

# The nature of code mixing and code switching between Amharic and Awngi, and its influence on the indigenous Awngi language

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## Abstract

*The coexistence of different communities in Awi Zone results in mixing and switching codes from the surrounding language, adapting their communication to cultural and linguistic influences and social contexts. The primary aim of this study was to explore the nature of code mixing and code switching from Amharic to Awngi and its influence on the indigenous language, Awngi, in the Awi Zone of Ethiopia. To achieve this goal, a qualitative research design was employed. Twelve respondents from the educational bureau, cultural and tourism bureau, and public schools were selected purposively. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Thematic data analysis was employed. The results demonstrated that code mixing and switching stem from social factors such as border proximity, marriage, religious practices, and trade activities. The research also highlighted that Awngi speakers blend and switch between Amharic and Awngi at the phonetic level, i.e., Amharic (ጥይት) to Awngi (ትይት), and word level Amharic (ትምህርት) to Awngi (ክንት). This practice of code mixing and switching has both positive (relationship formation, linguistic enrichment, cultural exchange, increased adaptability, and enhanced social connections) and negative (attitudinal changes and a decline of the indigenous language) effects. Consequently, it can be concluded that various aspects of Awngi have been influenced by the Amharic language, particularly its morphology. Finally, recommendations for future researchers, language experts, and language users have been suggested.*

*Keywords: Amharic and Awngi languages; Code mixing; Code switching; Influence*

## Introduction

Language is the human use of spoken or written words as a communication system. It encompasses the speech of a country, region, or group of people, including its vocabulary, syntax, and grammar. Language serves as an instrument for communication, complete with its own set of codes. When we refer to language as a communication tool, it influences the speech community, while the community, in turn, impacts the language they use. In Ethiopia, with multilingual societies like Agaw people, knowing more than one language facilitates smooth communication to build relationships and to share cultures among bilingual speakers. This dynamic interaction prompts the study of the relationship between language and society, a field known as sociolinguistics. Fatiman (2013) reinforces this concept by stating that society influences language, and language in turn influences society. The interdependence of these two elements is what drives the study of sociolinguistics.

When different speech communities coexist, mixing and switching codes from surrounding languages often occurs. A code can refer to a language, a variation, or a specific style of a language. In this study, "code" will be understood as a verbal element that can range from a single morpheme to the entire language system. Scholars, such as Amuda (2009), explain the multifaceted nature of code-switching in multilingual communities, examining its implications for communication, identity, and education. Several studies explored that it is a prevalent phenomenon in multilingual communities, serving various functions from stylistic

to identity negotiation and educational facilitation (Atoye 2005; Belly, 2011; and Hymes, 1974), that it is also the alternative use of two or more languages, varieties of a language, or even different speech styles.

Leyew (1998) concluded that since Ethiopia is a multilingual country, codeswitching is a widespread phenomenon among speakers of different indigenous languages. As a result, it is very common to hear the alternation of codes, especially from one language to Amharic and vice versa. Among educated people, it is observed that codeswitching frequently occurs from Amharic to English. In the Awi Administrative Zone, some communities are observed utilizing code-switching from Amharic to Awngi. Bokamba (2004) elaborates more these concepts that code-switching involves mixing words, phrases, and sentences from two distinct grammatical (sub) systems across sentence boundaries within the same speech event. In contrast, code-mixing refers to the embedding of various linguistic units such as affixes (bound morphemes), words (unbound morphemes), phrases, and clauses during cooperative activities, where participants must reconcile what they hear with what they understand to grasp the intended meaning.

From this, it is concluded that "code mixing" emphasizes hybridization, while "code switching" highlights the transition from one language to another. The results of previous research (Mowarin, 2014) have revealed that mixing and switching likely occur to varying degrees in the speech of all bilinguals, suggesting that a person proficient in two languages, A and B, has access to three systems: A, B, and C. The third system consists of hybrid forms that can be used with other bilinguals but not with monolingual speakers of A or B.

