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Analyzing Code-Switching Between Afaan Oromoo and English in Ethiopia: A Grammatical Perspective

This pilot study investigates code-switching between Afaan Oromoo and English in informal community interactions in Dambi Dollo, Ethiopia, using the Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model. It is based on two audio recordings totaling 90 minutes of spontaneous conversations, which have been transcribed and analyzed. The MLF model's principles were applied to identify the Matrix Language (ML) and Embedded Language (EL). Clauses are classified into monolingual and bilingual, with Afaan Oromoo predominantly governing syntactic structure, while English mainly serves as a lexical provider. The analysis highlights a strong preference for Afaan Oromoo in informal conversations, with Amharic and English playing minor roles. These findings contribute to understanding multilingualism in Ethiopia, demonstrating how linguistic structures and social factors influence bilingual communication.

Keywords: Afaan Oromoo, Bilingualism, Code-switching, English, Matrix Language Frame (MLF) Model

1. Introduction

Ethiopia, with its diverse communities, each distinguished by distinct languages, cultures, and ethnicities, offers a valuable opportunity for studying bilingualism and multilingualism in everyday life. According to Meyer et al. (2023), Ethiopia, an East African nation with a population exceeding 100 million, is home to over 80 languages, although this number can vary depending on the methodology used. For instance, Ado et al. (2021) identified over 85 languages spoken by approximately 110 million people. The coexistence of so many languages in Ethiopia creates a unique environment for studying various linguistic phenomena, with code-switching (CS) being a particularly prominent feature.

CS is a linguistic phenomenon observed in bilingual speech or writing, where individuals use two or more languages within a single conversation or piece of discourse (Deuchar et al., 2018; Deuchar & Stammers, 2012). In this context, CS refers to the practice of mixing multiple languages within the same communicative

exchange. This phenomenon is widespread in informal settings and multilingual communities, such as Ethiopia, where individuals fluidly mix linguistic elements to convey meaning and express cultural nuances. See instances of code-switching in the following examples. Key to glosses: 1/2/3PL, First/second/third Person Plural; 1/2/3SL, First/second/third Person Singular; POSS, possessive pronoun; DET, determiner; ACCO, Accusative; Q, Question mark; ART, Article; NEG, negative/negative particle; IMPV, imperfect verb; IMP, Imperative verb; PRV, Perfective Verb; CNV, Converb; FOC, Focus marker; COP, copula; NOM, Nominative marker; LOC, Locative marker; M, male; F, female; Pass, passive marker. Additionally, Afaan Oromoo words appear in standard font, English words in **bold** with @eng, and Amharic words in *italics* with @amh.

(1) **Direct @eng** hin did-e maalinnii wanti-chi.
Direct NEG refuse-3SL.PRV. what thing-ART
"It refused to direct what the thing is."

(Maccaa-OC09-MAB-94)

(2) *Mastaaweqiiyaa@amh* godh-ee achi kaa'-e
Advertisement do-3SL.M.CNV.PRV there put-3SL.M.PRV
factory
factory

blue magic@eng-tu.
blue magic -FOC
"The Blue Magic factory placed it there as an advertisement."

(Maccaa-OC09-SAF-280)

(3) Kun **file**@eng -tti hidh-am-a.
This **fil**e- to tie-PASS-IMPV
"This is tied to a file."

(Maccaa-OC09-SAF-48)

(4) **Photo**@eng hin qab-uum
photo NEG have-3SL.CNV.IMPV
"It does not have a photo."

(Maccaa-OC09-MAB-45)

CS has been extensively researched from various perspectives, employing diverse approaches and theoretical frameworks. Researchers have examined CS through linguistic, sociocultural, cognitive, and psycholinguistic lenses, as demonstrated in the works of scholars (such as Auer, 2013; Bullock & Toribio, 2009; Deuchar & Stammers, 2012; Gardner-Chloros, 2009); Khan & Khalid, 2018; Wei, 2009; and are among others. However, there is a notable lack of studies on CS within the Ethiopian context. Some Ethiopian research has addressed this topic(see Ali 2015; Bejiga 2021; Leyew 1998; and Sime 2019, for more details), but the Ethiopian context remains underexplored compared to studies in Western countries. Consequently, the study to be reported here is of potential significance. There is a gap in the literature regarding code-switching between Afaan Oromoo and other languages from a linguistic perspective in Ethiopia.

