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Editorial Page

Preface

Academic journals play important roles in knowledge dissemination, professional development, and decision-making across various sectors. They serve as authoritative sources of information that guide researchers, practitioners, administrators, and policymakers in their respective fields.

Injibara Journal of Social Sciences and Business (IJSSB) is established to document and disseminate scientific findings to the users. on top of being a platform for scientific findings, IJSSB is a platform where researchers can exercise academic and research skills. IJSSB publishes manuscripts from social sciences, education and behavioral sciences, business and economics, and law. IJSSB aims to create a platform of new findings on peace, quality of education, psychosocial support as well as tourism and entrepreneurial development. Manuscripts with innovative findings within the scope of the journal and that are formatted based on the guidelines of the journal are acceptable in the journal.

We are thankful to all organizations and individuals who have played important roles so that this second issue of the journal could be published.   This second issue of the first volume contains five articles that cover social sciences, education and behavioral sciences, and management. I hope the journal will be a platform for evidence-based information for researchers, policy makers, and decision makers in the scope areas that are covered by IJSSB.   We encourage all scholars document their findings in IJSSB.

Sincerely,

Tesera Bitew (PhD, Associate Professor)
Editor-in-chief, IJSSB

About the Journal

Injibara Journal of Social Sciences and Business (IJSSB) is a peer-reviewed, open-access multidisciplinary journal with a commitment to timely, quick, and high-quality review processes from submission to acceptance.

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Accurate attribution of authorship is essential, and changes in author listing after submission require detailed justification and agreement from all authors. Authors can appeal decisions, especially in cases of perceived procedural errors or excessive delays, by submitting a detailed response. Appeals are reviewed by the editor-in-chief and may involve further review. IJSSB team always prioritizes maintaining rigorous standards of integrity, transparency, and accessibility, ensuring valuable contributions to social sciences and business research.

Have a nice reading!

Guidelines for Contributors

To prepare an original research manuscript, authors should follow this structure: Title Page, Abstract, Introduction, Methodology, Results, Discussion, Conclusion, Declarations, and References.

Title Page: Include a concise title (max 15 words), author contact details, affiliations, and designate a corresponding author.

Abstract: A summary of 150-250 words covering objectives, methods, main findings, and conclusions, plus 3-5 keywords. Format with Times New Roman, italics, size 11, single-spaced.

Introduction: Provide context, significance, problem definition, and relevant literature to introduce the study's purpose.

Methodology: Detailed descriptions of study design, participants, data collection/analysis, and ethical considerations for replication.

Results: Objectively report participant characteristics and findings using narrative descriptions, tables, or graphs as needed.

Discussion: Analyze results in relation to objectives and previous research, noting implications, limitations, and potential for further studies.

Conclusion and Recommendations: Summarize findings, discuss practical applications, and offer recommendations where relevant.

Declarations: Include optional acknowledgments, conflict of interest statements, funding sources, ethical approvals, data availability, consent (if applicable), and author contributions.

References: Follow APA style for in-text citations and reference lists.

For **review articles**, the format is similar but includes a specific review title, an abstract (adjusted for review content), and distinct sections for methodology, synthesis of results, and an extensive discussion.

Formatting requirements for all manuscript types are strict, including a single-column layout, Times New Roman font size 12, and specified margins and spacing. Tables and figures must be sequentially numbered and provided after references.

Manuscripts must be submitted via email until a web-based submission system is established. Authors must confirm the submission agreement and provide accurate author information. Authors are recommended to read the author guidelines before submitting their manuscripts to IJSSB.

Contents

Effects of explicit reading strategy instruction on grade nine students' reading strategy use

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Abstract

The study investigated the effects of explicit reading strategy instruction on students' use of reading strategy. The study employed the embedded design. Two randomly selected intact classes with 33 and 35 participants were included in the study as non-treatment group and treatment group, respectively. Data were collected using quantitative and qualitative data gathering instruments through reading comprehension tests before and after the intervention, and a retrospective interview, respectively. The data collected through reading comprehension test were analyzed using quantitative data analysis technique. The data gained through retrospective interview were analyzed through edited verbatim transcription. Generally, the findings suggested that explicit reading strategy instructions accompanied by the three basic reading instructions i.e., the pre-, the while-, and the post-reading instructions favored students' reading strategy as used by the participants in the treatment group. The participants used reading strategy to answer questions that require higher-level thinking in the post-intervention. There was a statistically significant difference in each reading strategy ($t=-2.660$, $df=66$, $p=.010$; $t=-3.723$, $df=66$, $p=.000$; $t=-5.909$, $df=66$, $p=.000$; $t=-5.886$, $df=66$, $p=.000$) guess the meaning of new words, state main ideas, evaluate the text, and inferential understanding, respectively. Considering the pedagogical support of explicit reading strategy instructions as a continuing process, it is recommended that programs be tailored to increase students' use of reading strategies as an essential part of reading instruction.

Keywords: low-level thinking, high-level thinking, reading strategy instruction, reading strategy use

Introduction

Reading is regarded as one of the four major language skills which help students to master a second/foreign language and help them to achieve in their academic endeavors (Alderson, 2000; Grabe, 2009). In language instruction, reading can be taught through reading strategy instruction which is one way of teaching reading. Research has been conducted to examine the effects of reading strategy instruction

on students' achievement in reading comprehension and reading self-efficacy (Aghaie & Zhang, 2012; Tavakoli & Koosha, 2016). These studies were conducted out of the context of Ethiopian learners' lives. It is rare that the knowledge of the effects of explicit reading strategy instruction on reading strategies used by students with a homogenous group in Ethiopian secondary schools, specifically grade nine students in the Oromia regional state. The present study, therefore, aimed to bridge the research gap by conducting explicit reading strategy instruction on grade nine students in Gute Secondary School, East Wollega, Oromia, and examining the effects of explicit reading strategy instruction could help grade nine secondary school students in Ethiopia to enhance their use reading strategy.

In the present context, secondary school students are expected to read and answer comprehension questions that require lower-level thinking and higher-level thinking. As Pearson and Cervetti (2017) and Westwood (2001) explain, reading comprehension can be categorized into reading comprehension that requires lower-level thinking and reading comprehension questions that require higher-level thinking. Questions that require lower level thinking, for example, literal level comprehensions require a reader to understand the basic facts that are flourished in the text. Hence, in this study, twenty-one (21) questions were prepared to examine whether the students in both the treatment and non-treatment groups had a statistically significant difference in their reading strategy as used by the students to answer reading comprehension questions that require a lower level thinking process, both before and after the intervention. Of the twenty-one (21) questions, nine (9) questions are explicitly stated and should be answered according to the passage — saying *true* if the statement is correct and *false* if not. Two (2) questions ask readers to fill in the blanks and other two (2) questions ask them to put ideas in order. The remaining eight (8) questions ask readers to search specific information.

Regarding reading comprehension questions that seek a higher level thinking processes, as opined by Westwood (2001), inferential, critical, and creative level comprehensions are higher-level comprehension processes that involve higher cognitive skills of analyzing, interpreting, deducing the meaning, inferring, understanding, summarizing, checking and critiquing, generating, planning, and producing.

Statement of the problem

Grade nine students at Gute Secondary School show poor use of reading strategy. This has been observed when they are provided with reading comprehension questions that require employing reading strategies. Their difficulties likely stem from an inability to properly use the reading strategies during the pre-reading, the while-reading, the post-reading instruction. Furthermore, students at this grade level were unable to employ the reading strategies that help them answer reading comprehension questions to be answered through higher-level thinking and lower-level thinking accordingly. Therefore, the present researcher examined the effect of explicit reading strategy instruction on students' reading strategy use.

Review of related research

Explicit reading strategy instruction is a kind of reading strategy instruction –which is viewed as a teaching method. It focuses on explicit reading strategy instruction in the regular second or foreign language reading lessons through the three basic-reading strategy instructions: the pre-, the while-, and the post-reading strategy instructions (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009). Fewer studies have been conducted to investigate the awareness that students in various grade levels possess regarding reading strategy use (Chen & Chen, 2015). To help students use reading strategies to comprehend a given reading text, the role of effective instruction is crucial. Teachers are authorized individuals to employ the reading strategy instruction. Students may know the strategies needed to succeed in their reading, but they are not able to use the strategies successfully. Therefore, a classroom teacher is expected to smoothly run strategy instruction to help learners to use a given reading strategy selectively and know what strategy to use when to use it, how to use it, and why to use it.

Good readers usually use various reading strategies based on the context. For example, Hedgcock and Ferries (2009) have proposed the different reading strategy instructions as per the three basic reading instructions, such as the pre-reading, the while-reading and the post-reading strategy instructions. Other scholars, such as Ozek and Civelek (2006) have identified the different reading strategies employed during different reading phases or stages across different levels of students. Students should be encouraged to know what strategies to use, when to use them, how to use them, and why to use them in their reading process. Knowing how to use reading strategies can help students monitor their reading and use the required strategies (Duke and Pearson, 2002). This involves learning, planning for reading, monitoring

comprehension failures, and regulating strategy use while reading (Brown, 2007b). The purposes of using these reading strategies are directly or indirectly concerned with information processing to read and understand, answer explicitly stated questions, and answer questions whose answers can only be generated beyond the lines (Westwood, 2001).

Therefore, students can use reading strategies if explicit reading strategy instruction is employed strategically in the classroom. In effect, students become aware of declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge, i. e., what strategy to use, how to process, and when to employ the strategies. These could, in turn, enable students to identify the purposes of reading thereby answer literal level, inferential level, critical level, and creative level comprehension questions (Ghaith, 2018; Grabe, 2002; Pearson and Cervetti, 2015; Pearson & Cervetti, 2017; Tindall, 2010).

Some related research has been conducted in the Ethiopian context, from recent studies, for example, Geleta, Tamiru, and Sherif (2022) investigated the effects of explicit reading strategy instruction on students' achievement in reading comprehension. Two intact classes were selected for study, and the treatment group received reading lessons accompanied by the three basic reading instructions (the pre-, while-, and post-reading instructions through explicit reading strategy instruction) but the non-treatment group received reading lessons in the usual way of learning/teaching reading. The study employed an embedded design since data were collected using qualitative data gathering instruments through reading comprehension tests before and after the intervention, and an interview was also employed to gather data from the randomly selected participants from the treatment group. The findings emphasized the importance of employing explicit reading strategy instruction in enabling readers to comprehend reading comprehension questions, especially as it helps students properly handle reading comprehension questions that seek higher-level thinking.   The study recommended that, to develop students' higher level thinking, classroom reading teachers should create opportunities for the readers while delivering reading lessons by presenting activities that go with the pre-, while, and post-reading instructions. Secondary school language teachers are expected to present reading lessons through explicit reading strategy instruction as this one of the most

important instructions in reading lesson presentations. The study recommended that future researchers conduct research on the effects of explicit reading strategy

instruction on students' use of reading strategy that requires higher- and lower-level thinking.

However, currently, reading strategies used by secondary school students to read and comprehend reading comprehension questions, in the Ethiopian context, are declining. In other words, if students are asked to comprehend a given reading text, they exhibit poor reading comprehension. Various researchers suspect that students ether misuse or are unaware of the reading strategies that could help them read and comprehend the text. If classroom reading teachers explicitly employ strategy instruction, students might be aware of what strategy to use (declarative), how to use (procedural), and when and why to use (conditional) the strategy. Reports from secondary school teachers, experts, parents, and stakeholders suggest that many students are unable to understand a given reading text after attending eight years of instruction in the English language. Furthermore, local research showed that students' performance in reading strategy use in Ethiopian secondary schools is below the expected standard. This calls for an urgent need to improve students' reading strategy use — otherwise, it will continue to hinder students' academic success. If we expect better achievement in reading comprehension, the cause for students' failure to use reading strategies to read and comprehend a given reading text has to be investigated. According to the researchers' informal observation and practical presentation of reading lessons in the actual, students were unable to read and understand a reading text designed for their grade level because the they might not be aware of what (declarative), how (procedural), and when and why (conditional) to use reading strategy. If students are able to identify what, when, and why and how to use the strategies, they could use them based on the context in which the ultimate goal of reading will be achieved. Hence, this study attempted to answer the following research questions:

➢ Is there a statistically significant difference in the mean score value of each reading strategy that requires low-level thinking as used by the treatment and non-treatment groups?

➢ Is there a statistically significant difference in the mean score value of each reading strategy that requires higher-level thinking as used by the treatment group and the non-treatment group after the intervention?

➢ How do the participants in the treatment group reflect on their experiences when they are provided with explicit reading strategy instruction?

Theoretical framework

The research followed the orientation of the constructivist view of learning/teaching reading. The Constructivist proponents give a broader room for readers who construct meaning from text. In this theoretical instance, meaningful construction occurs when a learner actively engages in the reading process. For them, a learner integrates the new knowledge (knowledge to be learned) with their prior knowledge so that they can achieve their learning. According to Constructivist Theory, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Constructivist proponents believe that individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences directed toward certain objects or things.

In the training and application of these strategies, students preview the text to get the main idea of the topic. When looking at and previewing the text, readers quickly look at the title, sub-titles, headings, sub-headings, and pictures, tables, or illustrations that accompany the text to get a general idea of what a passage is about. At this stage, the reading teacher is expected to activate students' prior knowledge of the topic. Skimming and scanning are the two most reading strategies for learners of EFL as well as native speakers (Brown, 2007b). Skimming strategies help readers predict the purpose of the passage, main topic, thesis statement, and possibly the supporting ideas. An English language teacher can train students to skim passages, for example, they may impose a time limit when looking through a few pages of the material and ask students to identify the main points and search for specific information (Brown (2007b). It is possible to assess students' creative level comprehension through summary writing which inspires the reader to new and original thinking. This is a part of a post-reading strategy that requires a reader to apply a reading-writing connection to sort the main ideas and the theme of the text and write a new version of a text using his/her understanding (Hedgcock& Ferris, 2009; Westwood, 2001). In summarizing training tasks, readers may be required to shift the skills of reading to summarization creating either in spoken forms or written forms. In this regard, empirical research studies have shown that reading strategy instruction based on constructivist learning/teaching reading promotes students' reading strategy use (Bedir, 2002; Li, Gan, & Leung, 2022; Wang, 2009) and reading motivation (Wang, 2009). Researchers also agree that reading strategy instruction enhances reading self-efficacy (Tavakoli & Koosha, 2016).

In the context of the constructivist view, the role of the learner is much emphasized in a reading lesson. For example, a learner is expected to construct, interpret, infer,

analyze, and evaluate a given reading text. Learners are viewed as active individuals who construct knowledge and comprehend meaning through reading processes involving discovery, interpretation, and evaluation of the text. Consequently, a teacher serves as a facilitator, and both the classroom reading teacher and students are expected to learn from each other. Rather than imparting knowledge to students, teachers collaborate with students to create knowledge and understanding in their social contexts. This implies that the classroom reading teacher's culture, values, and prior knowledge play a significant role in shaping the interaction between learners and the task, enabling the learners to construct meaning.

Such interaction can happen between the reader, the text, the activity, and the context. This may explain why Duffy and Jonnassen (1992) claimed that constructivist instructional developers and classroom reading teachers should create suitable contexts, for learners to construct meaning through transactions between the reader, the text, and the context. In this regard, reading is viewed as a dynamic and complex phenomenon where meanings reside in the way learners conceptualize, extract, and interpret the text.

In reading strategy instruction, the constructivist proponents (for example, Duke & Pearson, 2002; Pearson & Cervetti, 2017; Snow, 2002) emphasize the importance of reading in the EFL classrooms. The constructivist view of reading has many implications for language teachers in the actual reading strategy instruction (Wilson & Lianrui, 2007). First, teachers are expected to decline teaching reading by simply practicing reading, but need to focus on assisting students on what strategies to use (declarative), how to use the strategies (procedural), and when and why to use the strategies (conditional) through explicit reading strategy instruction to increase students' capacity to use them. Second, teachers need to give better emphasis and follow the three basic reading instructions than simply employing the usual teaching procedure suggested in the student's textbook. Third, English language teachers need to show how learners build good reading skills, and how to fix up their comprehension failures.

As applied to the present study, this theory holds that the present researcher would expect the independent variable (explicit reading strategy instruction) to influence students' reading strategy use because the constructivist view of the reading process conceives the reader as an actively engaged participant who uses a variety of prior knowledge and reading strategies to frequently interact with others as s/he constructs meaning from the reading text.