As demonstrated by studies like (Nungki et al., 2025; Santiyani & Hikmaharyanti, 2023 ) code mixing and code switching can be appeared as *tag-switching* in which tags and certain set phrases in one language are inserted into an utterance otherwise in another, *intra-sentential switching* in which switches occur within a clause or sentence boundary, *inter-sentential switching*, in which a change of language occurs at a clause or sentence boundary, where each clause or sentence is in one language or the other, and *intra-word switching* in which a change occurs within a word boundary. These strategies, which have multiple advantages and disadvantages, of communication are rampant in Ethiopian regions like Awi Administrative Zone because there are communities from different areas of Ethiopia living together as multilingual groups.

According to recent studies, although switching and mixing of codes play a vital role in such multilingual countries, facilitating communication and cultural exchange between different linguistically differentiated groups, promoting learning of languages, complementing deficits in communication, increasing cognitive flexibility and problem-solving skills and articulating the fluid nature of identity in multilingual environments, (Manuel, 2024) and (Mehdi, 2024), they negatively affect the indigenous languages, such as linguistic purity concerns, resulting in stigmatization of the users, communication barriers: confusing the non-fluent conversation partners, and hinder the acquisition of official language proficiency (Nana Aichatou, 2020).

The implementation of code mixing and switching in a particular language is not a casual phenomenon; it has specific underlying reasons. Kosta (2015) states that there are various

factors that lead people to mix and switch codes. In some cases, it may serve as an indicator of membership in bilingual or multilingual societies. In other instances, switching and mixing are not merely reflections of social situations; rather, they can actively shape and create social contexts.

The multilingual nature of a country or speech community, along with individuals' bilingual or multilingual abilities, can lead to the mixing and switching of codes between languages. Fatiman (2013) states that the characteristics of a country, along with the bilingual and multilingual competencies of certain individuals and the interlanguage relationships between languages, contribute to code mixing and code switching in conversation, discourse, and communicative competence, enhancing communication.

While code mixing and code switching serve to facilitate communication, they also impact the indigenous language. At times, they can create new styles of communication, particularly for monolingual individuals within the speech community. In this context, Staggroula (2007) argues that attempts at code switching and mixing often encounter a range of theoretical and practical challenges across all aspects of linguistics, particularly regarding the matrix of the base language. There are many factors influencing the rate at which language changes, including the attitudes of the speakers toward borrowing and changing. When most members of a speech community value novelty, for example, their language will change more quickly. When most members of a speech community value stability, their language will change more slowly. When a particular pronunciation or word or grammatical form or turn of phrase is regarded as more desirable, or marks its users as more important or powerful, then it will be adopted and imitated more rapidly than otherwise (Kim, 2006). Code mixing and code switching often occur within bilingual and multilingual speech communities. Awi is one of such multilingual zones in Ethiopia, where languages like *Amharic* and *Awngi* are the most widely spoken, and *Kunfel*, spoken by lowlanders of the Awi Administrative Zone, is a variety and/or a dialect of the Awngi language. This multilingual environment fosters a significant amount of code mixing and switching among these languages, particularly between Awngi and Amharic. Despite the abundance of national and international research on language, there remains a significant gap in national studies specifically examining Amharic and Awngi, particularly in understanding the functions, motivations, or factors, and influence of code-switching and code-mixing between these languages. To address this gap, this research seeks to find out the underlying causes or motivations and to identify the positive or negative influences of transitioning and blending from the Amharic language to the Awngi language.