Sime (2019) explores Amharic-English code-switching in Ethiopian EFL classrooms, comparing its frequency and types in primary (grade 7) and secondary (grade 9) levels. Findings show higher CS use in primary classrooms (31.9%) compared to secondary classrooms (17%). Four CS types are identified: inter-sentential, intra-sentential, extra-sentential (tag), and intra-word switching, with intra-sentential CS being dominant at the primary level and inter-sentential at the secondary level. The study concludes that while CS supports learning, its use should align with students' proficiency to ensure adequate English exposure.

Keleta (2020) investigated code-switching between Tigrinya and English within FM radio broadcasts in Mekelle, Ethiopia, using the Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model. This research examines intrasentential code-switching in the Tigrinya language, with a focus on the prevalence of English nouns, adjectives, and verbs in radio broadcasts. Keleta's study highlights the role of Tigrinya as the matrix language, with English elements fitting into the morphosyntactic structure of Tigrinya (Keleta, 2020).

In a similar vein, Emam & Mekonnen (2022) examined code-switching between Amharic and English within the Ethiopian media. They found that English elements such as nouns, adjectives, and adverbs were frequently embedded within Amharic sentences, with Amharic serving as the matrix language. Their study underscores the dynamic relationship between Amharic and English in Ethiopia's multilingual media landscape and highlights the influence of English in modern civic and technological discourse (Emam & Mekonnen, 2022).

Leyew (1998) investigates Amharic-English code-switching in Ethiopia, analyzing linguistic and sociolinguistic factors across various contexts, including schools, universities, and media. The study identifies Amharic as the matrix language and English as the embedded language, with nouns and adjectives being switched more frequently than verbs due to morphological limitations. Influenced by

education, prestige, and linguistic economy, code-switching is systematic rather than random, though it is often viewed negatively by monolinguals. The study highlights structured patterns in Amharic-English bilingual interactions.

The primary aim of this pilot study, to be reported, was to explore code-switching (CS) between Afaan Oromoo and English in informal community interactions, where bilingualism and multilingualism are prevalent. The Matrix Language Frame (MLF) theory will provide the analytical framework (Myers-Scotton, 1993, 2002, 2004, 2006). The MLF distinguishes between the Matrix Language (ML) and the Embedded Language (EL) in code-switched clauses. The analysis will focus on clause-level code-switching, specifically intraclausal code-switching, which involves switching within a clause, as opposed to interclausal code-switching, switching that occurs at clause boundaries (Deuchar, 2012). This study will examine the distribution of CS between Afaan Oromoo and English, with particular attention to identifying the Matrix Language (ML).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Previous Research on Code-Switching in Ethiopian Languages

Despite Ethiopia being a multilingual country, there is a general scarcity of research exploring code-switching between pairs of languages, with little research on code-switching between Afaan Oromoo and English, I have found only a limited number of studies on Ethiopian languages such as English /Amharic, English/Tigrigna and rarely Afaan Oromoo/English CS, and these were in educational settings and media. Among the Ethiopian studies reviewed in Section 1, there are relevant insights into this area(see Balay, 2020; Bejiga, 2021; Leyew, 1998; and Sime, 2019, for details). In addition to these local studies, Temesgen and Hailu (2022) and Ali (2015) also investigated CS between Amharic/English and Oromiffa-Harari languages, respectively.

Temesgen and Hailu (2022) investigate code-switching practices among EFL teachers in Ethiopia, addressing a research gap in multilingual education contexts. Their study reveals that teachers switch between Amharic and English to clarify complex concepts, explain vocabulary, manage classroom dynamics, and foster rapport. Code-switching is driven by students' limited English proficiency, teachers' instructional beliefs, and the specific language skills being taught. The authors argue for the strategic use of code-switching as a pedagogical tool, rather than enforcing an English-only approach (Temesgen & Hailu, 2022).

Ali (2015) investigates Oromiffa-Harari code-switching in Dire Dawa, highlighting both its structural patterns and sociolinguistic motivations. The study, based on interviews, focus groups, and recorded conversations, finds that Oromiffa functions as the matrix language, with Harari as the embedded language. Code-

switching occurs systematically across word categories such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives, with intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag-switching being the most common types. Motivation includes ethnic identity expression, communicative efficiency, and bilingual competence. Notably, older speakers tend to use inter-sentential switching, while younger ones prefer intra-sentential forms. While offering valuable insights into bilingualism involving Afaan Oromoo, the study also underscores a research gap—there is limited investigation into clause-level Afaan Oromoo-English code-switching in informal, everyday discourse.

