ranking		
	Instrumental		1 st		2 nd				3 rd	
	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 some one 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			

English outside the classrooms. Use of languages with different people is shown in [Table 7](#).

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:

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

Table 9: 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.

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 Appendix-6.

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.

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 9](#).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

If we consider the available grammar books and supplementary reading generally used in Eritrean schools, we can understand that there are neither grammar books nor supplementary reading recommended for high school students. As we can understand from the responses of the students to some

questions in the questionnaire, the students have not been exposed to English as expected. Their less exposure to English language reflects in the low (though satisfactory) scores in the use of English articles.

Regarding the availability of English grammar books at Asmara University, we get Warriners and Griffith (1951) and (1977) and Thomson and Martinet (1960) on reserve. Here, we can understand that there is a vast gulf between what these students need and get and what is available to them.

As the responses show, the students errors are possibly caused by intralingual interference i.e the possible sources of errors are faulty generalization, incomplete knowledge of rules, ignorance of rule restriction, etc. Moreover, when we analyzed the deviations/errors, the hierarchy of difficulty in decreasing order is deviations in the use of „a“, „the“, „an“ and the „null“ article.

We can observe the following increasing order of difficulty in the use of article „the“. It is when specification due to (a) retrospective reference, (b) immediate surrounding, (c) the use of superlative forms and (d) a phrase or clause is put in the order stated above. Although remedial courses are required for teaching the definite article „the“, in general, teaching should focus on the last one in particular.

In Addition to this, the percentages of correct insertions of „a“ and „an“ in the test show that they decrease as more complex noun phrases were used in the test. Therefore, remedial courses should focus on the gradual introduction from simple to more complex noun phrases.

Generally speaking, although there is a tendency of inserting the definite article in place of the indefinite articles and the vice-versa, very strong tendency of not inserting articles in the potential places where articles are required is reflected in the percentage scores esp. by Amharic speakers.

The performance of the students in the test on English articles reflects the learning and teaching strategies over the years from grade three to freshman. Here, remedial courses should also pay attention to the habit of dropping articles and to the insertion of articles indiscriminately.

When we compare the correct percentage scores in the use of definite and indefinite articles by Amharic and Tigrigna speakers, the correct percentage scores of Tigrigna speakers are higher than that of the Amharic speakers. However, the correct percentage score of

Amharic speakers in the potential places for the „Ø“ or the „null“ article is higher than that of Tigrigna speakers (in the potential places for the „null“ article). Higher percentage scores by Tigrigna speakers in the use of definite and indefinite articles correlates roughly with the sociopsychological information regarding the use of English with different people and in different activities which states that the Tigrigna speakers used more English than the Amharic speakers.

The students“ satisfactory performance in the test on English articles indicates that the students“ main

motivational reasons for learning English is stronger than the main integrative motivational reasons for learning English because less exposure to English literature may possibly be associated with less integrative motivational reasons for learning English. Moreover, their claimed degree of control in the four language skills in which understanding speaking are relatively more difficult than reading and writing. This fact suggests that remedial courses should focus on teaching materials that help students develop the four integrative language skills in general and understanding and speaking skills in particular.

Concerning the socio-psychological date, 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.

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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Appendix

Appendix 1-A Percentage of inserting Ø article in different environment by Amharic Speakers

Places	a	%	an	%	The	%	Ø	%
business	23	28.75	0	0.00	2	2.50	55	68.75
my salary	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
six hundred birr	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
dragging feet	27	33.75	0	0.00	1	1.25	52	65.00
accountant	0	0.00	4	5.00	2	2.50	74	92.50
my voice	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
Water	7	8.75	0	0.00	0	0.00	73	91.25
six hundred birr	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
my pocket	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
God	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	1.25	79	98.75
my sterious manner	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
six hundred & five birr	2	2.50	0	0.00	1	1.25	77	96.25
six hundred birr	1	1.25	0	0.00	0	0.00	79	98.75
every month	0	0.00	1	1.25	0	0.00	79	98.75
this gentleman	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
six hundred & five birr	2	2.50	0	0.00	0	0.00	78	97.50
good morning	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
Counter	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
Money	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
Another clerk	0	0.00	2	2.50	0	2.50	78	97.50
A piece of paper	2	2.50	0	0.00	0	0.00	78	97.50
my name	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
Chairs	2	2.50	0	0.00	0	0.00	78	97.50
Tables	2	2.50	0	0.00	0	0.00	78	97.50
Books	2	2.50	0	0.00	0	0.00	78	97.50
Surprise	10	12.50	0	0.00	0	0.00	70	87.50
Misery	8	10.00	0	0.00	2	2.50	70	87.50
my mind	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
A roar of laughter	7	8.75	0	0.00	7	8.75	66	82.50
Home	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
Total	95	3.96	7	0.29	16	0.67	2279	95.08