The results of this study offer both practical and theoretical contributions to our understanding of linguistic phenomena, cultural preservation, and language policy. Firstly, it will provide insights that enable language users to differentiate between code-switching and code-mixing, establishing clearer definitions and frameworks for these concepts. More specifically, the study highlights how these practices influence language structure, syntax, and semantics in bilingual or multilingual contexts. Additionally, the findings can inform policymakers in crafting language policies that support cultural preservation, ensuring the protection and promotion of minority languages. Finally, the research will enhance social

cohesion by demonstrating how language practices foster social bonds within communities, encouraging collective efforts toward cultural preservation. Moreover, this research would offer a roadmap to future researchers, along with an extensive overview of recent trends and findings in this research field to linguistic practitioners and language policy-makers. Overall, it will shed light on how bilingual individuals navigate multiple languages in real-time communication, contributing valuable insights to this area of study.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to assess code mixing and code switching from Amharic to Awnigi and their influences on the Awnigi language.

More specifically, the study aims to:

1. identify the cause that Awnigi language speakers mix and switch codes from Amharic.
2. discover how this mixing and switching code is applied.
3. find out the influences of code mixing and code switching on the Awnigi language.

## Methodology

### Research design

In this study, a qualitative research design was employed, integrating qualitative data collection methods. This approach is well-suited for gaining comprehensive insights into the nature of code mixing and code switching from Amharic to Awnigi, as well as their influence on the indigenous language, Awnigi. Moreover, a qualitative research design enables researchers to gain a deep understanding of intricate social, cultural, and behavioral phenomena (Kothari, 2004). This approach was chosen for its capacity to offer a holistic perspective on the issue from various qualitative angles. In short, the nature of the problem and the research objectives necessitated the use of this research method.

### Participants

The subjects were drawn from the educational bureau, cultural and tourism bureau, and public schools in the Awi administrative Zone. A total of 12 (Twelve) respondents were selected from the study area. These participants were chosen using a purposive sampling technique as they are fluent in both Awnigi and Amharic. Therefore, they are deemed as information-rich cases for this qualitative study, required sufficient and relevant data on the problem is why only these educated samples participated in this study.

### Data collection instruments

Interviews, allowing for the collection of qualitative data on the problem, were utilized to investigate the nature of code mixing and code switching from Amharic to Awnigi and their influence on the indigenous language, Awnigi. At the beginning, to garner the necessary information, an interview was designed and conducted with 12 respondents who were proficient in both Amharic and Awnigi languages. It comprised semi-structured questions. The questions were intended to gather data on the reasons why Awnigi language speakers mix and switch codes from Amharic, the applications of mixing and switching codes, and the positive or negative influences of these practices on Awnigi language. The validity of the tool

was checked through language experts' review, and the researchers made some revisions according to the comments given. Participants were interviewed in their offices and school grounds, with the responses were both written and audio recorded after obtaining voluntary consent to gather insights for the study.

### Data analysis

After collecting data, it was analyzed using qualitative methods. The data gathered from interviews were analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis so that themes: causes of mixing and switching language codes from Amharic to Awngi, ways and levels of linguistic elements to mix and switch codes, and influences of code switching and mixing from Amharic were identified.

## Results

As previously mentioned, this study primarily focuses on identifying the influence of the Amharic language on Awngi due to the practice of code mixing and switching. Many scholars argue that code mixing and code switching can facilitate communication and strengthen the relationships between speech communities. However, from a linguistic perspective, these practices can negatively impact the host language. This is particularly concerning when speakers of the host language begin to replace their own sounds, words, and phrases with those from the second or foreign language. This situation is evident in the interaction between Awngi and Amharic languages. In the same vein, according to the analysis of data from the interview, the findings revealed that as a result of Amharic's influence, the participants highlighted that Awngi speakers are losing words and certain phonetic sounds; they are increasingly opting for Amharic over their native language, which suggests that language shift influenced by another dominant language may exist.

### Causes of mixing and switching language codes from Amharic to Awngi

#### Social factors

The participants have identified various social factors that lead them to mix and switch codes from Amharic to the Awngi language, including border proximity, marriage activities, religious activities, and trade activities. According to their interview responses, religion and historical relationships are significant contributors. In addition, border proximity and trade activities are reasons for mixing and switching codes from Amharic. These are discussed further in detail as follows.