2.2. Theoretical Framework: The Matrix Language Frame Model

The Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model, developed by Myers-Scotton, is a key theoretical framework in the study of code-switching. It distinguishes between the Matrix Language (ML), which determines the syntactic structure of a clause, and the Embedded Language (EL), which contributes lexical items. A key idea of the model is that while the ML sets up the grammar, the EL adds words in a way that follows the ML's rules without altering them (Myers-Scotton,1993, 2002).

The MLF model has been widely used to analyze code-switching in various bilingual communities (Deuchar et al., 2018). The key principles of the MLF model include the Matrix Language Principle, Morpheme Order Principle (MOP), and System Morpheme Principle (SMP). These principles guide the identification of matrix language by analyzing word order and grammatical markers (Deuchar, 2006).

The 4-M refined the MLF model by categorizing morphemes into content and system morphemes. System morphemes are further divided into early system morphemes, bridge late system morphemes, and outsider late system morphemes. I will employ the updated version of the MLF Model in my study to analyze the structural and morphosyntactic patterns of code-switching between Afaan Oromoo and English(see Jake, J. L., & Myers-Scotton, 2020; Myers-Scotton & Jake, 2017; Myers-Scotton & Jake, 2015; Myers-Scotton, 2002, for more details).

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

The data for this study were drawn from a bilingual corpus consisting of conversations in Afaan Oromoo-English. Many of the speakers were also competent in Amharic, one of the official languages. These conversations were recorded with native speakers of Afaan Oromoo, transcribed, and systematically coded to identify instances of code-switching. To maintain consistency in the transcription of words from two or more languages, the following conventions were employed: words in Afaan Oromoo were rendered in standard font, English words were presented in bold and tagged as @eng, while Amharic words were italicised and tagged as @amh. Each

example was annotated with detailed morphological information, including grammatical features such as tense, aspect, and number.

In this study, transcription files are named to ensure consistency, facilitate efficient data management, and traceability throughout the analysis. Each filename encapsulates key metadata, including dialect type, recording sequence, anonymized speaker identity, and the precise location of the extracted utterance within the dataset. In the file name Maccaa-OC09-MAB-45, "Maccaa" shows the specific Afaan Oromoo dialect; 'OC' stands for the dataset (with 'O' for Oromo and 'C' as a special code); "09" is the recording's sequence number; "MAB" is a fake name to keep the speaker's identity private; and "45" points to the row in the spreadsheet where this example is found.

This study draws on two audio recordings comprising approximately 90 minutes of spontaneous conversation among four speakers. We transcribed and organized the data into a structured spreadsheet. We identify each speaker using pseudonyms and delineate their corresponding utterances throughout the dataset. Utterances are classified as monolingual or bilingual clauses. The spreadsheet provides interlinear glossing for each clause to illustrate the underlying morphological and syntactic structures, with English translations for clarity.

The study employed a social network approach to recruit participants(Milroy, 1987). This ensures a diverse sample representing various social and occupational backgrounds. Speakers, aged 20 to 40, included government employees and students. All participants spoke the Macca Oromo dialect of Afaan Oromoo and had lived in the Kellem Wollega Zone for over 20 years.

3.2 Linguistic Data Analysis

The analysis aimed to identify the role of each language (Afaan Oromoo and English) as either the Matrix Language (ML) or Embedded Language (EL). Using the MLF model, we looked at the structure of each sentence to see if it followed the usual SOV (Subject-Object-Verb) order of Afaan Oromoo or the SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) order of English.

The data analysis process categorized utterances into simple and complex clauses. Each identified clause functioned as a unit of analysis to determine the Matrix language, as outlined above. In this analysis, main clauses and subordinate clauses are treated as distinct units. The clauses were classified as monolingual and bilingual on an Excel spreadsheet. Each clause was glossed, translated into English, and labeled as follows: monolingual Afaan Oromoo, monolingual English, monolingual Amharic, and bilingual clauses. If a clause has morphemes from one language, it's monolingual; if it has morphemes from two or more, it's bilingual.