Total potential places = 2400

Appendix 1-B Percentage of inserting Ø article in different environment by Tigrigna speakers

Places	a	%	an	%	the	%	Ø	%
Business	28	35.00	0	0.00	4	5.00	48	60
my salary	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
six hundred birr	1	1.25	0	0.00	0	0.00	00	98.75
dragging feet	34	42.50	2	2.50	8	10.00	36	45.00
accountant	1	1.25	11	13.75	4	5.00	64	80.00
my voice	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
Water	3	3.75	0	0.00	9	11.25	68	85.00
six hundred birr	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
my pocket	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
God	0	0.00	0	0.00	5	6.25	75	93.75
my sterious manner	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	2.50	78	97.50
six hundred & five birr	4	5.00	0	0.00	6	7.50	70	87.50
six hundred birr	1	1.25	0	0.00	3	3.75	76	95.00
Every month	3	3.75	0	0.00	0	0.00	77	96.25
this gentleman	3	3.75	0	0.00	0	0.00	77	96.25
six hundred & five birr	2	2.50	0	0.00	2	2.50	76	95.00
good morning	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
Counter	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
Money	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	2.50	78	97.50
Another clerk	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
a piece of paper	3	3.75	0	0.00	0	0.00	77	96.25
my name	1	1.25	0	0.00	0	0.00	79	98.75
Chairs	6	7.50	0	0.00	0	0.00	74	92.50
Tables	6	7.50	0	0.00	11	13.75	63	78.75
Books	6	7.50	0	0.00	0	0.00	74	92.50
Surprise	23	28.75	0	0.00	1	1.25	56	70.00
Misery	15	18.75	0	0.00	2	2.50	63	78.75
my mind	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
a roar of laughter	7	8.75	0	0.00	4	5.00	69	86.25
Home	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	80	100.00
Total	147	6.13	13	0.54	63	2.63	2177	90.70

Total potential places = 2400

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

Age Group	MOTHER TONGUE											
	TIGRIGNA				AMHARIC				OTHER ETHIOPIAN LANGUAGES			
	MALE		FEMALE		MALE		FEMALE		MALE		FEMALE	
	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
21 - 25	36		14	2.32	36	5.96	4	0.66	6	1	2	0.33
26 - 30	13	5.96	4	0.66	16	2.65	1	0.17	3	0.496	2	0.33
31 - 35	8	2.15	3	0.5	5	0.83	-	-	1	0.17	-	-
36 - 40	5	1.32	1	0.17	2	0.33	-	-	-	-	-	-
41 - 45	-	0.83	-	-	1	0.17	-	-	-	-	-	-
No response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	165	27.26	55	9.11	247	40.94	38	6.29	63	10.436	5	0.83

Appendix 3: 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
Siltigna	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%

Appendix-4 Language Wished to be learnt by Asmara University Freshmen (1986)

Language	Preferences						Average %	Ranking
	1 st		2 nd		3 rd			
	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

Appendix-5: 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

Appendix 6: 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

Appendix-7: Test Passage
Insert the missing articles: (a, an and the)

The moment I go through door of bank and attempt to do business there, I become irresponsible fool. I knew this before I went in, but my salary had been raised to six hundred birr month and I felt that bank was best place for it. So I walked in with dragging feet and looked shyly around at clerks. I had idea that person about to open account was obliged to consult manager. I went upto counter marked „Accountant“. The acc ountant was tall, old fellow. The very sight of him made me nervous. My voice was deep and hollow. I felt thirsty and looked around for water.

„Can I see manager?“ I said, and added solemnly „alone“. I don't know why I said „alone“.

„Certainly“, said accountant, and fetched him. The manager looked honest and calm man. I held my six hundred and five birr clutched in screwed up ball in my pocket.

„Are you manager?“ I said. God knows I didn't doubt it. „Yes“, he said.

„Can I see you?“, I asked, „alone?“ He felt that I had terrible secret to reveal.

„Come in here“, he said, and led me to private room. He turned key in lock.

„Are you detective?“ he said. He had gathered from my mysterious manner that I was detective.

„I am not detective at all. I have come to open account“,

„Fairly large“, I whispered, „I propose to deposit six hundred and five birr now and then a six hundred birr every month“. The manager got up and opened door. He called accountant. „Ato Haile“, he said loudly, „this gentleman is opening account. He will deposit six hundred and five birr“. I rose.

A big iron door stood open at side of room.