#### Religion

Religion is a factor that causes code mixing and switching from Amharic to Awngi. In this context, religion alone is not the reason; rather, it is the adoption of the Orthodox faith, which is primarily expressed in Amharic, that leads Awngi speakers to incorporate many Amharic codes into their mother tongue. As a result, some Awngi words are replaced by their Amharic equivalents. This is supported by the interview response, which highlights that when people

perform some cultural and religious activities in a common place, they are forced to switch and mix the codes.

*"One of the factors that motivates me to mix Amharic with Awngi is the coexistence of both the Amhara and Agaw ethnic groups, who share certain cultural similarities."INTERVIEW3*

#### Trade activities

It is known that, in a globalized world, people have trade exchanges between neighboring countries and even from distant corners. The same is true between the Amhara and Agaw people. Of course, trade by itself cannot be the cause for language distraction; however, during their transaction, people not only exchange goods and services, and rather they also exchange ideas since they communicate through language. Furthermore, most products are named in the producers' language-Amharic. Therefore, they mix and switch codes to understand each other.

According to respondents' views, trade activity between the Amharic and Awngi speech communities has a long history. Due to this trade transaction, the exchange of language codes, especially taking Amharic codes to their language, is common.

*I mix codes from Amharic to Awngi to enhance my proficiency in both languages for a better quality of life. I believe that knowing two different languages helps facilitate marketing-related activities. (INTERVIEWEE 7)*

Moreover, as one participant described below, the result reveals that both communicators do not understand each other while doing shopping activities, so the Awngi speakers transfer from their native language to the second language to make the communication clear.

*When listeners have difficulty understanding my message in Awngi, I switch to Amharic. Additionally, I mix Amharic with Awngi when I encounter people who cannot speak Awngi, especially if I feel that my responses to their questions might not be sufficient. (INTERVIEWEE 8)*

The respondents also commit the practices of switching and mixing codes from Amharic to Awngi language while they purchase commodities, since some shoppers sell their products of agriculture or livestock in one of the towns in the Awi administrative Zone, where the Awngi language is primarily spoken, and come from neighbors where Amharic language is primarily spoken.

*I mix and switch from Amharic to Awngi to ensure clarity for students and other interlocutors. I transform from one language into another if I ensure my listener does not completely understand the message I intend to convey during shopping. For example, the only Amharic speakers do their own trading activities, and I buy house commodities from them. (INTERVIEWEE 9)*



### Proximity

Proximity between Amhara and Agaw is another factor in the situation of mixing and switching codes between the languages. As the respondents mentioned, since they are close, many Amhara come to the areas where Agaw people live, including Injibara town, and vice versa. They added that the influence of Amharic speakers on Awnji speakers is relatively less in the areas relatively far from Gojjam. This factor is assured by the data from interviews and as stated below.

*Since Awnji is my native language, I use it to help my interlocutors understand my message. For example, I have friends who can only speak Amharic, and can speak both Amharic and Awnji languages, but when I communicate with those only speakers of Amharic and speaker of both languages, I should switch into Amharic for better understanding between us. This situation happens due to the job we are working on together in schools. However, at the primary education level, instruction in the mother tongue is lacking, resulting in low proficiency in Awnji among students. Another reason for code mixing and switching is that speakers often struggle to correlate letters between the two languages. Additionally, after spending a long time living among Amharic speakers, I find myself blending and switching back to Awnji when I return to my hometown and village. (INTERVIEW 1)*

However, some Awnji speakers are not interested in using their first language is Awnji, frequently, especially when their interlocutors are not able to speak Awnji. It is also noted that youngsters do not want to communicate in Awnji language due to different factors. Therefore, they frequently switch and mix from Amharic to Awnji language as described hereunder.