This study seeks to identify the matrix language within the context of code-switching between Afaan Oromoo and English. We analyzed word order, constituent structure, and finite verbs to determine the Matrix Language (ML) in Oromo/English clauses based on specific criteria, including morpheme order and outsider late morpheme principles. The assumption is that the morphology of the finite verb, i.e., outside late system morphemes, will originate from the ML if the clause shows classic code-switching patterns.

3.3 Distinguishing Code-Switching from Loanwords

Establishing clear criteria for differentiating between lexical loans and single-word switches in the code-switching between Afaan Oromoo and English is crucial for accurately analyzing language contact. This also offers insights into how external languages have influenced the structure and vocabulary of Afaan Oromoo over time.

In this study, words in Afaan Oromoo that were listed in authoritative dictionaries were considered loans, while words not in the dictionary were categorized as code-switches. This approach helps to clarify the relationship between language mixing and the incorporation of foreign elements in bilingual speech.

We have included single-word switches and differentiated them from loanwords based on their predictability (Muysken, 2000, p. 71; cf. Deuchar, 2006, p. 1899). This predictability is linked to "listedness," which refers to whether a word is stored in the speaker's mental lexicon, like being listed in a dictionary. We relied on established dictionaries, particularly the "Elelle trilingual Afaan Oromoo Amharic and English Dictionary"(Hinsen Makuria, 2009), to assess listedness. If an English-origin term is listed in a recognized Afaan Oromoo dictionary, it is classified as a loan; if absent, it is treated as a switch. We recognized that this approach may not be watertight, as dictionaries may not fully reflect current usage, which can lead to potential misclassifications. In the context of this study, which aims to identify the matrix language in code-switching instances between Afaan Oromoo and English, loanwords are excluded from the analysis. See the following examples:

(5)	Kaleessa	akkuma	ati	jetteen	cufe
	Yesterday	as	you	say-2SL.CNV.PRV	shut-1SL.PRV
	moobaayilii				
	mobile				

"Yesterday as you said I shut down the mobile."

(Maccaa-OC09-SAF-115)

(6) **Form**@eng gaafa guutte moo bilbileen itti
Form when fill-3SL.F.PRV while call-1SL.PRV to
him-a Yoonammoo
tell- 1SL.IMPV Yona-FOC
"When you fill out the form, I will call and tell them now."
(Maccaa-OC09-MAB-289)

In example (5), the Afaan Oromo dictionary lists the term "moobaayilii" (mobile) as a loanword from the English language. On the other hand, in example (6), the word 'form' is not listed in the "Elelle Afaan Oromoo dictionary" and "Glosbe" online Oromo-English dictionary, and so is categorized as the switch to English (the equivalent meaning in Afaan Oromoo is "unka" (form).

4. Results

4.1 Distribution of Matrix Language

4.1.1 Monolingual Clauses

The ML model framework applies not only to bilingual clauses but also to monolingual ones. Specifically, the Morpheme Order Principle and System Morpheme Principle can be used to find matrix language within these monolingual contexts, as well as in bilingual contexts. Afaan Oromoo follows a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) order in declarative sentences, while English follows a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) order. See the following example.

(7) Nam-ni amantii isaa sodaat-a. (Maccaa-OC01 EYN 544)
Man-NOM religion his fear-IMPV
"Man fears his religion."

In example (7), the clause follows the typical Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) structure of Afaan Oromoo, with the subject "Nam-ni" marked by the nominative case "-ni," the object "amantii isaa" (his religion) with the possessive marker "isaa," (his), and the verb "sodaat-a" (to fear) in its finite form. The verb ends with the '-a' aspect marker, a late outsider morpheme in Afaan Oromoo, indicating the imperfective aspect. This structure confirms Afaan Oromoo as the matrix language, with the "-a" aspect marker aligning with its grammatical system.
The following examples will be used to illustrate the application of the system Morpheme Principle.

(8) Lafa meeqa bitt-a. (Maccaa-OC01 DAH 220)
Land much buy-2S. IMPV
"You buy much land"

In example (8), the analysis confirms Afaan Oromoo as the matrix language.

The clause follows the typical SOV structure, but the object "lafa" precedes the verb "bitta" due to the implied subject. The adjective "meeqa" (a lot/much) follows the noun 'lafa,' consistent with Afaan Oromoo's noun-adjective order. The verb 'bitt' is marked with the -a suffix, a late outsider morpheme that indicates the 2nd person singular subject "you" and the imperfective aspect, signaling a habitual action. This structure highlights the verb morphology and syntax typical of Afaan Oromoo.