„Good morning“, I said, and stepped into safe.

„Come out“, said manager coldly, and showed me other way. I went upto accountant’s counter and pushed ball of money at him with sudden, quick movement as if I were doing trick. He took money and gave it to another clerk. He made me write sum on piece of paper and sign my name in book. I knew not what I was doing. There were chairs, tables, and books all around me. „Is it deposited?“ I asked in hollow voice.

„It is“ said accountant.

„Then I want to draw cheque“.

Someone gave me cheque book through little window. The people in bank had impression that I was millionaire who had something wrong with him. I wrote something on cheque and thrust it in at clerk. He looked at it with surprise. Suddenly I realized that I had written six hundred and five instead of five. Reckless with misery, I made up my mind. „Yes, I want to draw all my money, whole thing“.

„Are you not going to deposit any more?“ said clerk, astonished. . „Never“.

The clerk prepared to pay money. I took it and rushed out. As big door swung behind me, I caught echo of roar of laughter that went upto ceiling of bank. As I reach home, I felt it was unique experience.

Appendix 8: Sociolinguistic Profile of Asmara University Freshmen (1985/86)

1. Name _____ I.D.No. _____ Section _____ Day/Ext. ____
2. Sex _____
3. Age _____
4. Place of birth _____
5. Name the language in which you spoke first as a child _____
- 6.

Level	Name of the school	Location of the school	Medium of instruction
Elementary			
Junior Sec.			
Senior Sec.			
Any other			

7. Name the languages you know and tick (✓) the skills you have in these languages. Indicate by the side of the tick the degree of your control of each skill as follows: „very good“ = 3, „good“ = 2 „so-so“ = 1 „only“ a few words“ = 0.

Name of the language	Skills			
	Understanding	Speaking	Reading	Writing
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

8. (a) Which language do you use in speaking to the following?

Relation	Language(s) used
Mother	
Father	
Older relatives	
Younger relatives	
Close friends	
Local teachers	
Strangers	

(b) Which language do you use in following activities?

Activities	Language(s) used
Sport	
Shopping	
Listening to news	
Religious prayers	
Reading novels	
Films	
Songs	
Conversation	
Reading newspapers and magazines	
Letterwriting (personal) general reading	

9. What language would you most like to know (write their names in order of preference)?

Name of the language	Preference number

10. Indicate which of the following qualities do you recognize in the first three languages of your preference:

refined →	rich	useful for getting a job
sweet →	pleasant	useful for receiving higher
precise →	poetic	education in Ethiopia
prestigious →	to impress others	useful to pursue studies out side Ethiopia

Language	Qualities
Language of 1 st preference	
Language of 2 nd preference	
Language of 3 rd preference	

11. Family's Educational background

Relation	Qualification
Father	
Mother	

12. (a) Father's occupation _____
 (b) Place of work _____

13. (a) Mother's occupation _____
 (b) Place of work _____

14. Mention the language generally used at home.

15. In sections „A“ and “b” below are given some reasons, which may motivate Ethiopians to study English. Indicate by putting a tick (✓) the reasons for which you are studying English. Also write „1“ against the reason with represents your feeling most, „2“ for the next, and so on.

A. I want to learn English because

- (i) the educational system requires it. _____
- (ii) I want to make my stay easy when I visit some English Speaking countries. _____
- (iii) I want to appear smart. _____
- (iv) I want to impress the members of the other sex. _____
- (v) It will help me to get a better job.
- (vi) It will help me to read magazines/newspapers written in English And see English films. _____
- (vii) I want to study English literature. _____
- (viii) It is an international language. _____

B. I want to learn English because

- (i) I want to live like the Americans or the Britishers. _____
- (ii) I want to be welcomed by the American or the British people. _____
- (iii) I want to marry someone from a English speaking country. _____
- (iv) I want to understand the English and American people and their way of life. _____

16. Indicate your view about English by showing your agreement or disagreement with the following statements. Use the following scale to indicate your view:

- Strong agree = 1
- disagree = 4
- Agree = 2
- strongly disagree = 5
- Neither agree nor disagree = 3

1. English is a sweet language.

strongly agree 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ strong disagree

2. English is not a pleasant language.

strongly agree 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____ strongly disagree.

3. English is a precise language.

strongly agree 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____ strongly disagree.

4. English is not a rich language.

strongly agree 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____ strongly disagree.

5. English is a poetic language.

strongly agree 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____ strongly disagree

6. English is not a useful language.

strongly agree 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____ strongly disagree

7. English is not a prestigious language.

strongly agree 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____ strongly disagree

8. English is a refined language.

strongly agree 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____ strongly disagree