*I believe that speakers of the Awnji language do not fully respect it, and they often struggle to understand how words and letters can be used and structured. it is observed from too young speakers; there is a lack of awareness about how these two languages are utilized. (INTERVIEWEE 4)*

The respondents also engage in the practice of switching and mixing codes between Amharic and Awnji language while conversing with their friends, as they can speak both languages fluently. It is due to those whose first language is Amharic, and they live together with Awnji speakers. It is supported by the data from INTERVIEWEE 6 as stated below.

*Awnji is my second language is why I mix and switch codes. I speak this language because I live with the speakers of this language. Additionally, my difficulty in correctly recognizing the letters of Awnji contributes to my tendency to engage in code mixing and switching. I can speak Awnji because I am married to an Awnji speaker, and she helps me to know the language. (INTERVIEWEE 6)*

Ways and levels of linguistic elements to mix and switch codes from the Amharic to Awngi

### Levels of linguistic elements

In fact, there are numerous levels of linguistic elements that can be mixed and switched by bilinguals and multilinguals. For instance, codes at the phone, morpheme, word, phrase, and codes at sentence are the most common and frequently employed levels of code-mixing and code switching. The analysis of the data from the interview indicates that there are linguistic elements being transferred from Amharic to Awngi. For example, it reveals that code switching occurs at the sound or/and phonetic sound level. According to their explanation, they often take parts of words and attach them as prefixes or suffixes. However, code switching at the word level is more prevalent than at other levels. The interview discussions indicate that all three levels: phoneme, morpheme, and word are commonly practiced, with minimal use at the phrase level and almost none at the sentence level.

As noted by respondents, Awngi speakers frequently mix and switch codes from Amharic to Awngi in their speech. There are different ways in which Awngi speakers mix and switch codes of different Amharic linguistic levels into their native language that is Awngi. The respondents argued that *replacement and insertion* are highly practiced ways of code switching and code mixing. Besides, it is highlighted that the participants take some words with some internal modifications. The following justifications convinced the practice. From a linguistic point of view, when there is a situation of mixing and switching codes between languages, it can be employed in insertion, replacement, congruent lexicalization, or with modification. According to the information obtained from respondents, except for congruent lexicalization, all ways of mixing codes, which are listed above, are involved between Awngi and Amharic, albeit replacement and insertion are very common, as stated below in detail.

### Replacement

Replacement occurs when a speech community mixes and switches codes from another language by substituting their original words with words from that language. This differs from borrowing, which involves adding vocabulary to the host language without altering its original words. In contrast, replacement through code mixing results in the loss of original words from the host language, which is then replaced by new words from the other language. As indicated by the respondents, many Awngi words have been replaced by Amharic words. When a speech community replaces a word without being aware of the mixing and replacing process, it can pose a challenge for the language. If speakers are unaware of these replacements, they may forget their original words and begin to accept the new words as their own. In this context, many Awngi speakers are not conscious of how extensively their words have been replaced by Amharic words.

*When I feel that some students in my class do not understand or speak Awngi, I switch to Amharic. Additionally, I sometimes employ different*



*levels of linguistic elements, word and phrase level, such as I bring the word from Amharic, i.e., (ትምህርት), (ብሬ), and (ጥይት) to Awngi (ክንቲ), (ቢሬ), and (ትይቶ) respectively. Code mixing and switching also occur when I aim to convey the clear meaning of Awngi words through modifications. (INTERVIEWEE 12)*

### Insertion

In linguistics, insertion is the way of taking words or parts of words from one language and inserting them into another language. The process of inserting can be employed by taking part of a code from one language to another as a prefix, suffix, and infix, or as a fully flagged word. Basically, insertion is taking a code at the morpheme level. In the case of Awngi, the results show that insertion is very common. Awngi speakers take a prefix and insert it into their common word formation process. As many of the respondents have discussed, it is very common to take ኡ (/u/), which is the Amharic version of the definite article, as a prefix of Awngi, particularly with Amharic loan words. Nowadays, this prefix has become very common even before personal names.

Moreover, the data from both interviews highlighted that the speakers of both Amharic and Awngi languages commit mixing and switching codes in different linguistic levels, including morphological, phonological, phrasal, and sentence levels.