No English monolingual clauses were found in the two conversations analyzed in detail for this study. However, example (9), drawn from a separate recording (Maccaa-OC02-SAG 489) that was not closely examined, is included as an instance to illustrate that such clauses may appear in the larger dataset.

(9) **He never gives up.**
He never give-3SL.M. IMPV up.
"Inni gonkumaa abdii hin kutatu."(equivalent Afan Oromoo translation)

This clause follows the English SV order and satisfies the System Morpheme Principle, confirming English as the matrix language. The finite verb "gives" agrees with the subject "He" and demonstrates a late outsider morpheme through third-person singular agreement. The pronoun "He" is a content morpheme, while the adverb 'never' is an early system morpheme modifying the verb. The particle 'up' functions as a bridge late system morpheme, linking with "gives" to form the phrasal verb "gives up." These elements, such as the Morpheme Order Principle and the 4-M model, confirm English as the matrix language. The following example illustrates the syntactic structure of Amharic, a Semitic language with SOV word order in declarative clauses that employs the Geʿez (Fidel) script, an alpha syllabary (abugida) derived from the ancient Geʿez writing system. The following Amharic example demonstrates these features.

(10) ፀጉሬ ደረቀ ተበጣጠሰ:: (Maccaa-OC09 SAF 323)
Ts'egur-ē derek'-e tebet'at'es-e.
H̄air-my dry-PFV tangled-PFV
'My hair dried and got tangled.'

In example (10), the clause deviates from the typical SOV structure of Amharic, following a Subject-Verb-Verb (SVV) sequence instead, with the subject ፀጉሬ (Ts'egurē, 'my hair') marked by the possessive suffix "-ē". The two perfective verbs ደረቀ (derek'e, 'dried') and ተበጣጠሰ (tebet'at'ese, 'became tangled') suggest a causal relationship. Although the clause lacks an explicit object and does not fully align with the Morpheme Order Principle, the 4-M Model helps identify Amharic as the Matrix Language. The content morphemes— ፀጉሬ (Ts'egurē), ደረቀ (derek'e), and ተበጣጠሰ (tebet'at'ese)—hold the primary meaning, while the possessive morpheme '-ē' and the perfective aspect markers '-e' are seen as early and late system morphemes, respectively. All these morphemes are derived from Amharic's morphological system, confirming Amharic as the matrix language in this clause.

In the examples above, Afaan Oromoo (examples 7 and 8), English (example 9), and Amharic (example 10) feature monolingual clauses where the ML model is applied, and the matrix language is identified in each clause.

4.1.2. Bilingual Clauses

Based on the analysis from Section 5.1.1, this section uses the Morpheme Order Principle (MOP) and the System Morpheme Principle (SMP) to look at bilingual clauses and find out which language is the main one in code-switching situations. The analysis reveals which language governs the grammatical structure, examining how morpheme order and system morphemes behave in mixed-language utterances. The upcoming examples demonstrate how these principles help determine structural dominance, offering insight into the underlying matrix language in bilingual interactions.

(11) Utuu **initiative**@eng erga ta'-ee Qeellam Wallaggaa -tti
If initiative since be-CNV-PRV Kellem Wallagga -to
boqolloo -tu ta'-a.
corn -FOC be-IMP
"If there were an initiative, there would be corn in Kellem Wallagga."
(Maccaa-OC01 DAH 21)

In example (11), the clause "Utuu initiative erga ta'-ee" serves as the conditional, beginning with the bridge system morpheme "utuu" (if), which lacks independent meaning but structures the clause. 'Initiative' is an English content morpheme, while "erga" (since) also acts as a content morpheme. The verb "ta'-ee" (became) includes the converbial suffix "-ee," a late outsider morpheme linking the conditional to the main clause. The main clause "Qeellam Wallaggaa-tti boqolloo-tu ta'-a" expresses the consequence, with "-tti" marking locative case (a late outsider morpheme),

"boqolloo" (corn) as a content morpheme, "-tu" as an early system morpheme (focus marker), and "ta'-a" as the finite verb marked for modality and agreement (late outsider morpheme). The presence of these system morphemes from Afaan Oromoo confirms it as the matrix language.

(12) **Percent@eng** jaatamni kun eessa dhaq-aa **?**
Percent sixty-NOM this where go-CNV.IMPV -Q
"Where does this sixty percent go?"