Research gap

Currently, secondary school students' reading strategy use in the Ethiopian context is drastically decreasing from time to time. For example, when students are requested to comprehend a given reading text, they exhibit poor reading strategy. According to reports from secondary school teachers, experts, parents, and stakeholders, many students are unable to properly use a given reading strategy when the context requires them to read and understand a text after eight years of English instruction. Furthermore, the reading strategy employed by students in Ethiopian secondary schools is below the expected standard (Yenus, 2018). This calls for an urgent need to improve students' use of reading strategies as continued underuse could be detrimental to their academic success.

However, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, none of the studies analyzed in the review section examined the effects of explicit reading strategy instruction on the strategies used by secondary school students. No one has examined the effects of the explicit reading strategy instruction on each reading strategy as used by students in EFL classrooms in the local context of Ethiopia. These gaps prompted present researcher to investigate the effects of explicit reading strategies requiring higher- and lower-level thinking. Therefore, this study attempts to address the issue of students' failure to use reading strategies appropriately in response to the demands of the context, such as answering reading comprehension questions.

Materials and methods

This study aimed at examining the effect of explicit reading strategy instruction on grade nine students' reading strategy use. Hence, the embedded design was employed because the design helps the researcher to integrate the quantitative data with the qualitative data. Just to come up with better findings and conclusions, the present researchers primarily focused on an intervention-based study that involved a treatment group and a non-treatment group. According to Creswell (2014), the embedded design gives room for the researcher to collect qualitative data to augment the intervention study.

Research setting and participants

The present study targeted ninth grade students at Gute Secondary School in East Wollega Zone. Grade nine students were taken as the study population for the study

because the researcher believed that grade nine students are exposed to learning to read from grade 1 to grade 4, and in the next stage, from 5-8, students partially transition from learning to read to   reading to learn. Beyond grade eight, students are expected to comprehend a given reading text accordingly (MOE, 2010) and know what strategies to use, when to use them, why, and how to use them based on context, text, and activities provided (Grabe, 2009; Grabe & Stoller, 2011). Based on this, the selection of the grade level was purposive because it is believed that grade 9 students are familiar with reading and the principles of reading to learn by the end of grade 8. As a result, it is assumed that it may not be difficult to examine the effect of explicit reading strategy instruction on grade nine students' reading strategy use.

Research instruments

Quantitative data were gathered through tests (pre-test before intervention and post-test after intervention). Qualitative data were gathered through the retrospective interview of the participants in the treatment group to obtain more robust findings.

Tests

In the present study, pretest and post-tests were used as the main data-gathering instruments. The test consisted of four reading comprehension passages from which thirty-nine questions were prepared. The reading comprehension questions comprised reading strategies that seek higher-level lower-level thinking processes. Twenty-one (21) questions were prepared to examine whether students in both the treatment and the non-treatment groups showed a statistically significant difference in their reading strategy (that requires a lower level thinking process) as used by the students before the intervention and after the intervention. These are nine (9) questions that inquired the students to say True or False, two (2) questions that asked the students to fill in the blank spaces, eight (8) questions that inquired the students to search for specific ideas, and two (2) questions that probed the students to put ideas in order. In addition, eighteen (18) questions were prepared to examine whether the students in both groups had a statistically significant difference in reading strategy as used before and after the intervention. From the reading comprehension questions that were prepared to be answered through a higher level thinking process, three (3) questions inquired a reader to answer reference questions, eight (8) questions to guess the meanings of new words, four (4) questions to state the main ideas of the text, one (1) question to evaluate the text, and two (2) questions to infer the answer. The main objective of the posttest was to check

whether employing explicit reading strategy instruction brought any significant differences in the mean scores of the treatment group and the non-treatment group in their reading strategy as used by the participants.

Retrospective interview

In this research work, retrospective or post-task interview was used to have respondents recollect and report the thoughts they had in mind about the explicit reading strategy instruction they received and the improvement observed in their reading strategy as used by the participants in the treatment group. In this way, the researchers asked students questions about what they understood and which reading strategies they used to answer the comprehension questions. The researchers then used the students' responses to prepare additional questions (Chamot, 2005). Ericson and Simon (1993, p. 220) indicate that a retrospective interview is one form of verbal protocol that can reveal "what information are attending to while performing their tasks, and by revealing this information, can provide an orderly picture of the exact way in which the tasks are being performed: the strategies employed, the inferences drawn from information…". Based on these views, the researcher prepared post-task interview questions based on the student's responses recorded during the reading activity. The retrospective interview was conducted after the students answered the reading comprehension questions to let them retain and recollect their thoughts while reading and answering the questions. In this way, the researcher examined the nexus between explicit reading strategy instruction and reading strategy as used by the participants in the treatment group. The researcher interviewed the respondents about whether the reading strategy instruction they received through explicit reading strategy instruction enabled them to achieve better achievement in reading as used by them to answer reading comprehension questions in the post-test than in the reading comprehension pre-test.

Procedures of data collection

The quantitative and qualitative data were gathered concurrently. The quantitative data (Reading Comprehension Tests) were collected before intervention started and after the intervention. The intervention continued for 9 weeks. During this time, the classroom reading teacher presented reading lessons that accompanied the three basic reading instructions (pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading strategy instructions) with the adapted activities to the treatment group whereas reading

lessons were presented through the usual method of reading lesson presentation as suggested in the student's textbook to the non-treatment group.

The qualitative data were collected through retrospective interviews to have respondents recollect and report the thoughts they had in mind soon after the task performance during the intervention and let them relate their achievement in reading comprehension with the strategy instruction they received.

Methods of data analysis

The quantitative data gathered through reading comprehension questions before the intervention and after the intervention were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. From the descriptive statistics, mean scores (M) and standard deviations (SD) were employed. The mean scores were calculated to indicate the arithmetic average of each group and to approximately see the difference between the treatment and the non-treatment in their test scores. The standard deviation was computed to examine the average distance of all the scores in the distribution from the mean for each.

Concerning the inferential statistics, the researcher employed an independent sample t-test to compare and determine the differences in the mean scores of the pre-intervention reading strategy as used by the treatment group and the non-treatment group and the post-intervention reading strategy as used by the treatment group and the non-treatment group to address the first and the second research questions respectively.

Results and discussions

This section presents the analysis and results of both the quantitative and the qualitative data gathered through tests (pre-intervention and post-intervention) and retrospective interviews respectively. The quantitative data (tests) were gathered and analyzed to address research questions 1 and 2. The quantitative data were analyzed employing descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation and inferential statistics test, such as an independent sample t-test to examine the effect of the intervention provided to the treatment group on students' reading strategy use. Furthermore, the qualitative data gathered through retrospective interviews were analyzed using an edited verbatim transcription method to examine how the intervention exerted change on enhancing the treatment group students' reading strategy use.

Regarding the quantitative data analysis, the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) of the descriptive statistics were calculated and depicted in Table I and Table III. The results were also interpreted based on the mean score and the standard deviation. Accordingly, before the intervention, although the mean scores had a slight difference (non-treatment: M=4.69; 0.52; 0.60; 3.24 treatment: M=5.34; 0.57; 0.60; 2.60), for four of the items respectively (Table 1) and had the same level in using the reading strategy as used by the participants in the pre-intervention test. However, after the intervention, the results of the descriptive statistics for the post-test mean scores revealed that there was a big number difference between the treatment and non-treatment groups' mean scores in the reading strategy as used by the participants after the intervention (non-treatment: M=5.75; 0.78; 0.66; 4; treatment: M=6.37; 1.02; 1.11; 4.57): the treatment group's mean score exceeded that of the non-treatment group by 0.62; 0.24;0.45;0.57 mean scores in the reading strategy as used by the participants to answer reading comprehension questions, answering questions that bear explicitly stated ideas, filling in the blank spaces, putting ideas in order as appeared in the text and searching for specific information respectively. In the SD results of the pretest, the score deviates ± 2.14; ± 0.79; ± 0.65; ± 1.98, and ± 1.76; ± 0.81; ± 0.65; ± 1.35 for the non-treatment and treatment group in the reading strategy as used by the participants to answer reading comprehension questions that bear explicitly stated ideas, filling in the blank spaces, putting ideas in order as appeared in the text, and searching for specific information respectively. The SD results for the post-test also revealed that the scores in the non-treatment group and the treatment group deviated from ± 1.5; ± 0.92; ± 0.59; ± 1.5 and ± 1.75; ± 0.82; ± 0.75; ± 1.9 from the intervention mean scores for the reading strategy as used by the participants to answer reading comprehension questions explicitly stated, filling in the blank spaces, putting ideas in order, and searching for specific information from the text, respectively. This revealed that the scores in the treatment and non-treatment groups were approximately dispersed from the mean scores equally both before and after the intervention.

Table 1. Comparison of the mean scores of the non-treatment and treatment groups on each reading strategy that requires low-level thinking

S/ No	Reading Strategy	No of items	Treatment group (35)				Non-treatment Group (33)			
			Before Intervention		After Intervention		Before Intervention		After Intervention	
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Answering questions that bear explicitly stated ideas (say True or false based the reading passage)	9	5.34	1.76	6.37	1.75	4.69	2.14	5.75	1.5
2	Filling in the blank spaces	2	.57	.81	1.02	.82	.51	.79	.78	.92
3	Putting ideas in order	2	.60	.65	1.11	.75	.60	.65	.66	.59
4	Searching specific ideas	8	2.60	1.35	4.57	1.9	3.24	1.98	4	1.5

Table 1 depicts the comparison of the mean scores of the non-treatment and the treatment group students on each reading strategy as used by them to answer the reading comprehension questions set from the reading passage. Questions that require lower-level thinking processes are directly taken from the reading passages. Twenty-one questions were designed to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in the use of lower-level reading strategies before and after the intervention for students in both the treatment and non-treatment groups. Of these, nine were True/False questions, two were fill-in-the-blank, two required students to arrange ideas in the correct order based on the reading passage, and eight asked students to locate specific information within the passage.

Table 1 also depicts the comparison of the mean scores for each reading strategy as used by the participants to answer reading comprehension questions (four themes). As displayed in the table, the mean score for the four themes at pre-intervention (MBIT=2.27) for the treatment group is similar to the non-treatment group's mean score for the four themes i.e., (MBINT=2.26); whereas, after the intervention, as

displayed in the table, the treatment group's mean score (MAIT=3.27) exceeded the non-treatment group mean score (MAINT=2.80). The data for the participants in the non-treatment group showed an increase in mean scores i.e., (MBINT=2.26 and MAINT=2.80). Again, the data for the participants in the treatment group showed a mean score increase i.e., (MBIT=2.27 and MAIC=3.27). Although a mean score increase is observed in the descriptive statistics data, it is uncertain to conclude whether there was a significant difference. To avoid this ambiguity, the researchers conducted a statistical t-test analysis to conclude if there was a statistically significant difference being observed in each the reading strategies as used by the participants between the treatment and non-treatment groups.

Table 2. Independent Samples t-test results on each reading strategy that requires a lower level of thinking

	Reading Strategy	test	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
1	Answering questions that bear explicitly stated ideas (say True or false based the reading passage)	TBI	-1.360	66	.178
		TAI	-1.548	66	.126
2	Filling in the blank spaces	TBI	-.288	66	.774
		TAI	-1.134	66	.261
3	Putting ideas in order	TBI	.038	66	.970
		TAI	-2.697	66	.009
4	Searching specific ideas	TBI	1.567	66	.122
		TAI	-1.338	66	.186
	TBI: Test before Intervention; TAI: *Test after Intervention*				

Table 2 depicts the results independent sample t-test comparing the non-treatment and the treatment groups on each reading strategy as used by the participants on pre-test and post-test. Students were asked comprehension questions to answer through low-level thinking. TBI and TAI are used in the table to indicate *Test before Intervention* and *Test after Intervention*, respectively.

Four themes for each reading strategy that inquired about the students' lower-level thinking were selected and questions were set as per the reading strategy to be used. They designed to check whether the participants in both the treatment and the non-treatment groups managed to answer them. Of the specific questions prepared to examine whether students are empowered to answer questions using lower-level

thinking were ideas explicitly stated from the passage (Theme 1: True or False questions, 9 items), fill in the blanks (Theme 2, 2 items), arrange ideas in the order as they appeared in the passage (Theme 3, 2 items), and search for specific information (Theme 4, 8 items). An independent sample test (Table 2) was conducted to specifically address the questions that were prepared to be answered by employing each reading strategy. The results revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between the treatment and non-treatment group students in answering explicitly stated questions, *fill in the blank* questions, and questions that required searching for specific information from the passage (t=-1.360, df =66, p=.178; t=-.288, df=66, p=.774; and t=-1.567, df=66, p=.122). As Table 2 shows, an independent samples t-test of the pretest results reveals that there was no statistically significant difference in reading strategy for putting ideas in order between the non-treatment and treatment group students (t=.038, df=66, p=.970). However, the t-test result after the intervention reveals that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups in putting ideas in the order that comes from the reading passage (t = -2.697, df = 66, p = .009). This result contradicts the study conducted by El Hassan, Aldelaziz, and Abdelmajid (2022), which reported that the students in the experimental group answered higher-level thinking questions better than lower-level ones. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate why and how the participants in the treatment group performed better when answering questions that asked students to put ideas in the order they appeared in the passage.

In the post-intervention test, the participants in the non-treatment group performed better on the reading comprehension questions that asked students to put ideas in the order they appeared in the passage. These questions were selected from four themes (reading strategies). However, for the remaining three, the participants in both the treatment and the non-treatment groups showed the same performance in each of the three reading strategies used to answer the post-intervention test' questions included reading comprehension questions explicitly stated, filling in the blanks, and search for specific information in the passage of. This might be because the students could get the answers directly from the reading passage, so they were no forced to engage in higher-level thinking. For example, there were questions that asked student to say true or false according to the information in the passage, fill in the blanks, and search for specific information in the passage. The answers to these questions were directly located in the text. Thus, students might not be required to infer, which is why the students in both groups almost had a similar level in answering the

questions at the post-test. However, regarding putting ideas in order according to the passage, the students in the non-treatment group performed well after the intervention. To reach on a valid conclusion about why students in the non-treatment group performed well, further investigation is needed.

Table 3. Comparison of the mean scores of the non-treatment and treatment groups on reading strategies that offer students' a higher-level thinking

S/No	Reading Strategy	No of questions	Treatment group(35)				Non-treatment group (33)			
			BI		AI		BI		AI	
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Answering reference questions	3	1.08	.85	1.62	1.2	1.18	.95	1.15	.93
2	Guessing meanings	8	2.54	1.14	4.02	1.61	2.93	1.67	3.03	1.46
3	Stating main ideas	4	1.48	1.03	2.28	1.20	2.00	1.32	1.36	.78
4	Evaluate the text	1	.42	.50	.82	.38	.51	.50	.24	.43
5	Inferential understanding	2	.40	.65	1.05	.68	.60	.60	.18	.52

Table 3 indicates the mean score comparisons between the treatment and non-treatment groups for questions that require a higher-level thinking. These questions were carefully prepared based on the reading passages and the lessons provided. The questions were prepared to assess whether the students can answer reading comprehension questions that require higher-level thinking. The point was that the students in grade nine levels are expected to infer, summarize, evaluate, and guess the answers to the questions based on context. The answers to these questions are implicit, i.e., students cannot find them directly in the reading passage. Therefore, students are expected to use reading strategies that help them answer such questions. For this purpose, eighteen questions were prepared to examine whether there was a

statistically significant difference in each reading strategy requiring a higher level of thinking between the two groups of students before the intervention and after the intervention. Consequently, questions that require the students to employ a higher-level thinking were prepared: three questions inquired the students to answer reference questions, eight questions probed the students to guess the meanings of new words, four questions questioned the students to state the main ideas of the text, one question inquired the students to evaluate the text, and two questions inquired the students to answer inference questions.