*The level of linguistic elements I incorporate from Amharic into Awngi is significant. For instance, one method I sometimes use is translation. There are also certain letters, words, and phrases that I take from Amharic into Awngi. (INTERVIEWEE 5)*

The result also indicates that Awngi speakers mix and even switch from the Amharic language in the form of words and letters, whether knowingly or unknowingly, in attempting to avoid any vague communication with their students. One said that

*Since language is inherently complex, I make an effort to mix and connect it with Amharic to enhance clarity. I aim to develop various strategies tailored to my students, and I am aware of many alphabets and words that have been borrowed from Amharic into Awngi. (INTERVIEWEE 10)*

### *Impacts of code switching and mixing from Amharic on the native language-Awngi*

The respondents thought that mixing and switching codes from Amharic to Awngi is that Amharic is becoming more expressive; mixing and switching codes results in to make a better relationship with Amharic speakers. Besides, this situation is important to facilitate communication. Above all, one can conclude that mixing and switching codes from Amharic to Awngi has an impact on the host language; Amharic language takes the lion's share. Due to this, it is also inferred that host language speakers' attitudes towards Awngi have changed. This attitudinal change, in turn, is a leading factor for language change. Finally, language change would result from the attitudes built by the Awngi speakers.

Beyond this, when speakers of both languages engage in mixing and switching, it can have both positive and negative impacts, such as to clear the communication, to supplement message comprehension, and to improve intercommunication skills among speakers of Awngi language. This is supported as outlined below.

*I believe that mixing and switching codes from Amharic to Awngi has a positive impact on my mother tongue. For instance, it clarifies the language, aids in effective message comprehension, and enhances intercommunication skills. However, there are also negative effects; mixing and switching can lead to misunderstandings and confusion, particularly for those who are not proficient in Amharic. (INTERVIEWEE 7)*

In short, the result demonstrates that Awngi language can be influenced in various ways, allowing it to incorporate words from Amharic due to the practices of mixing and switching codes from Amharic.

*Absolutely, in my view, mixing and switching codes from Amharic to Awngi affects the Awngi language in several ways. Firstly, it helps me become a better communicator with speakers of other languages, such as Amharic. Additionally, this practice enriches the host language, allowing Awngi to incorporate words from Amharic. (INTERVIEWEE 1)*

## Discussion

The primary aim of this study was to examine the nature of code mixing and code switching between Amharic and Awngi, as well as their impact on the Awngi language. The findings revealed that speakers of Awngi frequently mix and switch to Amharic for various reasons. Additionally, these speakers employ different strategies when engaging in code mixing and switching. These practices have both positive and negative effects on the indigenous Awngi language.

To begin with, the findings revealed that Awngi language speakers mix and switch codes from the Amharic language due to different factors such as border proximity, religious activities, historical relationships, and trade activities. This finding aligns with the study by Bhatt & Behura (2019), which indicated that code-switching among bilingual speakers is influenced by cognitive and contextual factors. For instance, the factors identified in this research can be classified as contextual factors. In terms of border proximity, it is evident that speakers of both Awngi and Amharic are in close physical proximity, which may encourage interaction between the two groups. Thus, this geographical context frequently affects language contact, leading to code-switching or code-mixing due to the constant movement of people between towns and within the same area. Additionally, there is a shared experience between speakers of the host language and Amharic speakers.

As a result, religious activities provide opportunities for individuals to come together and engage in various practices, such as rituals and other traditions. This communal involvement significantly increases code mixing and code switching among multilingual or bilingual

participants. Another factor contributing to code mixing and switching among different groups is their historical relationship. While this factor may not be considered the primary reason for mixing and switching from Amharic to Awnji in this research context, the practices of language mixing and switching are believed to be influenced by the historical ties between bilingual or multilingual speakers. This occurs through interactions, conflicts, or alliances formed in the past or present between these groups. Trade-related activities are also significant reasons why Awnji speakers blend and switch to Amharic. Given that both language speakers live in proximity and sometimes together, they have ample opportunities to interact during economic exchanges (Kachru, 2010; Li, 1994). Additionally, cognitive factors, such as bilinguals' proficiency in each language and the situational context, influence the frequency and reasons for their language mixing (Deuchar & Quay, 2000).