(Maccaa-OC01 EYN 139)

Example (12) follows the Subject–Interrogative Word–Verb (SIV) order typical of Afaan Oromoo interrogatives. The subject phrase "Percent jaatamni kun" (this sixty percent) reflects Afaan Oromoo noun phrase structure, with the head noun ('percent') first, followed by the numeral "jaatamni" and demonstrative "kun", contrasting with English word order. The interrogative "eessa" (where) follows the subject, and the verb "dhaqaa" (go) completes the clause, adhering to Afaan Oromoo syntax. Though "percent" is an English content morpheme, all system morphemes—including "jaatamni," "kun," "eessa," and the imperfective aspect marker "-aa" which is a late outsider morpheme—are from Afaan Oromoo. This confirms Afaan Oromoo as the matrix language governing the clause's grammatical structure.

(13) Nageenya jech -uu-n **business**@eng ta'-e.
Security mean -NP business be-3SL.PRV
"Security became a business."

(Maccaa-OC01 EYN 190)

In Example (13), the clause adheres to the morphosyntactic structure of Afaan Oromoo and includes an English insertion. "Nageenya" (security) is the subject, "jechuun" (means) functions as a noun/verb hybrid, and "business" is the English noun insertion. "ta'e" (became) is the finite verb with a perfective marker "-e." Despite the insertion, the clause adheres to Afaan Oromoo grammar. In Myers-Scotton's 4-M Model, "Nageenya" and "business' are content morphemes, while "jechuun" is an early system morpheme, and "-e" is a late outsider system morpheme marking tense and aspect.

(14) **So@eng** gaafa dhimmi keenyatti deebin-uu
So, when issue our-LOC go back. 1PL.CONV. IMPV
"So, when we go back to our issue"

(Macca-OC02-SAG 41)

In example (14), all morphemes are derived from Afaan Oromoo, except for the conjunction "so," which is sourced from English. The finite verb "deebin-uu" (go back) agrees with the subject, which is shown by a first-person plural marking on the verb functioning as a late outsider morpheme.

(15) **Daily** @eng hin -qaam-u
Daily NEG -chew.1SL.IMP
"I do not chew 'chat' **daily**."

(Maccaa-CO04-GAE 667)

Similarly, example (15) features the morpheme "daily" from English, while the rest of the clause is in Afaan Oromoo, and the verb "qaam-u" (chew) originates from Afaan Oromoo. Here, the finite verb "chew" appears at the end of the clause, reflecting the order, with the implied subject "I" and the suffix "-u" marks it as a late outsider morpheme.

(16) **Attendance**@eng guut-aa-n jir-a.
Attendance fill.CONV.1SL exist-IMPV
'I am filling out attendance.'

(Maccaa-OC016 SIB 96)

Also, example (16) features the morpheme "attendance" from English, while the rest of the clause is in Afaan Oromoo, and the verb "jir-a"(exist) originate from Afaan Oromoo. The finite verb "*jir-a*," marked by the suffix "*-a*," functions as an outsider system morpheme and appears after the English content morpheme "*attendance*," which serves as the object in the clause.

(17) Amma ijoollee **batch**@eng keenyaa yoo gaafat-t-ee
Now children **batch** our if ask.2P-CONV.PRV
"Now, if you ask the students of our batch."

(Maccaa-OC016 BOO-307)

In example (17), the clause adheres to Afaan Oromoo syntax while incorporating the English word "batch." The phrase "ijoollee batch keenyaa" follows a noun–modifier–possessive structure, contrasting with English order. The verb "gaaffattee" (you asked) reflects typical SOV order, with the suffix "-ee" functioning as a late outsider morpheme. Despite the insertion, the clause aligns with Afaan Oromoo grammar, confirming it as the matrix language.

According to Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame Model, the Morpheme Order Principle (MOP) and system morpheme principles assert that the morpheme order in examples (7), (8), (11), (12), (13), (14), (15), (16), and (17) reveals that Afaan Oromoo is the matrix language in all of these examples. English often limits its influence on content words such as nouns and verbs, while the grammatical framework conforms to Afaan Oromoo principles. Example (18) further illustrates this pattern, as the syntactic structure of Afaan Oromoo maintains its dominance even with the insertion of an English lexical item.