As displayed in the table, the results were also interpreted based on the mean scores and the standard deviation. Accordingly, before the intervention, although the mean scores had a slight difference (non-treatment: M=1.18, 2.93, 2.00, 0.51, 0.68; treatment: M=1.08, 2.54, 1.48, 0.42, 0.40, respectively), the participants had the same level in using the reading strategy use as in the pre-intervention test. However, the post-test results after the intervention revealed a significant difference in mean scores between the treatment and non-treatment groups in the reading strategy used by the participants (non-treatment: M=1.15, 3.03, 1.36, 0.24;0.18; treatment: M=1.62, 4.02, 2.28, 0.82, 1.05). The mean score of the treatment group exceeded that of the non-treatment group by 0.62, 0.24, 0.45, and 0.57, respectively, in the reading strategy used to answer reference questions, guess meanings, state main ideas, evaluate the text, and employ inferential understanding. Regarding SD results of the pretest, the scores deviate ±0.95; ±1.67; ±1.32; ±0.50; and ±0.60 and ±0.85; ±1.14; ±1.03; ±0.50; ±0.65 for the non-treatment and the treatment groups respectively when answering reference questions, guessing meanings, stating main ideas, evaluating the text, and answering questions that required inferential understanding. The SD results for the post-test revealed that the scores for both the treatment and non-treatment groups deviated from the intervention mean scores for the reading strategy used to answer reference questions, guess meanings, state main ideas, evaluate the text, and answer questions inquiring about inferential understanding. The deviations were as follows: ±0.93, ±1.46, ±0.78, ±0.43, ±0.52, ±1.2, ±4.02, ±2.28, ±0.82, and ±1.05. This revealed that the scores in the treatment and non-treatment groups were dispersed equally from the mean scores before and after the intervention. According to the descriptive statistics data, the participants in the treatment group performed better on the post-test than on the pretest. However, it is unclear whether there exists a significant or non-significant difference between the groups based on the mean score difference. To avoid this ambiguity, the researchers

conducted a t-test statistical analysis (independent sample-t-test) to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in reading strategies used by the participants.

Table 4 reveals the results of the independent sample t-test conducted for each reading strategy used by the participants to answer reading comprehension questions that require high-level thinking. As shown in Table 4, the t-test results before the intervention revealed no statistically significant difference between the treatment and non-treatment groups in answering reference questions and guessing meaning from context (t=.575, df=66, p=.56; t=1.145, df=66, p=.257). In contrast, the t-test result for the post-test revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of the non-treatment and treatment groups when answering reference questions and guessing the meanings of new words (t = -2.660, df = 66, p = .010). However, the t-test result indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in the mean scores of the non-treatment and treatment groups in answering reference questions (t = -1.781, df = 66, p = .079).

Table 4. Independent Samples t-test results for each reading strategy

S/No	Reading Strategy	Test	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
1	Answering reference questions	TBI	.575	66	.568
		TAI	-1.781	66	.079
2	Guessing meanings	TBI	1.145	66	.257
		TAI	-2.660	66	.010
3	Stating main ideas	TBI	1.893	66	.063
		TAI	-3.723	66	.000
4	Evaluating the text	TBI	1.188	66	.239
		TAI	-5.909	66	.000
5	Inferential understanding	TBI	1.808	66	.075
		TAI	-5.886	66	.000

Table 4 again reveals that the t-test results for the pre-test (t = 1.893, df = 66, p = .063; t = 1.188, df = 66, p = .239; t = 1.808, df = 66, p = .075) show that there was no statistically significant difference between the treatment and non-treatment groups in the reading strategies used to answer questions inquiring about main ideas, text evaluation, and inferring answers beyond the text. Conversely, the independent

sample t-test conducted for the post-test revealed a statistically significant difference in the average mean score calculated for the two groups in reading strategy. This difference was evident when the participants were asked to search for main ideas, evaluate the text, and answer questions that required them to think beyond the lines. These results show that the participants in the treatment group performed well after the intervention. The findings of this study are comparable to those of El Hassan, Abdelaziz, and Abdelmajid (2022). In their study, the experimental group of students who received training in three higher-level thinking skills—understanding, analyzing, and evaluating—showed significant improvement between the pre-test and post-test and outperformed their counterparts in the control group. Thus, it can be deduced that reading strategies inquiring into students' higher-level thinking, as used by the participants, can be improved through explicit instruction in reading strategies. Additionally, the findings are consistent with Lyons's (2017) study, which indicated that providing relevance instructions is an effective way for instructors to promote higher-level comprehension of science texts. In the post-intervention test, there was no statistically significant difference between the treatment and non-treatment groups in the five themes (reading strategies) selected for questions inquiring about students' high-level thinking, i.e., answering inference questions (t = -1.781, df = 66, p = .079). However, for the remaining four participants in the treatment group, better performance was shown in each reading strategy used to answer reading comprehension questions that asked them to guess the meaning of new words, state main ideas, evaluate the text, and answer inference questions on the post-intervention test. The participants in the treatment group showed better performance in answering reading comprehension questions that require higher-level thinking because they were trained to use reading strategies that require higher-level thinking through explicit reading strategy instruction. Thus, the students in the treatment group were trained on which strategy to use, how to use it, and when and why to use it through explicit reading strategy instruction during the intervention period. According to Westwood (2001), reading comprehension questions that require higher-level thinking involve inferential, critical, and creative comprehension. These questions require higher-order cognitive skills such as analyzing, interpreting, deducing meaning, inferring, summarizing, checking and critiquing, generating ideas, planning, and producing. Fortunately, the participants in the treatment group gained these skills through training during the intervention periods. It is presumed that this is why the participants in the treatment group performed better when answering reading comprehension questions that require

higher-level thinking. This might be because the students could not get the answers directly in the reading passage in which readers are expected to engage in higher-level thinking. For example, they must guess the meaning of new words, state main ideas, evaluate the text, and answer inference questions. The answers to these questions are not directly located in the text. In other words, students must think beyond the text to find the answers. This is why participants in the treatment group performed better in the reading comprehension post-test. However, of the five themes, regarding answering reference questions, there were no statistically significant differences in the average mean scores of the treatment and non-treatment groups in the reading comprehension post-test. To reach a valid conclusion, it is necessary to investigate why the participants in the treatment group did not perform well.

Results from interview

Six participants from the treatment group were randomly selected for interviews. The results of the interview analysis showed that the intervention provided ample experience to enhance students' reading strategy use. Accordingly, S1 opined that the intervention helped him to improve his reading strategy for answering reading comprehension questions. For instance, he replied; "The other experience I gained (from the training provided) is that: I understood my reading strategy as I used in reading comprehension questions, especially, those that require higher-level thinking processes.

For example, there were questions that asked me to guess the meaning of new words, state the main ideas, evaluate the reading text, and answer inference questions. S4 also shared his opinion that the training guided him to use a reading strategy to answer reading comprehension questions prepared from a reading passage. Similarly, S5 said that due to the experience she gained from the training, her achievement in reading comprehension became better when answering reading comprehension questions prepared from a reading passage. She said, "The training helped me understand how to grasp the meaning conveyed through the reading text, especially the questions that seek higher-level thinking to guess the meaning of new words, identify main ideas, and evaluate the reading text based on context".

Conclusions

The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data analyses indicate that the intervention provided to participants in the treatment group guided them to better

use reading strategies that require higher-level thinking compared to the participants in the non-treatment group. Specifically, participants in the treatment group outperformed in answering reference questions, guessing the meanings of new words that are prepared from the reading passage, answering questions that inquired students to search for main ideas, evaluate the text, and answer inference question. Hence, the explicit reading strategy instruction accompanied by pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities (which included reading comprehension questions that inquire about both higher- and lower-level thinking) guided the participants in the treatment group to better use the reading strategy that requires higher-level thinking to read and comprehend reading comprehension questions. This implies that the intervention (explicit reading strategy instruction) had a positive effect on the treatment group participants' reading strategies which in turn helped them to better answer high-level thinking questions better than low-level thinking questions. Hence, EFL teachers need to present reading lessons that employ explicit reading strategy instruction and include questions that inquire about both higher- and lower-level thinking to promote students' use of reading strategies.

Furthermore, concerned individuals are expected to conduct research to determine if providing explicit instructions on reading strategies can encourage students to use these strategies more effectively. This would involve using strategies that promote higher-level thinking, such as making inferences, referencing, evaluating the text, guessing the meaning of new words, and identifying the main ideas of the text, rather than strategies that promote lower-level thinking, such as filling in blank spaces, putting ideas in order, and searching for specific information in the reading passage.

Data availability statement

The data used in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Acknowledgments

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The Ethiopian higher education cost sharing scheme; exploring the policy, practice, and challenges

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Abstract

The Ethiopian Higher Education Cost Sharing Scheme, introduced in 2003, represents a fundamental policy shift aimed at supplementing public funding for higher education through non-governmental and customer contributions. This review analyses the cost-sharing policy of Ethiopian higher education and its implementation by synthesizing various evidences from peer reviewed studies and policy documents. Utilizing a systematic literature review approach, the study highlights that the cost-sharing scheme serves as a crucial tool for balancing rising educational expenses with the growing demand for education. Despite the slow progress in cost recovery, some graduates have begun to pay their lent expenses. Therefore, this review recommends the need for increased efforts to generate non-government revenue to support the necessary government funding for the expansion of the system.
Key words: cost-sharing, equity, financing, higher education, student loan

Introduction

Higher education institutions bear the crucial responsibility of equipping individuals with the advanced knowledge and skills necessary for various roles within the country, while also facilitating the transfer, adaptation, and dissemination of information from around the globe. However, one of the most significant challenges these institutions face is funding, which remains a pressing issue worldwide which impedes their effective operation. Over the last few decades, the financing landscape of higher education has undergone dramatic changes, shaped by complex political, ideological, and intellectual debates worldwide (World Bank, 2002). These developments stem from the reality that the costs associated with higher education are escalating at a pace that outstrips income growth, particularly in terms of tax revenues. As a result, the concept of cost-sharing, where the financial burden of education is distributed among beneficiaries, has gained significant attention globally to ensure educational access for the broader population.

The financial challenges faced by higher education institutions are universal and arise from similar global pressures. According to Johnstone (2004) and Johnstone & Marcucci (2010), the diverging trends in costs and revenues within higher education can be traced to three primary factors: rapidly increasing per-student costs, rising participation rates in higher education, driven by population growth and improved access and growing reliance on increasingly insufficient government funding. Although the impact of these forces varies by country, many low- and middle-income nations are experiencing budget cuts that affect both universities and broader national higher education systems. In response, many countries have adopted cost-sharing policies as a solution to the challenges posed by underfunded and overcrowded institutions, with recommendations from the World Bank advocating for additional revenue generation through non-governmental sources, primarily from students and families (Johnstone, 2004).

Cost-sharing in higher education refers to the practice of transferring the financial responsibility for education costs from being solely or predominantly shouldered by the government or taxpayers to a shared model involving parents and students (Johnstone 2004, Marcucci & Johnstone, 2007, Marcucci, Johnstone & Ngolovi, 2008; Johnstone & Marcucci, 2010). This scheme allows both the beneficiaries of public higher education institutions and the government to collaboratively shoulder the costs incurred for education and accompanying services (Teshome, 2007). In Ethiopia, cost-sharing in higher education is commenced in October 2003, following the enactment of the Higher Education Proclamation (FDRE, 2003a) and the accompanying Cost Sharing Regulations (FDRE, 2003b). Under this regulation, any student who graduates from a public higher education institution and has accepted a repayment obligation must contribute to the cost of their education and related services.

The underlying rationale for cost-sharing in Ethiopia revolves around prioritizing education and reducing the per-student cost. The Ethiopian government places primary funding emphasis on early and general secondary education (grades 1-10). According to the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy (ETP) (1994), "the priority for government financial support will be up to the completion of general secondary education and related training (grade 10), with increased cost sharing at higher levels of education and training" (FDRE, 1994). This cost-sharing initiative aims to boost student enrollment in higher education and significantly expand available higher education services. The government has recognized that increased enrollment in undergraduate programs necessitates supplementary revenue, which can be generated

through cost-sharing mechanisms. The Education Sector Development Program (ESDP VI) (MoE, 2021) highlights that while government spending on education has increased over the past two decades, budgetary gaps remain. Therefore, it recommended cost-sharing as a viable method to reduce per-student costs and plans to increase the contributions expected from higher education students.

Repayment for the education costs is structured as a tax that graduates will pay from their salaries or earnings. This approach, known as the "Graduate Tax," is a modified version of Australia's Income Contingent Repayment System (Teshome, 2006). Johnstone (2004) describes this model as more attractive, simpler, and more manageable than other options, such as mortgage-style loans. The Graduate Tax system in Ethiopia facilitates equitable access to education for students from all backgrounds, as repayment amounts do not depend on parents' income levels. The crux of the matter, however, lies in assessing the effectiveness of this cost-sharing policy in achieving its intended goal of financing the higher education sub-system.

The cost-sharing policy is designed to help meet the fundamental objectives of higher education, particularly in augmenting revenue as a non-governmental funding source. Nonetheless, substantial gaps exist within both the policy and its implementation, along with numerous challenges that hinder effective execution, as highlighted by several researchers (Teshome, 2007; Emnet, 2008; Abebayehu, 2012; Wanna & Desalegn, 2012; Sewale, 2013). Therefore, this paper aims to analyze the Ethiopian higher education cost-sharing policy and assess its implementation. Additionally, it will identify the challenges encountered during implementation and propose potential strategies to enhance the financial efficiency of public higher education institutions through cost-sharing. The specific objectives of this exploration include:

➢ Analyzing and reviewing the Ethiopian higher education cost-sharing policy in the context of relevant theories and general principles.
➢ Examining the implementation of the cost-sharing scheme in Ethiopia in accordance with the policy framework's guidelines.
➢ Identifying the primary challenges associated with the implementation of the cost-sharing scheme in Ethiopian higher education institutions.

Methods

This study involves a comprehensive and systematic review of existing literature to identify specific patterns, themes, or biases related to the problem being investigated. It takes into account relevant policies, previous research, and issues associated with cost-sharing and its implementation to guide the analysis. Consequently, the research

relies on secondary data, including government documents, official education statistics, the Higher Education Proclamation No. 351/2003, and the Ministry Regulation on cost sharing No. 91/2003. These documents and their associated practices were systematically summarized, examined, analyzed, and verified to ensure valid conclusions could be drawn from the findings.

The researcher's first-hand experiences and observations as both a teacher and a student who has recently navigated a cost-sharing system greatly contributed to analyzing the data on policy issues and their implementation from multiple perspectives. This approach allowed for a thorough assessment of the cost-sharing scheme and facilitated the drawing of meaningful conclusions and implications.

To achieve these objectives, the study employed a qualitative approach with an emphasis on systematic literature review. This method utilizes explicit and rigorous criteria for identifying, critically evaluating, and synthesizing all literature relevant to the topic (Cronin et al., 2008). Thus, via highlighting gaps or inconsistencies in the existing body of knowledge, the literature review can inspire research ideas, assisting the researcher in defining or refining research questions or hypotheses.

Search strategy

A comprehensive search was carried out using web-based academic tools that mimicked database queries (such as Google Scholar equivalents via the web search and browse page functions). "Ethiopian Higher Education Cost Sharing Scheme," "cost sharing higher education Ethiopia," and variants with operators like filetype:pdf and site:scholar.google.com were among the search terms used. 60 results from three queries were filtered for relevancy. The focus was after 2003, but there were no date restrictions. For the sake of thoroughness, grey literature such as policy briefs, guidelines and strategies were incorporated.

Inclusion and exclusion standards

Peer-reviewed English-language articles, theses, or policy documents that analyze the scheme's implementation, effects, or reforms with an empirical or theoretical focus on Ethiopia are included. Research works published before 2003, contexts outside of higher education, and non-English sources are excluded except the Ethiopian education policy (ETP) of 1994 and the World Bank (2002) direction. Following full-text review (n=20) and abstract/title screening (n=50), ten sources satisfied the requirements.

Data extraction and synthesis

Data were extracted on study design, key findings (implementation, equity/access/quality), challenges, and recommendations using a standardized template. Thematic synthesis was employed, grouping findings into, rating sources as high (n=6), medium (n=3), or low (n=1) based on methodology rigor.

Results and discussion

The Ethiopian higher education cost-sharing policy: An analysis through theoretical and principles frameworks

The Ethiopian higher education cost-sharing policy defines graduate tax as "a scheme in which an amount is deducted from income in the form of a tax paid by beneficiaries who are obligated to share the costs of their higher education" (FDRE, 2003b). According to the guidelines, beneficiaries must commence the repayment process within six months of receiving their income post-graduation, or within a maximum of one year after graduation, following a one-year grace period. The graduate tax is set at a minimum of 10% of the monthly salary for employed individuals, while self-employed beneficiaries will have the amount deducted from their yearly income (FDRE, 2003b).