Bilinguals employ code mixing and code switching between Amharic and Awnji in various ways. The findings of this study indicate that Awnji speakers mix and switch languages at the phonetic, morpheme, and word levels. As noted by some scholars, code mixing and code switching encompass multiple linguistic levels, including phonological, morphological, syntactic, and pragmatic aspects. For instance, Myers-Scotton (1993) described the syntactic structures that either facilitate or restrict code-switching. She proposed the Matrix Language Frame model, suggesting that switches predominantly occur within specific syntactic contexts governed by the grammatical rules of the dominant language in bilingual speech. Additionally, the phonological level is relevant when bilinguals mix and switch codes, often due to similarities between the two languages. This is evident when speakers of both languages incorporate vocabulary from Amharic into Awnji. Therefore, it implies that Awnji speakers may incorporate words from Amharic while communicating, using Awnji accent and intonation. For instance, the respondents of the interview indicated that they might borrow from "ገሬ" (Amharic), meaning "ox" in English, or use or replace "ጥይቅ" (Amharic), which is a Semitic language and originated from the Ge'ez language, with the Cushitic language family i.e. "ገሬ" (Awnji) instead of "ጥይቅ" (Awnji), meaning "bullet" in English, respectively (Hetzron, 1978). This blending of sounds illustrates how speakers shift between languages. Previous studies have shown that when speakers lack a specific morpheme in one language, they may switch to another language to find an appropriate morpheme to complete their expression. In this context, they employ an insertion technique, where bilingual speakers integrate a word from one language into the grammatical structure of another. This aligns with many studies, such as (Amsalu, 2006; Bialystok, 2017; Poplack, 1980; García, 2009), bilingual speakers switch and mix from their second or foreign language in conveying the message.

Thirdly, the results indicated that the practice of mixing and switching codes from Amharic to Awnji has both positive and negative effects on the host language, Awnji. On the positive side, it fosters relationships between Awnji and Amharic speakers, facilitates smooth communication, and helps navigate taboo expressions. However, it can have negative consequences. For example, attitudinal changes may occur. This could lead to a decline in the widespread use of the host language, Awnji, within the context of this study. Supporting this finding, although the focuses differ, research by Dwyer (2010; Hinton, 2013; Lewis, 2014;

Smith & Holmes, 2022) indicated that code-switching and code-mixing among speakers of indigenous languages can have both positive and negative impacts. These influences are often shaped by the sociolinguistic context, cultural dynamics, and existing language policies (the National Indigenous Languages Report, 2018). According to the findings of this study, positive influences include linguistic enrichment, cultural exchange, increased adaptability, and enhanced social connections. Conversely, negative impacts on the host or indigenous language resulting from bilinguals mixing and switching codes include language shift and loss, stigmatization and identity issues, and fragmentation of the language.

Eventually, the Awi people use two languages for different purposes, a concept supported by Hymes and Bokamba. For example, Hymes (1974) states that code-switching is the alternative use of two or more languages, varieties of a language, or even speech styles. Similarly, Bokamba (1989) describes code-switching as the mixing of words, phrases, and sentences from two distinct grammatical (sub) systems across sentence boundaries within the same speech event. The Agaw people engage in code mixing and switching at both inter-sentential and intra-sentential levels. This aligns with Cao's (2011) conclusion on code mixing, as the switching between two languages within a single sentence, a practice common in bilingual societies.