(18) Xaafii nam-ni **export**@eng hin -godh-u.
Teff.ACCO man.NOM **export** NEG do.IMPV
"Man does not **export** teff"

(Maccaa-OC12 EYS-326)

In example (18), the clause is primarily in Afaan Oromoo, with the English insertion "export." The object "Teff" precedes the subject "Man," forming an OSV order, atypical for Afaan Oromoo and possibly pragmatically motivated. The final verb, "hin godhu" (do not), aligns with typical SOV syntax, reinforcing Afaan Oromoo as the matrix language.

(19) *Biri@amh* dhibba lama **transfer@eng** naa godh-i.
Birr hundred two **transfer** **for** me do-IMP.IMPV
"Do **transfer** two hundred birrs to me."

(Maccaa OC010 YOT 350)

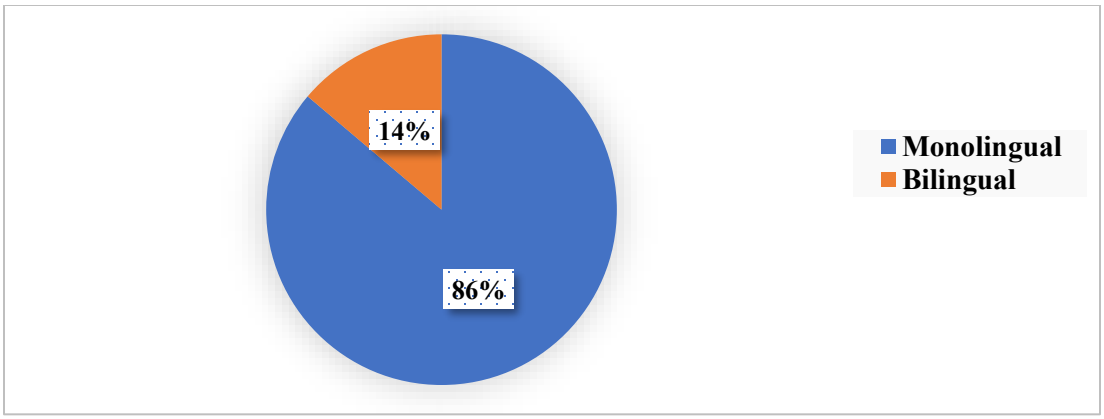
In example (19), three languages are represented: "Birr" is from Amharic, "transfer" is from English, and the remaining terms are from Afaan Oromoo. Despite the insertions, the clause maintains Afaan Oromoo's grammatical structure, highlighting its role as the matrix language in this trilingual code-switching instance. The phrase "Birr dhibba lama" ('two hundred Birr') serves as the direct object of the imperative verb "godhi" ('do/make'), while "naa" indicates the indirect object (to me), with the subject "you" implied, as is typical in Afaan Oromoo imperatives. Even though both Afaan Oromoo and Amharic use an SOV structure, the System

Morpheme Principle indicates that Afaan Oromoo is the matrix language because all the system morphemes come from it, with just one Amharic content morpheme included. This illustrates how the clause maintains the grammatical framework of Afaan Oromoo while accommodating lexical insertions from another language.

4.2 Quantitative Analysis

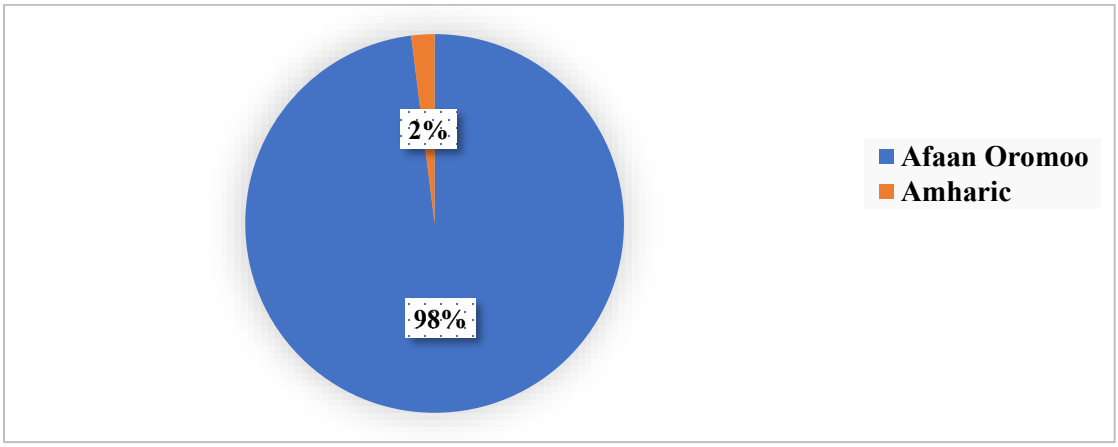
The transcription analysis yielded a total of 644 clearly interpretable clauses, comprising 555 monolingual and 89 bilingual clauses. Clauses deemed unintelligible—due to factors like poor audio quality, overlapping speech, or incomplete utterances—were excluded to ensure data reliability. The analyzed clauses were drawn from two distinct conversational contexts: Maccaa-OC01, where speakers aged 23 and 33 discuss market inflation and its impacts, and Maccaa-OC09, involving individuals aged 24 and 40 conversing in a human resources office during routine work.