Per the policy, repayment must be completed within 15 years, depending on the type and duration of the educational program, with repayment terms influenced by the anticipated starting salaries of graduates in various fields. Therefore, cost recovery occurs through a graduate tax after graduates have entered the workforce. The responsibility for ensuring the effectiveness of the cost-sharing recovery program lies with the graduates, their employers, and the Ethiopian Revenue and Customs Authority (FDRE, 2008). The repayment process is governed by a legally binding agreement entered into by beneficiaries and institutions at the start of each academic year. This contract signifies the beneficiary's commitment to repay the owed amount through future earnings in accordance with legal stipulations (FDRE, 2003b; Teshome, 2007).

Teshome (2007) cites Johnstone and Abebayehu, who argue that the Ethiopian graduate tax does not significantly contribute to non-governmental revenue. They propose introducing a modest upfront tuition fee alongside a gradual reduction of subsidies for room and board. He supported this viewpoint by indicating that the revenue generated from the graduate tax may be insufficient, particularly given the

substantial budgetary requirements needed to expand access, maintain quality, and ensure the relevance of higher education. Estimates suggest an initial recovery rate of around 10%, increasing to 20% after 2015, with a default rate of about 30% (Teshome, 2007).

Moreover, studies indicate that the suitability of the current deferred repayment model in achieving the policy's foundational assumptions must be assessed in relation to the nation's social, economic, and technological development (Dejene & Hussien, 2019; Emnet, 2008; Wanna & Desalegn, 2012). Dejene & Hussien (2019) further note that the policy and its implementation guidelines do not address repayment protocols in cases of graduate unemployment. Beyond financial implications, the policy raises various social and academic concerns; for instance, it promotes a narrow view of equity, focusing solely on access while neglecting the processes and outcomes of higher education. As discussed by Johnstone (2004) and Chapman (2005), the policy suffers from conceptual confusion by conflating the terms "income contingent" and "graduate tax," which could lead to misunderstandings, irregularities, and ultimately undermine equity.

On a different note, Wanna & Dessalegn (2012) argue that income-contingent repayment models are preferable to traditional loan arrangements that aim to remedy capital market failures due to lack of collateral in higher education financing. They emphasize that such models differ vastly from mortgage-style loans, where the ramifications of default can be severe, barring individuals from access to other financial markets.

Overall, a graduate tax scheme is unlikely to yield significant cost recovery in many transitional and developing countries, primarily due to ineffective and unreliable revenue collection systems. Without robust collection mechanisms, governments are typically limited to extracting income from civil servants and, to a lesser extent, employees of multinational corporations and large private firms (Wanna & Dessalegn, 2012). Repayment rates from individuals in entry-level roles in the private sector, particularly those who are self-employed, are often minimal or non-existent. Additionally, the scarcity of job opportunities further complicates the ability of university graduates to repay their debts (World Bank, 2010).

In light of these challenges, proponents of the mortgage-style loan model advocate for loans where repayments are fixed over a specified period, disregarding fluctuations in the borrower's financial situation. Even the World Bank suggested various loan alternatives for Ethiopia in 1999/2000, including mortgage-type mechanisms with

Development Banks acting as lenders (Teshome, 2007b) prior to the formal introduction of the policy.

In conclusion, although the cost-sharing scheme in the form of a graduate tax has its limitations, many scholars advocate for its adoption in developing countries like Ethiopia over other student loan models, due to its consideration of borrowers' circumstances and lack of collateral requirements

The implementation of the cost-sharing scheme in Ethiopia

In the Ethiopian higher education cost-sharing policy, the repayment or recovery of costs is governed by a legally binding agreement that beneficiaries enter into with their institutions at the start of each academic year. Through this contract, students commit to repaying the amounts owed from their future earnings as tax deductions in accordance with relevant legislation (FDRE, 2008). Graduates are legally obligated to fulfill their repayment responsibilities. However, Abebayehu & Johnson (2004) and Wanna & Desalegn (2012) have highlighted various challenges and irregularities in the implementation process. This process involves multiple entities, including the Ministry of Education, the Federal Inland Revenue Authority, regional revenue offices, higher education institutions, and employers.

Research by the Ministry of Education indicates that graduates are failing to meet their cost-sharing obligations in a timely manner (Teshome, 2006; Emnet, 2008). According to the policy, beneficiaries are required to start their repayments within six months of graduation if they are earning an income, or within one year, as a graduate tax of at least 10% of their monthly income; for self-employed individuals, repayments are deducted from their annual income (FDRE, 2003b).

A study conducted by Sewale (2013) revealed that many graduates from Ethiopian universities are employed in the public sector, making it relatively straightforward to monitor their incomes through established government systems. However, the recent economic growth and expansion of the private sector have made tracking graduates employed in private enterprises or who are self-employed significantly more challenging. Due to difficulties in verifying their income, many graduates may conceal their actual earnings. This issue is further compounded by the weak capacity of the country's tax system, which predominantly relies on repayments from civil servants and some employees of multinational corporations and large private enterprises, posing a significant challenge to effective cost recovery.

According World Bank (2003) projections, it was estimated that by 2020, the share of higher education in total education spending would be 4 to 5 percentage points lower

with cost-sharing than without it. However, the cost contribution from students in Ethiopia is exceedingly low (Teshome, 2006). Given the modest revenue expected from cost-sharing, it is crucial to reassess the current tuition fees and the government's obligation to cover costs related to food and housing for beneficiaries. The new education roadmap indicates that currently, students cover only 15% of their costs through the cost-sharing scheme; thus, it is recommended to increase this contribution gradually to 30% over the next 15 years to lessen the financial burden on the government (MoE, 2018).

Overall, the Ethiopian higher education cost-sharing program is poorly implemented, resulting in inadequate cost recovery. Multiple factors contribute to the low repayment rates, which are discussed in the following section.

The major challenges of implementing a cost-sharing scheme in Ethiopia

Researchers and the Ministry of Education reports have revealed that the repayment of cost-sharing obligations by beneficiaries in Ethiopia is ineffective. Graduates are failing to fulfill their cost-sharing duties as stipulated in the agreements they signed. Several key issues have been identified as the primary challenges to the effective implementation of higher education cost-sharing in Ethiopia (Teshome, 2006; Teshome, 2007a; Emnet, 2008; MoE, 2009; Sewale, 2013; Johnstone, 2006).

Lack of awareness about the policy

Understanding the cost-sharing policy among key stakeholders, including students, university management, and the general public, is crucial for the successful implementation of the program. A survey conducted by Teshome (2007a) revealed that, despite their close involvement and vested interest, the awareness level among the university community is significantly lower than anticipated. Additionally, the overall lack of knowledge about cost-sharing is evident, as many management staff are unfamiliar with income-contingent repayment. In many instances, both faculty and management lack clarity regarding the principles, challenges, opportunities, and other essential provisions outlined in the Ethiopian cost-sharing proclamation. Without a foundational understanding of the policy which directly impacts universities and students there is a substantial risk of missed opportunities stemming from misperceptions and misunderstandings of roles and responsibilities (Emnet, 2008; Sewale, 2013). Furthermore, a lack of information regarding the whereabouts of beneficiaries after graduation poses additional challenges in terms of awareness and follow-up. Consequently, the insufficient understanding of the policy and its

implementation remains a significant obstacle to effective cost-sharing in Ethiopian higher education.

Income contingent does not provide immediate non-governmental revenue

The higher education sector in Ethiopia is facing numerous challenges that require immediate financial solutions. To address these issues, a prompt recovery rate is essential. However, the income-contingent loan system, by its very nature, is not designed to generate additional revenue in the short term (Teshome, 2007a). This is largely due to the fact that the current system excludes any upfront fees, meaning that all graduates are expected to begin repayments only after they have completed their studies. Since it takes at least four years for students to graduate, and the recovery of total costs can span 10 to 15 years during which they repay only 10 percent of their monthly income (FDRE, 2003b) the proposed cost-sharing recovery scheme struggles to meet the need for immediate financial relief. Additionally, the high rates of unemployment further hinder effective cost recovery.

Difficulty to implement the concept of making students "customer"

One of the primary objectives of cost-sharing in Ethiopia is to position students as "customer-like" participants in the educational system. This concept, articulated by Teixeira et al. and cited by Emnet (2008), suggests that cost-sharing encourages students to become rational consumers while prompting institutions to become cost-conscious providers that respond more effectively to the needs of individuals, society, and the labor market. This implies that students should have the autonomy to choose where and what to study, while institutions should have the flexibility to select their candidates.

From the students' perspective, a variety of factors influence their choice of institutions and programs. These factors include institutional characteristics, such as location and available program offerings, as well as academic considerations, such as a student's level of preparation and the admission criteria of the institutions. Paradoxically, in the current Ethiopian context, students are often assigned randomly to institutions across the country, and higher education institutions do not have the liberty to recruit their own students. Ideally, each university should have the freedom to admit students based on its own admission criteria or mechanisms. However, the present system relies on centrally administered university entrance exams (Teshome, 2007a).

While the placement program aims to consider merit and specific subject performance to align students with suitable programs and institutions, many students face limited choices and diminished opportunities to secure their preferred programs and institutions (Emnet, 2008). The placement process is centrally coordinated, with representatives from all public universities making decisions at the Ministry's premises.

Weak collection system and capacity of government

According to the policy, various levels of government in Ethiopia, from federal to woreda, are involved either directly or indirectly in the collection of graduate taxes. Under the cost-sharing policy, all employers, whether public or private, are required to deduct the amounts owed by beneficiaries and remit them to the Federal Revenue Authority or its designated agents. However, a significant challenge arises from Ethiopia's status as one of the poorest countries globally, grappling with numerous political, social, and particularly economic issues. Unlike more industrialized nations, Ethiopia lacks a well-organized tax and banking system capable of effectively tracking and verifying income sources for borrowers throughout their earning lives, as noted by Johnstone (2006) and Emnet (2008). Consequently, even government employees may not fulfill their cost-sharing obligations because their employers lack access to information regarding their loan histories.

High default rate

Moreover, there is considerable uncertainty surrounding the adequacy of the record-keeping systems meant to track each former student's repayments, levels of indebtedness, and mobility (Emnet, 2008). To date, policy documents indicate that no administrative structure has been established specifically for monitoring graduates' movements. It falls to employers to report contributions to the Federal Revenue Office, yet there is a lack of robust documentation about beneficiaries' whereabouts, which contributes to a rising default rate. Although there is potential for improvement in the long term, the costly bureaucracy required to monitor a growing number of graduates could make cost recovery increasingly expensive. This situation is exacerbated by the weak capacity of the tax system, which relies primarily on repayments from civil servants and employees of multinational corporations and large private enterprises, complicating cost recovery efforts (Teshome, 2007b; Chapman, 2005).

Brain Drain

Another significant challenge in implementing cost-sharing in Ethiopia is the unregulated movement of graduates abroad without fulfilling their repayment obligations. The trend of graduates migrating to developed countries is rising not only in Ethiopia but throughout Africa (World Bank, 2002). This outflow of university graduates complicates the cost recovery process. Given these dynamics, a substantial number of graduates may leave the country annually in search of better opportunities while neglecting their debts. Although the policy stipulates that beneficiaries must inform the Federal Inland Revenue Authority of their address and employment details upon graduation, it lacks legal enforcement mechanisms for noncompliance (Teshome, 2007a; Emnet, 2008), further contributing to the increasing default rate.

In response to these challenges, the government recently enacted regulations to restrict graduates' movement outside the country without repaying their debts. Under the new regulation, beneficiaries intending to leave for over six months must provide a guarantor for their outstanding payments. However, this measure presents difficulties. First, the right to freedom of movement, enshrined in the national constitution, complicates enforcement. Additionally, the Main Department for Immigration and Nationality Affairs announced on July 26, 2004 cited on (Emnet, 2008), that exit visas are no longer required, allowing any Ethiopian or foreign resident to leave the country without such documentation, which could have been utilized to monitor repayments. Second, relying on beneficiaries' willingness to present a guarantor upon graduation creates further obstacles, as once a beneficiary departs, compelling guarantors to fulfill their obligations would require costly and time-consuming legal action. Thus, without adequate record-keeping and information systems, the mobility of graduates remains a significant challenge for cost recovery in Ethiopia.

Unemployment

Unemployment among graduates poses yet another challenge to cost recovery in Ethiopian higher education. For instance, the unemployment rate rose to 19.10 percent in 2018, up from 16.90 percent the previous year (Berhanu et al., 2022). The resolution of the unemployment crisis is unlikely to be swift, presenting an ongoing obstacle for effective cost recovery efforts

Conclusion

The discussion highlights that the Ethiopian cost-sharing scheme serves as a crucial mechanism for addressing the continually rising educational expenses while meeting the demand for education. However, the actual cost recovery has not met expectations. Despite delays, some graduates have made efforts to repay their costs from the outset, which points to a potential for successful financing of higher education by the beneficiaries. Several challenges hinder effective cost recovery, including a lack of awareness about the policy, the income-contingent system not generating immediate non-governmental revenue, weak collection capacity, brain drain, and high unemployment rates. To enhance the capacity of higher education in Ethiopia, it is essential to alleviate the financial burden on the government by effectively implementing the cost-sharing policy and improving cost recovery efforts.

Implications

From our experience in sharing the cost of higher education with beneficiaries, we can understand that the history of cost sharing in Ethiopia dates back to almost 19 years starting from 2003. To minimize the state's role in financing higher education and expand capacity and access, both for classroom instruction and for living accommodations thereby increasing participation, is the main aim of cost sharing in Ethiopia. The cost recovery mechanism employed in the policy is graduate tax (contingency loan), which can be deduced from graduate income after graduation, the system that is borrowed from Australia. The policy has many advantages for the government and the society at large. It can improve efficiency and equity, enhance access, increase government revenue, minimize student's financial burden, increase the expansion of private universities and colleges, etc. Even if the cost to be shared by beneficiaries is minimal which couldn't provide radical change on the higher education financial problems, the implementation of the policy faced many problems. To achieve the objectives of the policy, taking remedial actions for those problems that are identified by different researchers would be given high worth. Hence, it calls for as many efforts as possible to be made, like, employing better and flexible strategies, empower implementing organizations and continuous follow-up and evaluation.

Declaration of interest statement

The author Habtam Genie Dessie declares that he has no conflicts of interest or financial ties to any organizations or individuals that could potentially influence the

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Tourism governance as a driver of sustainable development: insight from harar city, Ethiopia

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Abstract

Tourism governance involves policies, laws, regulations, and institutional frameworks that help guide the development of tourism. This study aims to assess administrative and institutional features of tourism governance as drivers of sustainable development with particular reference to the city of Harar in eastern Ethiopia. The research employed a descriptive and explanatory design using mixed approaches of probability and non-probability techniques in the process of data collections from various target populations such as experts in the local government offices, culture and tourism bureaus, tour operators, tour and travel guides, museum guides, hotel owners and staffs, and community representatives. Data was collected from 120 respondents through questionnaires and some key informants through interviews. The quantitative ones were analyzed using SPSS version 20 for frequency, percentage, and mean proportions. The study ascertains that tourism governance has a profound impact on the practice and development of tourism industry. Tourism governance mainly of policy frameworks, stakeholder engagements, institutional capacity, and governance structure significantly influences tourism development and subsequently shows an impact on the economic growth of the city. Limited effort in promotional activities, inadequate budget allocation, limited stakeholder involvement, political instability, and weak institutional structure have been identified as the main problems related to the tourism governance of the study area. As a remark, the authors finally recommend that the government improve tourism regulations, review policies, encourage stakeholder engagements, and allocate sufficient budget for the tourism industry to maximize the opportunities potentially could be gained from it.

Key words: Tourism governance, challenges, Sustainability, Tourism development, Harar City.

Introduction

Understanding the concept of governance in tourism sector is important for sustainable tourism development. Governance, in its whole sense, can be defined as the rationale behind policy-making, stakeholder participation, and resource distribution. In this context, tourism governance refers to the structures and functions and relationships that determine the management and order of tourism activity within a specific location (Hall, 2011). Tourism governance encompasses the political, legal, and administrative frameworks governing the functioning of tourism industry to ensure community ties, cultural preservation, environmental safety, and economic rewards (OECD, 2012; Scott, 2011).