## Conclusion

As discussed in the results section, various aspects of Awnji have been influenced by the Amharic language, particularly its morphology. And, several social factors lead speakers of two different languages to mix and switch codes. For example, there are four primary reasons for this mixing and switching. The factors include trade activity, geographical proximity, religion, and marriage activities. In trade, when exchanging goods and services, speakers often adopt the Amharic names for products. Upon importing items, they replace the original names with their Amharic equivalents. Regarding religion, since most Agaw people are Christians, they learn the Bible, which is written in Amharic and Ge'ez. This exposure helps them become familiar with the language, leading to a blending with Awnji. However, it's important to note that religion and language are distinct social phenomena; they do not sacrifice one for the other. Geographical proximity is also a contributing factor for code switching and mixing, as the West Gojjam Zone and Awi Zone are located close to each other, which has facilitated interactions over time. This is important for both groups to understand the culture of the people in these zones, which in turn will foster mutual respect. Codes at the phone and word are the most common and frequently employed levels of code-mixing and code-switching. Moreover, there is the occurrence of code mixing and switching between these two indigenous languages in several linguistic elements, such as morphemes and sentence level. In linguistics, when the frequency of language mixing increases, it is referred to as code switching, which can lead to language shift. This highlights the need for language users to make an effort to consistently use the language in their communication.

The practice of code switching and mixing could result in both positive and negative influences on the language is Awnji of the demographic group. In any speech community, if the youth are losing their language in favor of another language, it poses a significant

linguistic challenge. This might also be true for the Agaw community, where young Awngi speakers are particularly influenced by mixing and switching to Amharic. As a result, keeping the original Awngi language becomes difficult as many youths are unfamiliar with the Awngi vocabulary that is being lost. In the case of the Agaw community, these impacts of code switching and code mixing from Amharic to Awngi are present in the current research. This suggests that Awngi speakers are adopting certain features of Amharic, with adults and parents passing these Amharic characteristics on to their children. Historically, Amharic has exerted a significant influence on Awngi. Researchers are concerned that these circumstances could lead to a bottom-up language death, where language change begins in low-level environments, such as the home. However, the practices of code switching and code mixing between Amharic and Awngi may have a positive impact, which is useful in developing relationships among speakers and clarifying the intended message for listeners.

## Recommendations

Based on the results, the researchers recommend the following points. As discussed in the analysis and conclusion sections, the situation of code mixing and switching between Amharic and Awngi is quite severe, impacting various aspects of the Awngi language. Therefore, immediate action is needed to prevent the potential loss of the language. The following measures should be implemented: First and foremost, it is crucial to explore the original Awngi words in the context of language evolution and contextual applications of words. As highlighted in the data analysis, many Awngi terms have been lost. Thus, recovering the original Awngi vocabulary that has been replaced by Amharic equivalents is vital. To locate the original Awngi language codes, the following strategies can help in this endeavor. One approach is to utilize elders as sources of information. As discussed in the conclusion, the youth in the Agaw speech community are heavily engaged in mixing and switching codes between Amharic and Awngi. Many respondents noted that elders tend to speak the original Awngi more fluently. Thus, gathering original Awngi words and sounds from elders should be the primary task in efforts to preserve the language.

However, some limitations were noted in this study. Initially, the study was guided by a qualitative research approach, which may not be representative. The study concentrated solely on educated individuals, excluding illiterate groups; as a result, the findings cannot be regarded as applicable to all wider communities. Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers utilize a longitudinal mixed methods design to enhance understanding of the issue. In addition, future researchers should consider employing other sampling methods, such as stratified sampling, to gather more comprehensive data. Additionally, utilizing participant observation, focus group discussion as data collection methods would provide the most reliable insights into how code-switching and mixing occur in real-life contexts, as using only an interview instrument is not able to garner sufficient and representative data on the issue. Therefore, the researchers would like to recommend that future researchers, particularly those who are bilingual in Awngi and Amharic, investigate the influence of code-switching and code-mixing on indigenous languages using methodologies that effectively capture the nuanced linguistic behaviors, social contexts, and cultural implications involved.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

## Data availability

All the above information is correct.

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