Effective tourism governance enhances decision-making processes and ensures equitable distribution of tourism gains in a sustainable manner, as it involves the well-functioning of all the variables including government bodies, local communities and private enterprise (Bhuiyan et al., 2023; dos Anjos & Kennell, 2019). Strong institutional frameworks in tourism planning and management lead to higher inclusive growth and environmental performance. These can be attained through participatory decision-making, clear regulatory frameworks, and transparent procedures to foster stakeholder trust and cooperation (United Nations, 2007; UNWTO, 2019). On the other hand, Motsamai (2024) argues that poor governance practices, such as corruption and a lack of transparency, can hinder the growth of the tourism industry, erode stakeholder confidence, and obstruct productive cooperation. Moreover, pandemics such as COVID-19, geopolitical tensions, such as the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, and seasonality have been also among the challenges which significantly affect the tourism sector particularly developing counties including Ethiopia (Atasoy et al., 2023; Kumar & Ekka, 2024; Tan & Cheng, 2024). To reverse all the problems mentioned above, adopting a well-structured tourism governance framework significantly enhances the sustainability so that it meets the current needs of tourists and regions and ensures a guaranteed approach to preserve opportunities for the future as well (Bianchi, 2009; Dinica and Hans, 2008). In this case, the role of stakeholders is pivotal as it encourages participatory approach and mitigates competing interests among actors, such as government, the private sectors and local communities (Byrd, 2007).

Ethiopia possesses significant potential in its tourism industry due to its rich cultural heritage and diverse natural landscapes (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2015). However, governance issues such as political instability, safety concerns, and insufficient infrastructure continue to impede growth (Chukala, 2023; Engda, 2020). To fully exploit Ethiopian's tourism potential, improvements in political instability, investment in infrastructure and coordinated marketing strategies are essentials. This enhancement will benefit not only the economy but also local communities, positioning Ethiopia as a prominent tourist destination in Africa.

Ethiopian tourism governance comprises federal, regional, zone and district levels. This structure may pose challenges to industry growth due to lack of coordination, leading to fragmented planning and implementation (Popovic et al., 2011; Saner et al., 2015). This fragmented approach often results in communication gaps, causing

inefficient resource allocation due to differing objectives and methods (Popovic et al.,2011).

Furthermore, efforts to expand tourism are complicated by unequal allocation of resources, which exacerbates regional imbalances by giving certain areas more financing and attention than others (Wang & Tziamalis, 2023). Financial limitations may impede the ability to carry out tourism-related projects and upgrade infrastructure, which would further limit prospects for development in underprivileged regions (Haq et al., 2024). Inconsistent policy implementation across different governance levels can lead to confusion and difficulty in compliance among stakeholders due to the vast variation in rules (Marpaung et al., 2021). Harar City faces challenges in sustainable tourism development, including weak tourism governance, inadequate infrastructure, ineffective implementation of policy, poor environmental management, and limited promotion of historical sites. This study examines tourism governance in Harar city, Ethiopia, focusing on policy frameworks, stakeholder engagement, institutional capacity, and governance structure. The sustainability perspective identifies economic, environmental, and social-cultural sustainability as the primary elements for sustainable tourism development.

Related literature review

The Brundtland Commission's well-known definition of sustainable development, which states that development "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs," has become a central tenet of modern tourism planning (WCED, 1987). Sustainable tourism aims to reduce environmental and cultural damage while helping local economies (UNWTO, 2013). But just growing tourism doesn't mean things will automatically be sustainable. It really depends on how things are managed. Tourism governance involves how tourism policies are made, how choices are decided, and how everyone involved works together (Bramwell, 2011). It's not just about the government; it includes teamwork, involvement, honesty, and responsibility from different groups like public groups, businesses, community organizations, and locals (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). Good tourism governance is seen as what helps tourism match the three main areas of sustainability: money, society, and the environment.

Tourism governance theory comes from two main ideas about how management affects sustainable growth. First, Institutional Theory (North, 1990) helps us see how official and unofficial rules affect what people do in terms of money and society. In tourism, this means looking at how policies, rules, and organizations either help or hinder sustainable actions. The theory says that good institutions lower uncertainty and costs, which helps everyone work together better (Scott, 2011). Second, Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) gives us a way to look at the complicated relationships involved in running tourism. It says that when managing a tourist spot, you should think about what's important to everyone involved. This includes groups like government offices, private companies, local people, and other non-profit sectors. Working well with these groups isn't just something extra but is a requirement to make tourism better for the long run (Byrd, 2007). Putting these two theories together gives us a good base for studying the main parts of tourism governance that we're looking at: rules, how people work together, the skills of the organizations involved, and how things are set up.

Research context and knowledge gap

Ethiopia's tourism industry has great potential because of its culture and nature (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2015). Governance problems like instability and poor infrastructure are still holding it back. The tourism governance system struggles with coordination problems between different agencies, which lead to disjointed planning. This creates communication breakdowns and inefficient use of resources.

Uneven resource allocation makes regional inequalities worse, as some areas get more attention than others. Limited funding restricts tourism projects and infrastructure improvements, hurting underprivileged regions. Inconsistent policies across governance levels can cause confusion for stakeholders (Weldesenbet & Meskele,2021). Although governance is important, there's not enough research applying theoretical frameworks to study how tourism governance impacts sustainable growth in cultural heritage sites like Harar, Ethiopia. Current research mentions governance problems generally, but lacks detailed analysis of their specific impacts locally.

Harar City, a UNESCO site, shows these problems. It has issues with tourism governance, infrastructure, policy implementation, and limited promotion. This study looks at tourism governance in Harar using institutional and stakeholder

theories. It focuses on policy, stakeholder involvement, institutional ability, and governance structure and how they affect sustainable tourism in terms of economic, environmental, and socio-cultural aspects.

Methods

Study area description

Harar is an ancient city located in eastern Ethiopia, a region draped with rich historical, cultural, religious, and natural heritage. The city is situated about 525 kilometers away from Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. Origins of Harar go back to the 15th century AD, an important medieval Islamic history (Ahmad, 2015). With its exceptional architectural beauty and historical importance, Harar was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2006. This indicates that the city is an important center for Islamic cultural treasures, reflected in its arts and architectural marvels (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2015).

Regarded as one of the four holiest cities in the world, Harar is packed with attractions for the tourist: an impressive Jugol defensive wall, many majestic mosques, and residential areas of densely packed homes showcasing very fine Islamic architecture. The city boasts over one hundred shrines to saints of Islam and numerous museums and cultural centers featuring an outstandingly rich array of historic and ethnographic collections (Ahmad, 2015).

Harar's tourism development is still in its infancy, yet the potential of this city is huge. The city itself is a haven for Islamic artistry, architectural beauty, and a reflection of outstanding Ethiopian craftsmanship. Harar's cultural and religious heritage does not only benefit the local community but also offers great opportunities for sustainable tourism development. Governance of tourism, in this case, is important in acting as a catalyst for achieving sustainable economic growth with protection of cultural heritage and increased community involvement in the tourism industry. This research reviews how effective tourism governance can use the distinctive features of Harar City as a resource for sustainable development.
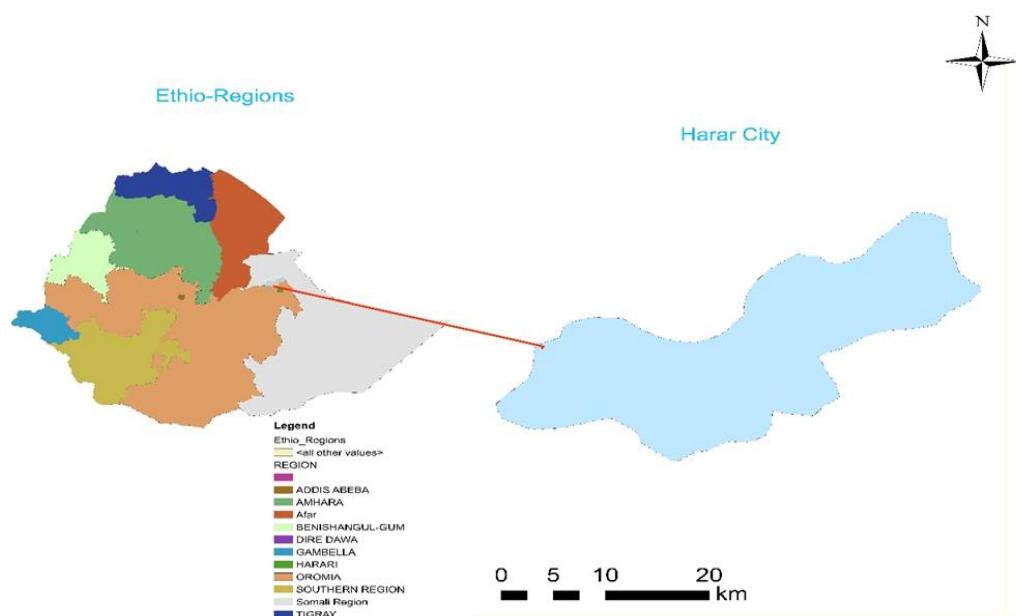
Figure 1. Map of Harar city
Source: Prepared by the researchers using ArcGIS (2024)

Research design

This study used both descriptive and explanatory research designs. Macdonald & Headlam (2008) argue that the researcher does not have control over variables in a descriptive design; instead, the focus is to report on and interpret what is happening. A descriptive research design was thus utilized in this study to explore and narrate the effects which the existing tourism governance system has on Harar City's sustainable tourism development using both qualitative and quantitative methods. In this respect, the descriptive approach was helpful in investigating current governance practices comprehensively, thus showing both strengths and weaknesses of the system. Conversely, the explanatory design unveiled the connection between the governance structures and the sustainable tourism outcome: how governance might catalyze the process of sustainable development.

Research approach

This study employed a mixed research approach (qualitative and quantitative) to benefit from the strengths of qualitative and quantitative methods and a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. This approach is also beneficial to understand the impacts of the existing tourism governance structure on sustainable tourism development in the study area. Mixed-methods

research allows for a more inclusive understanding of the problem, and it is perhaps the most widely used method in research practice (Dawadi et al., 2021).

Target population of the study

The target population of this study included local government office experts, culture and tourism office experts, tourism operators and tour guides, museum guides, hotel owners and their managers and community representatives. This diverse target population will enable a comprehensive understanding of how tourism governance influences sustainable development in the tourism sector.

Sampling techniques

Both probability and non-probability sampling were used in the process of data collection. Purposive sampling was applied to ensure insightful information was collected from experts in the local government offices, culture and tourism offices, tourism operators, and tour guides. This kind of sampling ensured that data came from sources that know about the tourism governance. Random sampling included local community representatives and government officials in order to increase diversity and reliability in the data obtained.

Sample size determination

Ethiopia has so far conducted 3 Population and Housing Censuses (PHC) in 1984, 1994, and 2007. No census has been conducted since 2007. Therefore, based on worldometer, Harar City has a population of 157,000 (https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/ethiopia-population/ which is retrieved on November 14, 2024. Therefore, the researchers took 60 people using judgmental sampling technique. The researchers selected respondents from various sources, including government officials, Harari Region Culture and Tourism Office, Harar City Culture and Tourism Office, tourist guide associations, museum guides, hotels, and local communities. The population frame for this study included people directly connected to tourist potentials and those involved in tourism governance. The sample was distributed properly using the appropriate sample size determination formula. The quantitative or survey part of the research required representation. To determine sample size, Yamane's (1967) formula was used:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where: n: The sample size; **N:** The population size; **e:** The level of precision or sampling error (0.05).

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N*e2} \qquad = \qquad \frac{172}{1+172\,(0.05)^2}$$

$$= \quad \frac{172}{1.43} = 120.27 \approx 120$$

Therefore, 120 samples for each target group were allocated proportionally and 13 interviewees were selected as:

Table 1. Sample proportion

No	Sample Frame/Target Groups for Questionaries'		Total Population	Sample Size
1.	Local government office experts		20	14
2.	Harari Region Culture and Tourism Office		25	17
3.	Harar City Culture and Tourism Office		15	11
4.	Tourist Guide Association		18	13
5.	Museum Staff Guides	Harar National Museum	8	6
		Sherif Museum	6	4
		Artur Rambo Arthur Museum	6	4
		Harari Cultural Center Museum	4	3
6.	Hotel owners and their managers		10	7
7.	Local community (purposely selected)		60	41
		Total	**172**	**120**
	Sample Frame for Interviewees Selection			**Selected for Interview**
1.	Local government office experts			2
2.	Harari region culture and tourism office			2
3.	Harar City Culture and Tourism Office			2
4.	Museum guides			2
5.	Community leaders			2
6.	Hotel owner/managers			1
7.	Tourist Guide			2
			Total	**13**

Data collection instruments

Quantitative data was obtained using self-administered structured questionnaires as the primary method of data collection. These questionnaires were carefully crafted to extract authentic information from the designated target groups. Furthermore,

qualitative data were acquired through in-depth open-ended and semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity for thorough exploration and clarification, allowing participants to articulate their personal thoughts, ambitions, and emotions comprehensively (Buchanan, 2018).

Closed-ended questions were employed to investigate individuals' reactions regarding specific pre-determined factors whereas open-ended questions proved particularly valuable in elucidating the rationale behind a respondent's perspective on a particular matter (Buchanan, 2018). The study gathered secondary data from various sources, including books, articles, reports, brochures, folders, magazines, and plans, to examine cultural tourism and development. It used personal observation, document analysis, and comparison of findings from different sources to ensure validity and reliability. Observations were conducted using checklists while document analysis included both published and unpublished documents. The study's validity was further strengthened by comparing findings from various sources, including web pages, academic journals, articles, commercial publications, and annual action plans.

Method of data analysis

The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather and analyze data. The qualitative approach involved non-numerical data collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The quantitative approach involved collecting numerical data and analyzing it using descriptive statistics. Thematic analysis was used to examine the qualitative data, identifying recurring themes and patterns related to tourism potential and development challenges. The quantitative data were integrated based on similarity and alignment with research objectives.

Results

Response Rate of Questionnaires
Data were collected via a questionnaire distributed to 172 stakeholders in Harar City's tourism sector, including government experts, tourism operators, hoteliers, and community representatives. The survey aimed to assess perspectives on tourism governance and sustainable development. A total of 120 questionnaires were fully completed and returned, resulting in a 69.7% response rate. This section analyzes the demographic composition of these respondents with details of their gender, age, education, and employment status.

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

This section presents the demographic data on respondents including gender, age, level of education and employment status. The demographic data on respondents provides valuable insights into the characteristics of the surveyed population.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variables		Frequency	Percent
	Male	68	56.7
Gender	Female	52	43.3
	Total	120	100
Age	18-25 Years	14	11.7
	26-35 Years	56	46.7
	36-45 Years	30	25.0
	46-53 Years	12	10.0
	Above 56 Years	8	6.7
Educational level	Certificate	3	2.5
	Degree	108	90.0
	MA and above	4	3.3
	5.00	5	4.2
	Total	120	100.0
Employment	Tourism Related Sector	110	91.7
	Non-Tourism Related Sector	10	8.3
	Total	120	100.0

The results of Table 2 show that 101 (61.3%) of the respondents are male, while the rest, 160 (36.9%), of the total target groups are female respondents. This implies that the number of male respondents is greater than that of female respondents. This shows males are more involved in the tourism industry compared to females. The age distribution is highly concentrated between 26 and 35 years (46.7%), which suggests that the young adults are actively engaging in tourism-related activities. This section of the population might be more open to new governance practices that promote sustainable development. The sample is highly educated, with 90% holding degree holders that suggest their awareness of the principles underlying sustainable

development and good governance. Moreover, as many as 91.7% of respondents in this study were employed in the tourism industry, adding another layer of credibility to their statements regarding how governance influences sustainable development. The demographic profile, therefore, revealed that the insights garnered were very crucial in framing effective governance strategies that advance the sustainability of the tourism industry in Harar.

Descriptive statistics of tourism governance

The Effect of Policy Implementation on Sustainable Tourism Development

Table 3. The effect of policy implementation on sustainable tourism development

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
Tourism policy effectively supports sustainable tourism development	3.6333	1.22942
Tourism Policies are regularly updated to reflect current trends and challenges.	3.2750	1.32819
The existing tourism policies promote the participation of local communities	3.5500	1.15118
Government policies support sustainable tourism development initiatives	3.4167	1.34466
There is a clear framework for implementing tourism policies in Harar	3.4250	1.32629

(Source: Survey, 2024)

The table shows that the "policies supporting sustainable tourism development" have a high score of 3.63, with a moderate standard deviation indicating different opinions. The "policies are kept up-to-date to reflect emerging trends and challenges" has an average score of 3.28, suggesting that respondents may feel policies are not adapted to changing circumstances. The statement "The existing tourism policies promote the participation of local communities" has an average score of 3.55, indicating some agreement on the setting of policies encouraging local involvement in tourism. The

mean for "Government policies support sustainable tourism development initiatives" is 3.42, with a large variation in responses. This suggests that the implementation of such policies may be effective in some cases but may not be so in others, making it context-dependent. Further research is needed to understand the factors causing such variation in perceptions, including stakeholder perspectives, varying contexts, and other contextual factors. The final statement "There is a clear framework for implementing tourism policies in Harar" has a mean of 3.43, suggesting that while some find it clear, others may encounter ambiguities or challenges. Overall, the data indicates a generally positive perception of current tourism policies in Harar regarding sustainable development, but there are concerns regarding regular updating and clarity in implementation.

In order to support the data obtained in quantitative way about effects of Tourism policy implementations on tourism development in Ethiopia, with evidence from Addis Ababa city. Interview questions were prepared and distributed to hotel managers, hotel customers and local community leaders.

To confirm this idea, an interview was conducted with one tourism expert from Culture and Tourism Office, Ethiopia, who stated that regarding Tourism related policy implementation:

> *The Ethiopian tourism development policy, launched in 2009, aimed to expand tourist attractions, diversify the industry, enhance infrastructure, attract private investment, and establish educational initiatives, but is not fully implemented in the county (Informant, 02, June, 2024). Ethiopia's tourism policy implementation in Harar City faces challenges like lack of stakeholder support, economic issues, poor coordination, and lack of awareness. To address these, political will, media involvement, increased tourism professional awareness, and government financial resource allocation are recommended (Informant, 02, June, 2024).*

The other key informants stated that:

> *The Ethiopian tourism policy, despite its vision for responsible and sustainable tourism development, lacks full support from stakeholders. stakeholders. This problem is exacerbated by lack of awareness about about the policy, which hinders its effective implementation in areas*

like Addis Ababa and other parts of the country (Informant, 04, June, 2024).

The effect of stakeholder's collaboration on sustainable tourism development

Table 4 The Effect of Stakeholders Collaboration on Sustainable Tourism Development

Stakeholders Collaboration on Sustainable Tourism Development	Mean	Std. Deviation
Tourism stakeholders (government, private sector, local community) in Harar collaborate effectively	2.2833	1.79253
Local community members are actively involved in decision-making processes related to tourism.	3.3167	1.30277
There is clear communication among stakeholders regarding tourism policies and initiatives	3.8583	.92850

(Source: Survey, 2024)

The above table shows that most respondents perceived ineffective collaboration among tourism stakeholders, including government, the private sector, and local community. The mean score for the statement "Tourism stakeholders-government, the private sector, and the local community-collaborate effectively in Harar" is 2.28, with a high standard deviation of 1.79. Local community members are actively involved in decision-making processes related to tourism, but this also indicates certain barriers to full involvement and potential limitations to effectiveness of the community engagement in tourism governance.

The highest mean score for the statement, "There is clear communication among stakeholders regarding tourism policies and initiatives" is 3.86, with a low standard deviation of 0.93. This indicates that respondents generally perceive communication among stakeholders as effective and consistent, but there are still concerns about the effectiveness of collaboration among all stakeholders in Harar. Increasing collaboration could help ensure all stakeholders are on board, which could be an important next step in advancing sustainable tourism development for the region.

To confirm this idea an interview was conducted with one tourism expert in Culture and Tourism Office, Ethiopia, who stated:

> *In sustainable tourism development, stakeholder collaboration entails cooperation among local communities, government entities, private sector businesses, and non-government organizations for mutual interest. Each stakeholder provides diverse perspectives and resources in making better decisions. Local communities may use knowledge of their environment and cultural heritage to guide them in undertaking sustainable tourism development practices. The government agencies may provide regulatory frameworks, while the private sectors can create eco-centric products and services. Collaboration among players will breed a feeling of trust across the board, which is needed for success in a long-term perspective, in addition to contributing positively to the tourism ecosystem (KI 01, June, 2024).*

Institutional capacity

Table 4 the Effect of institutional capacity on Sustainable Tourism Development

Institutional Capacity	Mean	Std. Deviation
Local tourism institutions have sufficient capacity to implement tourism strategies.	3.2750	1.22962
Tourism authorities in Harar are well-staffed and well-trained	3.2417	1.27679
The institutional framework for tourism governance supports effective communication among stakeholders.	3.4333	1.23488
Institutional frameworks are flexible to adapt to emerging tourism trends	3.7250	.78817

(Source: Survey, 2024)

Table 5 above has 3.27 mean values of institutions having sufficient capacity to implement strategies. However, a standard deviation of 1.22 means there is a moderate dispersion of the distribution; hence, though many people believe in the

sufficiency of institutional capacity, a considerable number of dissenting opinions exist. The above table shows that the mean score is 3.24, meaning the level of staffing and training of tourism authorities in Harar is good to ensure sustainability of tourism development. Again, a relatively high standard deviation of 1.27 indicates that though many perceive authorities as well-staffed and trained there are indeed varying perceptions about this.

Table 5 further shows that the highest mean of 3.43 in the series, with regard to the level of effective communication among the stakeholders themselves, presents a strong belief in the institutional framework to support dialogue and collaboration within the tourism sector, which supports the suitability of tourism development. The standard deviation stands at 1.23, indicating that while most respondents believe in this aspect, there is still some diversity in opinion, because tourism institutions often have low relationship with stakeholders.

The average of 3.72 indicates that there is a favorable perception regarding the adaptability of institutional frameworks to new trends arising within tourism, a prerequisite if competitiveness is to be maintained in a constantly changing industry. The standard deviation is lower at 0.78, which indicates that tourism institutions at regional and local level have no power to update and change a framework designed and enacted by country level. The reason that the ministry of tourism in Ethiopia has exclusive power to prepare tourism policies and regulations which all regions and city administrations must apply. To this, Harar city and then the tourism office in Harar city accept the polices and implement it as well. By this reason institutional frameworks are not flexible to adapt to emerging tourism trends.

As one of the key informants who is culture and tourism office experts stated:

> *Institutional capacity helps to manage resources, implement policies, and engage stakeholders in sustainable practices. This capacity is crucial for sustainable tourism development because it allows for comprehensive policies that integrate tourism activities into sustainability objectives, ensuring protection of natural resources, cultural heritage promotion, and community involvement. Efficient governance structures facilitate coordination among stakeholders at local, business, and government agency levels. Institutional capacity also allows for better resource allocation, enabling investment in infrastructure supporting sustainable tourism practices, such as eco-friendly transportation options and facilities. Additionally, solid institutional*

frameworks build resilience to disturbances like climate change or economic cycles, ensuring the sustainability of tourism initiatives over the long term (KI 05, June,2024).

The effect of governance structure on sustainable tourism development

Table 5 the Effect of Governance Structure on Sustainable Tourism Development

	Mean	Std. Deviation
The governance structure supports sustainable tourism development in Harar	3.4917	1.07684
Leadership in tourism governance is transparent and accountable	3.5833	1.37556
Decision-making processes in tourism governance are participatory	2.9833	1.50620
The governance structure ensures equitable benefits from tourism for all stakeholders	3.4500	1.16569
There is a clear division of responsibilities among tourism-related organizations	3.3917	1.19731

(Source: Survey, 2024)

Table 6 above shows perceptions of tourism governance structure in Harar, focusing on its effectiveness in supporting sustainable tourism development. The mean score of 3.49 indicates a positive perception of the governance structure, with a standard deviation of 1.07 indicating a reasonable scatter in responses. In addition, the above table reveals that the mean score of 3.58 indicates a strong belief in transparency and accountability in leadership, with a standard deviation of 1.38 indicating greater variability. The other mean score of 2.98 suggests less participatory decision-making processes, with a high standard deviation of 1.51 suggesting disagreement among stakeholders over the degree of participation. Moreover, the mean score of 3.45 suggests a somewhat favorable view of the governance structure ensuring equitable benefits of tourism for all shareholders, with a standard deviation of 1.17 indicating moderate agreement but also indicating a difference in opinions regarding equity in benefit distribution. Finally, the mean score of 3.39 indicates some agreement among stakeholders regarding the division of responsibilities among organizations engaged in tourism activities, with a standard deviation of 1.20.

As a key informant, culture and tourism office expert stated as:

The Harar City's governance structure, derived from the federal government, has significant implications for sustainable tourism development. This top-down approach can facilitate or hinder grassroots initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable tourism. Aligning with federal governance provides Harar with broader resources and frameworks, such as funding opportunities, marketing strategies, and infrastructure development. However, this direct translation of federal government structures into reality can also pose problems, as local regulations and policies may not consider the unique cultural and environmental contexts of Harar. A one-size-fits-all approach may limit local initiative spontaneity and responsiveness to needs. For example, federal guidelines may focus on large-scale tourism without considering local input or ecological impacts, leading to over-tourism or degradation of natural resources. The success of sustainable tourism governance depends on local governments' ability to translate federal directives into relevant contexts. If local governance structures are weak or lack authority and resources, a gap may exist between policy and practice (Informant 01,05,08 & 10, June, 2024).

Challenges of tourism governance on tourism development

Table 6. Challenges tourism governance on tourism development

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Lack of promotion	3.4562	1.36556
Inadequate budget allocation	3.7125	1.18903
Limited stakeholder engagement	3.2560	1.42858
Political instability	3.5125	1.38903
Weak institutional structure	3.3563	1.41658

(Source: Survey, 2024)

Table 6 presents data on challenges in tourism governance affecting tourism development, showing the mean and standard deviation for each listed challenge. The findings reveal significant challenges in the tourism industry in Harar city, including inadequate budget allocation, lack of promotion, political instability, weak

institutional structure, and limited stakeholder engagement. The high mean value of 3.71 indicates a significant issue with low financial resources, posing a major development challenge. The lack of promotion, with a mean value of 3.45, indicates insufficient efforts to promote tourism activities, hindering growth and potential. Political instability, a weak institutional structure, and limited stakeholder engagement also pose significant challenges to effective tourism management and development in Harar city.

In addition to the questionnaire survey, the key informant interview stated that:

> *Tourism governance is vital for the industry's growth and sustainability, but challenges from political, economic, social, and environmental factors can hinder its effectiveness and negatively impact tourism development. Political instability in the country significantly impacts tourism development, leading to policy changes and lack of political will, causing uncertainty for investors and businesses. Corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies also hinder sustainable tourism practices. (Informant 02, 04, and 06, June, 2024).*

They added that:

> *Economic factors like fluctuating exchange rates, inflation, and global crises can hinder tourism development in cities, with insufficient funding and income inequality affecting the equitable distribution of benefits. In addition to this, in Hara city, inadequate stakeholder engagement is a major obstacle to tourism governance and development. These stakeholders are vital in decision-making, policy formulation, and sustainable tourism practices. Inadequate engagement often results from ineffective policies and lack of inclusivity and hinders the overall growth of the tourism sector (Informant 02, 04 and 06, June, 2024).*

The other key informant who is a tourism expert in culture and tourism offices in Harar city added that:

> *Even though promotion is crucial for attracting tourists, increasing awareness, and boosting the local economy, promotional activity in Harar city is inadequate. Inadequate promotion can hinder the growth*

and sustainability of the tourism sector. It hinders investment in tourism infrastructure and services, as many tourists may remain unaware of the city's cultural heritage sites, historical landmarks, vibrant markets, and diverse culinary experiences. This can exacerbate the challenges faced by Harar city in developing its tourism sector. Furthermore, inadequate promotion can strain the resources and capabilities of local authorities responsible for managing tourism development. Without sufficient funding and support, government agencies cannot effectively market Hara city as a tourist destination and coordinate with private sector stakeholders, resulting in fragmented approaches to promoting tourism. This can result in missed opportunities for collaboration and synergy (Informant 01, 02 and 05, June, 2024).

Correlation matrix

		Policy	Stakeholder Collaboration	Institution	Governance	Sustainable tourism Development
Policy	Pearson Correlation	1	.417**	.798**	.738**	.707**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	120	120	120	120	120
Stakeholder Collaboration	Pearson Correlation	.417**	1	.183*	.465**	.568**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.045	.000	.000
	N	120	120	120	120	120
Institution	Pearson Correlation	.798**	.183*	1	.663**	.607**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.045		.000	.000
	N	120	120	120	120	120
Governance	Pearson Correlation	.738**	.465**	.663**	1	.841**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	120	120	120	120	120
Sustainable tourism Development	Pearson Correlation	.707**	.568**	.607**	.841**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	120	120	120	120	120

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The above table shows that the study examined the bivariate relationship between the main dimensions of tourism governance and sustainable development in the city of Harar, Ethiopia. Pearson's correlation analysis showed that all governance factors are strongly and positively correlated with the sustainable development of tourism. The governance structure showed the strongest correlation (r =.841, p <.01) and was identified as the most important relationship between sustainability performance. Policy (r = .707, p < .01) and institutional capacity (r = .607, p < .01) also showed strong and significant correlations, while cooperation between stakeholders (r = .568, p < .01) showed a slightly positive correlation. However, the strong interrelationship between independent variables, in particular between policy and institutional capacity (r = .798, p <.01) points to possible multilinearity, which should be further explored in a subsequent multivariate analysis.

Discussions

The survey indicates that the majority (56.7%) of respondents are men, while 43.3% are women. This gender discrepancy shows that more males are likely to be working in the tourism business. This tendency is consistent with previous tourism research **(Mitra & Sankar, 2021).** The majority of respondents (46.7%) are between the ages of 26 and 35, indicating that young individuals participate in tourist activities. The survey found that 46.7% of respondents were between the ages of 26 and 35, showing that young individuals are actively participating in tourism-related activities. This is consistent with research demonstrating that younger people are more inclined to adopt sustainable development strategies. It shows the respondents' extensive educational background, with 90% having earned degrees, to enhance their understanding of sustainable development concepts. The 91.7% of respondents who work in the tourist industry provide weight to their perspectives on governance and sustainable development. This demographic profile is critical for developing effective governance solutions to help Harar's tourist industry remain sustainable.

The main finding of this study is that all core tourism governance dimensions demonstrate significant positive correlations with sustainable tourism development, which are quite strong. Among them, governance structure stands out to be the most powerful factor with a very strong correlation coefficient (r = .841, p = .01) demonstrating it. Therefore, the study's main argument, that governance plays a key role in sustainable tourism development, receives strong empirical backing aligned with global frameworks (UNWTO, 2021)**.** The degree of these relationships is quite

different and gives a subtle understanding of the influence each one has, while the entire picture of governance is positive and this highlights their significance as a group in bringing about sustainable results. While the overall governance structure was positively assessed (average = 3.49), the low score for participatory decision-making (average = 2.98) revealed a significant deficiency in the governance. This indicates that a governance structure is in place, but that its implementation lacks real inclusiveness. This strong correlation suggests that strengthening participatory processes - moving beyond what Bachtiar (2022), would have called tokenism to a genuine empowerment of citizens - could bring the biggest improvements in sustainability outcomes. The high level of transparency (average = 3.58) provides a solid basis on which to build more collaborative structures.

Both policies (r =.707, p <.01) and institutional capacity (r =.607, p <.01) showed strong and significant links to sustainable development. However, their very high correlation coefficients (r =.798) and the fact that the correlation coefficient is lower than that of the independent drivers indicate that they are deeply interlinked, not independent. Descriptive results underline this link: respondents were generally positive about the effectiveness of the policy (mean = 3.63) but were only slightly confident about institutional capacity (mean = 3.27). This divergence is consistent with the qualitative observation that institutional frameworks often lack the adaptability and staffing to effectively implement well-intentioned policies. As Ngxongo (2021) points out, policies need to be adaptive, but in Harar the gap between policy and practice is due to a lack of data and analysis. This strong correlation suggests that policies alone are not enough; they must be backed up by institutions that have the training, resources, and flexibility to be effective local intermediaries.

Cooperation between stakeholders has shown a modest but significant correlation with sustainable development (r =.568, p <.01). This statistical link is crucial, as it underlines the importance of cooperation, even when descriptive data reveal that cooperation is a major area of weakness. The very low average score for effective cooperation (2.28) shows a serious deficiency despite good communication (3.86) and efforts to involve the community (3.32). This suggests that, while channels of communication may exist, they do not translate into meaningful cooperation. This finding is supported by Hilario et al.(2024), underlining that cooperation is often lacking in practice. The positive correlation indicates that addressing this cooperation deficit is a clear opportunity to improve the sustainability of the performance.

The results for institutional capability show a modest impression of local tourist institutions' ability to effectively implement initiatives, with a mean score of 3.27. Although respondents are confident in the capability of tourist authorities (mean = 3.24), the variety in responses indicates varying views on the sufficiency of staffing and training. This is consistent with study by Erkuş-Öztürk (2011), who states that well-trained individuals are critical for good tourist governance. The flexibility of institutional frameworks (mean = 3.72) got positive feedback, demonstrating some confidence in the institutions' capacity to adjust to new developments. Qualitative data gathered from informant's interview indicate that institutional frameworks may not always be adaptable to local circumstances, highlighting the need for institutions to be fully staffed and have the authority and flexibility to modify policies to meet the specific demands of Harar's tourism sector.

In general, Harar's system of governance is highly rated with a mean score of 3.49. However, the lower rating for participatory decision-making (mean = 2.98) indicates a considerable room for improvement. This research is in line with Arnstein (1969), fears of the "ladder of citizen participation," which mostly excludes genuine involvement in political processes. Transparency and accountability in leadership are scored highly (mean = 3.58), but the range of responses indicates various stakeholder experiences. The findings show that, while the governance structure serves as a basis for long-term tourism growth, strengthening participatory processes is crucial for establishing stakeholder confidence and ensuring equitable profits from tourist operations.

The study reveals that Harar's efficient tourist management efforts suffer from budget constraint, only 3.71% of the city's annual budget, which hinders the marketing and growth of the tourism industry. The current finding is consistent with Kauffman et al. (2020), which indicated that financial constraints are common barriers to effective sustainable tourism development. The inability carry out promotional activities to create demand, with a mean of 3.45, hampers tourism growth. Therefore, better marketing strategies should be formulated so as to attract tourists, as underlined by Chen and Kerstetter (2021). Other major barriers include political instability and weak institutions. This finding matches with Hall and Page (2019), in that political factors greatly influence the governance of tourism. Interviews with key informants have highlighted the notion that political instability forms an uncertain atmosphere for tourism development, thus affecting long-term planning and investment. The lack of

participation by stakeholders further exacerbates these problems, as good governance is possible only with the active participation of all parties.

Conclusion

This study aimed to empirically assess tourism governance as a driver of sustainable development in Harar, Ethiopia. The findings provide a clear and evidence-based conclusion: while the foundational elements for effective tourism governance are recognized in Harar, significant gaps in its structure, implementation, and collaborative mechanisms critically hinder its potential as a driver of sustainable development.

The analysis reveals a pivotal insight: the Governance Structure emerged as the strongest correlate of sustainable development (r = .841), underscoring that the overarching system of roles, responsibilities, and coordination is paramount. However, this potential is undermined by a pronounced deficit in participatory decision-making, indicating that the current structure is more hierarchical than inclusive. Furthermore, the study identifies a critical disconnection between policy and practice. While Policy frameworks themselves are viewed positively, their strong correlation with the less modestly perceived Institutional Capacity (r = .798) highlights a fundamental implementation gap. Policies cannot be effective without capable, well-trained, and adaptive institutions to execute them.

A third major impediment is the failure of stakeholder collaboration. Despite its significant correlation with sustainability (r = 0.568), the stakeholder collaboration was rated as the poorest-performing governance dimension. This indicates that communication channels exist but they fail to translate into meaningful cooperative action, creating a substantial barrier to inclusive growth.

These governance challenges are exacerbated by external and resource-based constraints, including inadequate budget allocation, political instability, and insufficient promotional activities, which collectively create an uncertain environment that stifles long-term investment and planning.

Therefore, for tourism to become a true engine of sustainable development in Harar, governance interventions must be strategic and sequential. The primary focus must be on transforming the governance structure to be genuinely participatory, empowering all stakeholders in decision-making processes. Concurrently, efforts are urgently needed to bridge the policy-institution gap by enhancing institutional capacity

through training, staffing, and granting flexibility for local adaptation. Finally, moving beyond mere communication to foster genuine, action-oriented stakeholder collaboration is essential for building trust and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits. Without addressing these core governance deficiencies, financial investments and promotional campaigns will yield limited returns in achieving long-term sustainability.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following policy and practice recommendations are proposed to harness tourism as a driver of sustainable development in Harar.

- **Prioritize structural reforms in governance**: - As governance structures have shown the strongest correlation with sustainable development ($r = .841$), policy makers should work to build more integrated and coordinated governance. This means that policy makers should clearly define the responsibilities of tourism authorities at federal, regional, and municipal level, establishing formal rules to ensure coordination to reduce fragmentation in planning and implementation.
- **Strengthen participatory governance structures**: - The regional tourism office should establish a formal steering committee with decision-making powers. The committee shall be composed of representatives of local authorities, tour operators, hotel associations, and elected community leaders from the regions concerned. Its mandate should be to jointly develop tourism plans and to monitor their implementation. This would directly address problems in the collaborative decision-making process.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares that that there is no conflict of interest in this research. The study was conducted fairly, and there are no such financial or personal relationships which could have influenced the results.

Ethical consideration

This study does not carry any violations against humanity. All participants' interactions were conducted in a respectful manner and in accordance with ethical procedures.

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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 (ፕይፇ), and word level Amharic (ትምህርት) to Awngi (ከንቲ). 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, Stagvroula (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 Awngi and their influences on the Awngi language.

More specifically, the study aims to:

1. identify the cause that Awngi 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 Awngi 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 Awngi, as well as their influence on the indigenous language, Awngi. 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 Awngi 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 Awngi and their influence on the indigenous language, Awngi. At the beginning, to garner the necessary information, an interview was designed and conducted with 12 respondents who were proficient in both Amharic and Awngi languages. It comprised semi-structured questions. The questions were intended to gather data on the reasons why Awngi 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 Awngi 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 Awgni 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 Awgni 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 Awngi 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 Awngi 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 Awngi 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 Awngi 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 Awngi when I return to my hometown and village. (INTERVIEW 1)

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

I believe that speakers of the Awngi 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 Awngi 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 Awngi speakers. It is supported by the data from INTERVIEWEE 6 as stated below.

Awngi 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 Awngi contributes to my tendency to engage in code mixing and switching. I can speak Awngi because I am married to an Awngi 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), (በሬ), and (ጥይት) to Awngi (አንቲ), (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-Awgni

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 Awngi 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 Awngi 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 Awngi in various ways. The findings of this study indicate that Awngi 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 Awngi. Therefore, it implies that Awngi speakers may incorporate words from Amharic while communicating, using Awngi accent and intonation. For instance, the respondents of the interview indicated that they might borrow from "በሬ" (Amharic), meaning "*ox*" in English, or use or replace "ጥይት" (Amharic), which is a Semitic language and originated from the Ge'ez language, with the Cushitic language family i.e "በሬ" (Awgni) instead of "ትይቻ" (Awngi), 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 Awngi has both positive and negative effects on the host language, Awngi. On the positive side, it fosters relationships between Awngi 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, Awngi, 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 Awngi 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 Awngi. 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 Awngi 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.

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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Bridging the gap: A comparative study of primary school students' language needs and textbook suitability

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Abstract

This research project aimed at exploring the nexus between primary school students' English language learning needs and textbook contents. To achieve the research objective descriptive survey design was employed, and teachers' and students' samples were included by using a simple random sampling technique. Accordingly, 338 teachers and 783 students were selected for the study sample. The instruments of data collection were questionnaires, document analysis, and interviews. By using these methods of data collection, the findings were that the course contents in English textbooks were beyond students' level and their language needs as foreign language learners. Also, the various activities and the course contents were not graded well from simple to complex levels. Lastly, the textbook preparation did not significantly address students' English language needs at the lower cycle primary education level. In considering the findings of the study, the following recommendations were given. First, the textbook developers should prepare English textbooks for the first cycle of primary education in considering students' levels. Second, the textbook developers should assess the students' need for English Foreign Language in the first cycle of primary school. Finally, researchers should study further the status of teachers' efforts to minimize the gap between students' need of English learning needs and the textbook preparations.

Keywords: EFL needs; textbook preparation; primary education; text analysis

Introduction

The expansion of economic and political relations among the nations of the world is increasing due to globalization. Hence, there is a need for common means of communication, which makes English language important. English has become the medium of international communication for a variety of reasons. Within the context of education, there is an enormous reservoir of educational materials in all fields available in English. These provide an invaluable aid for education, particularly in relation to advancing industrial diversification and technology. Regarding to this, Beril and Engin (2018) explained that one of the consequences of the pervasive presence of English in various educational contexts and countries is the emergence and rapid development of English-medium instruction   Due to such significance of

teaching English in various education levels, studying students' need in comparing with what is presented has a pivotal role in students' English Foreign Language learning.

In addition, Tzotzou (2014) explained that conducting needs analysis is essential to plan educational programs and curriculum development. Need analysis is used to collect information about learners' needs, focusing on the study of learners' perceived and present needs, as well as their potential and unrecognized needs.

In other words, before we analyze learners' EFL needs, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook is important. The process of textbook evaluation can be essential to develop our understanding of its significance and limitations when teachers and students use them. In doing so, it contributes to both acquisition theory and pedagogic practices. Concerning the necessity of quality textbooks, Alemi and Bagheri, (2013) stated that the educational quality of textbooks as the main source of input for English as a foreign language (EFL) learners is too significant for their learning progress.

Furthermore, it is realized that effective teaching and learning constitute functions of a combination of factors, which are the teacher, the material, the learner, and the learning situation (Ndukwe, 2015).   This scholar added that one of the fundamental principles underlying learner-centered systems of language learning is that teaching learning programs should be responsive to learners' needs. Currently, this is widely accepted as a principle of program design and development. Needs analysis is a vital prerequisite to the specification of language learning objectives.

The above discussion implies that to make the teaching learning process, consider the learners' needs in preparing what they will learn, can make its own contribution to creating good conditions for English Foreign Language learning.

English language teachers should understand the students' need of learning and the challenges they face in the teaching learning process (Harris, 2015). In the study country's context, secondary school students' English textbooks were not prepared with a good level of quality. For instance, some of the exercises were not designed for genuine communications; some of the skills were not presented in the way the learners needed; and significant numbers of topics and contents were not in harmony with the learners' interests and culture. For instance, Abebe (2016) studied on the quality of grade twelve English text books, and in his research study, it has been explained that

teachers and students pointed to some weaknesses in textbook in terms of its glossary list, shortage of time to cover the stated objectives, lack of models for final achievement tests, placing listening texts in the text book which would have been put in the teachers' guide and missing to include pronunciation lessons.

Though such studies have been conducted in secondary schools, no studies on primary school level English textbook preparations and students' need for English Foreign Language learning in the study country context, as far as reading from the Internet, as well as from printed material. This gap led the researchers to conduct research on the gap between the learners' EFL needs and English textbook preparation. This research study can be a pioneer for other course subjects at the primary level of education in the study country context. The general objective of this research is to explore the nexus between primary school students' language learning needs and textbook contents. Specifically, the study aimed to: 1) To analyze students' need for EFL learning, 2) To evaluate the graded of contents presented in the textbooks, and 3) To check if there is a gap between students' EFL learning need and what is being presented now to them.

Methods of the study

Description of the study and the area

Based on the Ethiopian population projection of 2021, Awi Zone is expected to have a total population of 1.3 million people. 12 percent of the total population lives in urban areas, and 88 percent of the people live in rural areas. The study focuses on exploring the nexus between primary school students' language learning needs and textbook contents. Geographically, the study addressed primary schools in nine rural woredas and three administrative towns.

Research design

This part of the study briefly describes the research approach that has been followed, the way the study samples were selected, and the setting of the study. Thus, this study aimed to explore the nexus between primary school students' language learning needs and textbook contents.

In conducting this research study, the researcher applied a descriptive survey research design. This is due to the nature of the research, which was designed to analyze students' language in comparison with their textbook preparations. Based on the data that was collected, the research type is mainly qualitative research supported by

quantitative data, as there was data which were analyzed through words as well as in numbers.

Population, sample size, and sampling

The study zone has 554 primary schools, and about 2214 English teachers who were teaching from grade one up to four. The study schools were selected randomly from nine administrative woredas and three towns clustered randomly by using a simple random sampling technique. Within nine rural woredas and three administrative towns, a total of thirty-five primary schools were included in the sample. To determine the teachers' sample size, the following sampling formula (n $=\frac{N}{1+N\,(e2)}$, where n = sample size; N = population and e = estimated error) was used. Using this formula, we estimated a total of 338 teachers.

To estimate the students' sample size, we employed the formula [$n = \frac{Za/2^2 pq}{W2}$ where n = the minimum sample size; Za/2= level of confidence (95%=1.96; P= the proportion of PI practice in the area, assuming 50%; Q=1-p (50% and W= margin of error (5%)]. By using the above sampling equation, the minimum sample size for this study is 384 students. However, by considering the multistage cluster nature, if the researchers used a design effect of 2 and took 2% non-response rate and the final sample size would be 783 students. In sum, 338 teachers and 783 students were included in this research study.

Data collection tools

In order to gather relevant information and to accomplish the objective of this study, the researchers used different instruments such as questionnaires, document analysis, and interviews. Questionnaires and document analysis were the main tools of the study, whereas the interview was used as a supplementary data collection tool in the study.

Questionnaires

Two different questionnaires were designed and administered to teachers and students separately to collect quantitative survey data. Most of the survey questionnaires were closed-ended with five-level Likert scale items from "Strongly Disagree (coded as 1) to "Strongly Agree (coded as 5) while some questionnaires were open-ended items.

The items that were designed by the researchers were commented on by other EFL experts and piloted in primary schools of the study town.

The variable to be studied by using the questionnaires was students' EFL learning needs. Hence, the questionnaires included items that offer brief information about the primary school students' need for English language learning. Also, the questionnaires measured whether or not a gap exists between students' needs and the presented lessons in their textbooks. Regarding the gap between the students' English Language learning needs and the presented content, the students were asked in the questionnaire items, and they responded directly to the given questions.

Document analysis

The document analysis is the second main data collection instrument. It concerns students' textbooks by using appropriate evaluation criteria. These criteria were adapted from literature, like as Mukundan et al (2011), and from other international experts on foreign language. Further, the evaluation checklists were evaluated and checked by other English Foreign Language teachers who were teaching at the university level. Based on those evaluation criteria, the occurrences were rated by tallying them.

Interview

The interview was used as a supplementary tool, and it helped to collect detailed information regarding the students' EFL learning needs and the gap with what is presented in their textbook. To do this, a semi-structured interview was set to ask the respondents detailed information. Since the interview was conducted to triangulate the data obtained from questionnaires and document analysis, ten respondent teachers from every sample school were selected.

Data collection procedures

In the data collection process, questionnaire items and document analysis criteria were designed based on the ideas found in the literature. After the questionnaire items were set, they were trialed in three primary schools of the study Administrative Town. In continuing this, some expressions of the questionnaire items were identified to be modified. The analysis result of chron batch alpha coefficient was 0.75. Next, the questionnaires were administered for the sample study. In addition, in the document analysis procedures, students' English textbooks starting from grade one up to grade

four were reviewed by using textbook evaluation criteria. To supplement the data that was obtained by using questionnaires, interviews were conducted.

Data analysis procedures

In the data analysis procedure, the data were categorized into two parts. The first category was the qualitative data, which was obtained from the open-ended questionnaire, the interview, and the information obtained from the document analysis. The second category was the quantitative data that was obtained from closed-ended questionnaires.

The information collected regarding students' EFL needs and the gap between the presented contents and their learning needs was tabulated and typed into SPSS version 23 based on the questionnaire item types. This was analyzed by using item analysis through descriptive statistics, specifically the mean.

After interpreting the analysis result, the qualitative results were summarized and discussed. Lastly, conclusions of the findings were made with reasonable recommendations.

Results

Teachers' responses

This section contains teachers' responses on quality textbook preparations, the presented activities in the textbook, about vocabulary contents, the pronunciation lessons, the textbook preparations in comparison with students' needs, and the textbook preparation in consideration of students' level.

Table 1: Teachers' Response to the Quality of Textbooks

No	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	The textbooks are suited to students' interests	338	2.1	1.19
2	The textbook contains sufficient text and pictures	338	3	1.19
3	The activities are good	338	1.9	0.97
4	The activities in the textbook are graded from simple to complex	338	1.9	1.02
5	Activities are prepared to initiate meaningful communication	338	2.2	1.03
6	Activities are suitable for individual, pair, and group work	338	2.5	1.18
7	The activities are graded based on levels of difficulty	338	2.25	1.1
8	The objectives are achievable	338	2.25	1.07902
9	The activities are good	338	1.9722	0.9706
10	The textbook contains important listening activities with clear objectives	338	2.0833	0.96732

As can be seen in the above table, the teachers were asked if the textbooks were suit for the students' interests. For this item, the teachers responded with a mean value of 2.1 with a standard deviation of 1.19. In addition to this, the teachers answered with a mean value of 3.0 for the questions they were asked to answer about whether the textbook contained sufficient text and pictures, with a standard deviation of 1.19. The mean values were found from five Likert scale response items. The result indicated that the English textbooks contained sufficient text and pictures. However, the English textbooks were not significantly suited to the students' interests.

Item 3 asked the teachers whether the activities were good, and they reacted with a mean value of 1.9, and the standard deviation of this mean was 0.97. Further, they were asked to respond if the activities in the textbook were graded from simple to complex. They reacted with a mean value of 1.9 and a standard deviation of 1.02. Also, the teachers were asked if the activities were prepared to initiate meaningful communication. Accordingly, they responded with the mean value of 2.2 and the standard deviation of 1.03. Finally, by item 6, the teachers were asked if the activities were suitable for individual, pair, and group work. They answered with the mean value of 2.5 and the standard deviation of 1.18.

Hence, the result showed that the English textbooks were not significantly good, graded from simple to complex, and initiated meaningful communication.

In the above table, item 7 asked the students if activities were graded based on levels of difficulty, and the teachers replied with the mean value of 2.25 and with the standard deviation of 1.1. This result implies that the activities in the textbook were not graded from simple to complex. They were also asked whether the objectives are achievable or not. They responded with the mean value of 2.2500 and the standard deviation of 1.07902. Moreover, the researchers asked the participants whether the activities were good or not in item 9. And the teachers answered this question with the mean value of 1.9722 and standard deviation of 0.97060. And they were asked about the apparent aims of listening activities in the students' textbook at item 10 in the above table. They responded that the mean value of 2.0833 with a standard deviation of 0.96732. The results indicated that there was no significantly achievable course objective; the activities were not significantly good, and the textbooks did not contain important listening activities with clear objectives.

Table 2: Teachers' Response to Vocabulary and Pronunciation Activities

No	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
11	Reading activities are graded from simple to complex	338	2.5	1.2
12	The reading activities are interesting	338	2.2	1.1
13	Activities have achievable objectives that consider students' level of understanding	38	1.9	0.94
14	Activities are interesting	338	2	1
15	Vocabulary in every section of the lesson is appropriate to the level	338	2	0.94
16	Vocabulary activities are graded from simple to complex across the chapters	338	2.2	1.01
17	Vocabularies are repeated well	338	2.4	1.13
18	The pronunciations are contextualized	338	2.08	0.96
19	The pronunciation is clear for the students	338	1.94	0.95

As shown in the above table, the teachers responded to item 11 with the mean value and standard deviation of 2.5 and 1.2, respectively. Besides, the teachers were asked, focusing on reading activities, whether they are interesting or not at item 12 in the above table 4. For this, they replied with the mean value of 2.2 and with the standard

deviation of 1.1. The mean value of 1.9 and the standard deviation of 0.94 are seen at item 13, where the researchers asked the teachers whether the activities have feasible objectives that take into account students' level.   And they responded with the mean value of 2.0 and standard deviation of 1.0 for the above item 14 in table 4. The obtained result implied that the reading activities were not significantly graded from simple to complex, interesting, and did not have achievable objectives.

As can be seen in the above table, the teachers were asked if the words were proper for every section of the lesson. Accordingly, they responded with the mean value of 2.0 and with the standard deviation of 0.94. Item 16 emphasized whether the activities that were designed to progress vocabulary were arranged from simple to complex throughout the chapters. Regarding this, they replied with the mean value of 2.2 and with the standard deviation of 1.01. In addition, the findings from teachers' interviews supported that the textbooks were not graded from simple to complex level. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the vocabulary activities were not graded from simple to complex across chapters of the English textbooks. For item 17 in the above table, the teachers were asked if vocabularies are repeated well in the English textbooks, and they responded with a mean value of 2.4 and a standard deviation of 1.13.

Students were asked to know if the pronunciations were well contextualized, and they gave their reaction to this item with a mean value of 3.2 and a standard deviation of 1.06.

As can be inferred from item 18 in the above table, the teachers responded with a mean value of 2.08 and a standard deviation of 0.96. In addition, the current researchers provided the item that concerns the clarity of pronunciation for the students on item 19. For the presented question, the teachers replied with the mean value of 1.94 and the Std. deviation of 0.95. In sum, the result indicated that the pronunciation lessons were not contextualized, and they were not clear to the students.

Table 3: Teachers' Response to the Textbook Preparations in Relation to Students' Needs and Level

No	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
20	The textbook contains appropriate English content	338	2.25	1.15
21	The course contents fit with students' needs to develop their English skills	338	2.05	1.12
22	The course contents fit with students' need to know the expected language skills to the level	338	2.05	0.95
23	The English language inputs in the textbook are good input for the next level of education	338	2.41	1.31
24	The activities are necessary for the students' level and are achievable	338	1.83	0.91

In item 20, the teachers were asked to answer if the textbook contained appropriate English content, and they reacted with a mean value and standard deviation of 2.25 and 1.15, respectively. However, item 21, which was accentuating whether the contents of the textbook fit students' need so as to enhance language skills, was provided for the teachers. In relation to this, the mean value indicated that 2.05 and 1.12 are the standard deviations. Furthermore, as it is figured out at item 22 in the above table, the mean value showed that 2.05 and 0.95452 are the standard deviations. It can be summarized that the textbook did not contain appropriate English content, and it was not suitable for students' needs to develop their English skills. Also, the course contents did not fit with students' need to know the expected language skills to the required level.

During the interview, the teachers gave explanations that much course contents in the textbooks were not prepared considering what English content were needed at students' graded levels. They explained that overall, such lesson contents made the students pessimistic in their English Language learning. Hence, they are not interested to learn the English subjects.

As it is indicated in item 23, which asked whether the inputs of English language in the textbook were good for the next educational level or not, had a 2.41 mean value. In addition, the teachers were asked whether the activities were important and achievable for the students. For this item, they responded with the mean value of 1.83, and the standard deviation was 0.91. Regarding the achievability of the activities, the teachers

explained during the interview that the activities did not consider students' level. The experienced teachers added that most students faced difficulty in participating in the classroom activities.

In concluding, the English language inputs in the textbook were not a significant improvement for the next level of education. The activities were not necessary for the students' level and were not achievable.

Students' responses

Students were asked if the activities were prepared to initiate communication, and they reacted with a mean value of 3.2 and a standard deviation is 0.96. In addition, students were asked if the activities were suitable for pair and group work. For this item, they responded with the mean value of 2.5 and the standard deviation of 2.5.

Table 4: Students' Response to Activities Presented in the Textbook

No	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Activities are prepared to initiate communication.	783	3.2	0.96
2	Activities are suitable for pair and group work.	783	2.5	0.97
3	Reading activities can be done by students	783	2.2	0.99
4	Writing activities have achievable objectives and consider the learners' level	783	2.75	0.93
5	Activities are suitable for group work	783	2.45	1.04

Also, item 3 asked the students if reading activities could be done by them, and they gave the answers with a mean value of 2.2 and a standard deviation of 0.99. Item 4 was given to know if writing activities had achievable objectives and considered the learners' level, and they responded with a mean value of 2.75. Item 5 asked the students if activities are suitable for group work. Hence, the result indicated that activities were prepared to initiate meaningful communication, and they were suitable for pair and group work. The data shows that writing activities had achievable objectives and considered the learners' level. However, the result implied that reading activities could not be done by students, and the reading activities were not significantly suitable for group work.

Table 5 Vocabulary Lessons and the Grading of Activities

No	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
6	The number of vocabulary words in the course content is appropriate for our levels	783	3.1	0.95
7	Course contents are graded from simple to complex levels	783	2.8	1.18
8	Vocabularies are repeated in the course content	783	4.1	1.03

As can be seen in the table, item 6 asked to know the amount of vocabulary in the course content appropriate to their levels, and they reacted with a mean value of 3.1 and a standard deviation of 0.95. Item 7 asked the students if the course contents were graded from a simple to a complex level. They responded to this with the mean value of 2.8 and the standard deviation of 1.18. Item 8 asked the students to know if vocabularies were repeated in the course content. They answered with the mean value of 4.1and standard deviation of 1.03.

Table 6: Students' Response to Grammar Activities

No	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
9	Grammar activities are achievable	783	2.65	0.92
10	The grammar section has been contextualized	783	3.2	1.2
11	The grammar activities are clear and achievable	783	2.51	1

In the above table, item 9 asked students if grammar activities were achievable, and they responded with the mean value of 2.65 and with the Std. deviation 0.92. In addition, by item 10, the students were asked if the grammar section had been contextualized. They gave answers with a mean value of 3.2 and with a standard deviation of 1.2. Next, item 11 asked the students if grammar activities were clear and achievable, and they answered with a mean value of 2.51 and a standard deviation of 1.0. From the above result, it can be concluded that grammar activities were achievable and contextualized. In addition, the grammar activities were clear and achievable.

Document analysis results

English textbooks from grade one up to grade four had been reviewed by the researchers using prescribed criteria. Overall, the textbooks, the listening texts were presented in students' textbooks. In this situation, teaching listening skills was too difficult; students were reading the listening text while the teachers were ordering them to listen to the teachers' oral reading.

Accordingly, it was found that in the grade one English textbook, each unit of the textbook does not clearly distinguish major and minor topics, and it lacks precise instructions. Hence, it is tricky to engage in the activities due to the absence of the necessary activities. Not only difficulty for the students but also the junior teachers were confused about what to do by using such parts of the textbook without the appropriate instruction.

The titles of the units were not contextualized. They were talking about two/more different parts. In a sense, there was no logical relationship between the overall aim of the unit and the activities. For example, under unit 12 on page 73, it is about command, but the tasks are not about commanding.

Moreover, it was improved that in the grade one textbook, the lesson contents and the activities were not graded from simple to complex. For instance, the textbook in the first unit starts with a short paragraph and words. Next to this, the content progressed to letter and number counting. This indicated that there were lessons outside the given context of the unit.

In the same way, the researchers reviewed a grade two English textbook. It was reviewed that, as a limitation, there were no lesson objectives for each unit, nor were there subtopics for each lesson. Also, the book was not compiled with the appropriate teaching methodology. For example, on pages 69 and 73, the activity invited the learners to learn only speaking and listening language skills. Some of the vocabulary in the book was difficult for grade two students, and it was difficult to teach by locally contextualizing it for the students' level.   For instance, the vocabulary presented on page 97 includes "recites" and "chants''. Hence, the textbook preparation lacked contextualized to the study country context, and the textbook led the teachers and students to feel difficulty with words. In addition, the textbook ordered the teachers to practice their students' listening, but the listening text had been presented in the students' textbook.   Grammatical errors occur; for instance, in a reading comprehension passage, it says, "Desta and Andaregech go to Addis Abeba with their

family". Such a grammatical error would lead students to learn the wrong pattern of English. In Unit Two of the grade three English textbook, the lessons and activities were not graded from simple to complex across units. In the same way, the distribution of vocabulary is not simple to complex. In addition, the textbooks contained various interpretations of pictures, graphs, and symbols. This might be difficult at this grade level. Furthermore, some tasks were difficult for those with a lower level of education. For example, reading a poem was not relevant in the beginner level of a foreign language class. These presentations of course content mismatched with the theory of language learning, which claims that the learner learn the language by adding what they had in their initial knowledge (i+1).

Lastly, grade four English textbook activities were difficult at this level. For example, in this grade level, students were asked to practice and write letters. Also, tasks were not graded from simple to complex. Activities were not learner-friendly since activities contain many unfamiliar words and complex lessons. Overall, the textbooks were prepared approximately to the mother tongue speaker of English learning material. Hence, it created anxiety in learners, and they considered English a difficult course subject.

Discussion

The primary aim of this study was to explore the alignment between English language learning needs of first-cycle primary school students and the contents of the English textbooks used in schools found Awi Administrative Zone. The findings indicate a significant mismatch between students' English language learning needs and the content, structure, and pedagogical design of the textbooks.

First, the data obtained from both teachers and students consistently showed that the English textbooks did not sufficiently address the learners' language levels and needs. Teachers particularly highlighted that the materials were not adequately contextualized to the students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and that much of the content appeared to have been prepared with assumptions appropriate for first-language English learners. This supports earlier claims made by scholars such as Harris (2015) and Abebe (2016), who also found Ethiopian English textbooks misaligned with the learners' local realities and learning levels.

Second, the findings revealed that the textbooks lacked proper grading of content and activities from simple to complex. Both qualitative and quantitative data, including document analysis and responses from teachers, showed that the activities were often poorly sequenced, leading to difficulty in comprehension and participation among students. This violates one of the core principles of effective curriculum design in foreign language teaching, which advocates for scaffolding learning experiences based on learners' proficiency levels (Tzotzou, 2014). The document analysis especially confirmed inconsistencies in the logical progression of units and activities, and in many cases, key language skills such as listening and pronunciation were presented in impractical formats, undermining their pedagogical effectiveness.

Moreover, the vocabulary and grammar sections were found to be inadequately designed. Although students reported higher satisfaction in areas like vocabulary repetition, both teachers and textbook analysis suggested that the lexical and grammatical content was not age or level-appropriate. This reflects Alemi and Bagheri's (2013) assertion that textbook quality, especially in terms of content alignment with learners' capacity which is crucial for meaningful EFL learning.

Additionally, the study found a lack of clear and achievable learning objectives across the textbooks. This issue was emphasized by teachers, who observed that many students could not effectively engage with textbook tasks due to difficulty levels and unclear instructional design. The absence of attainable goals is a serious flaw, as it demotivates learners and contradicts the principle of learner-centered education (Ndukwe, 2015).

Students' perspectives added further weight to the concern. While they acknowledged some features of the textbooks, such as vocabulary repetition, they reported that reading and group activities were difficult to manage, and some tasks did not align with their capabilities. These findings underscore the importance of involving learner feedback in curriculum and material development, as emphasized by Beril and Engin (2018).

Taken together, the findings point to systemic issues in the development of English textbooks for primary education in the region. The mismatch between curriculum content and learner needs not only hampers students' motivation and performance

but also places additional burdens on teachers who must mediate between the prescribed material and the learners' actual capacities.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, it has been concluded that the course contents in English textbook were beyond students' level and their language needs as foreign language learners; the textbooks did not match the local context. The various activities and the course contents were not graded well from the simple to the complex level. Finally, based on the results obtained from the teachers' questionnaires, the textbook preparations did not significantly address students' English language needs at the study grade levels. Simply, it looks like the English textbook for first language speakers of English, and it was beyond the foreign language learners' level.

Declarations

The authors declare that this research manuscript has been researched and composed by ourselves, and it has not been submitted elsewhere and is not under consideration for publication. Moreover, the following issues are declared.

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Conflict of interest

In this research study, there are no financial and non-financial competing interests; it is university-sponsored work.

Availability of data

The authors declare and confirm that the data and detailed information are available for the presented research problems and findings if it is needed to present. Further, the researchers would like to confirm that data sharing is applicable in this research article.

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