Figure 1. The distribution of overall Monolingual and Bilingual Clauses



We further classified the monolingual clauses based on the conversation's language (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Matrix Language Distribution of Monolingual Clauses

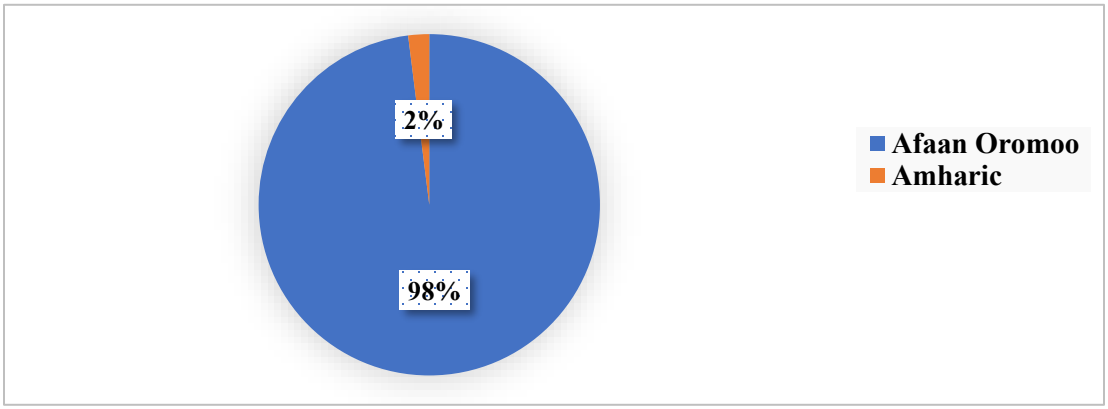


In Figure 2, of the 555 monolingual clauses, the majority comprised 544 clauses (98%) in Afan Oromoo. This analysis highlights the predominant role of Afan Oromoo in conversation. Eleven (2%) of the remaining monolingual clauses contained Amharic, indicating its minimal use in the discourse. There were no monolingual English clauses.

Out of the total dataset, 89 clauses—approximately 14%—were bilingual, revealing distinct patterns of language mixing. Among these, 29 clauses featured English insertions, 55 included Amharic insertions, and 5 contained both Amharic and English insertions. This distribution underscores the dominance of Afaan Oromoo across the data while also highlighting Amharic's stronger presence than English within bilingual clauses. The higher frequency of Amharic insertions suggests its deeper integration in bilingual interactions, likely due to historical ties. This includes the geographic proximity between Amharic and Afaan Oromoo. Additionally, the occurrence of clauses with both Amharic and English insertions points to complex language contact dynamics within the speech community.

Although English was used less frequently compared to Amharic, this finding aligns with earlier research that indicates English is typically spoken in formal, global, or educational settings, whereas Amharic is more commonly used in everyday conversations between bilingual speakers.

Figure 3. Matrix Language Distribution of Bilingual Clauses



Although Afaan Oromoo predominantly functions as the matrix language in bilingual clauses, the analysis reveals two instances where Amharic assumes that role and Afaan Oromoo as the embedded language. Notably, no bilingual clauses were found with English as the matrix language. However, due to the limited dataset—drawn from only two conversations—this should not be viewed as conclusive. Although English is often used in many areas, especially in formal or international settings, its limited use as the primary language here suggests that Afaan Oromoo and Amharic play a more significant role in these specific conversations. Nonetheless, the presence of monolingual English clauses in other recordings indicates that English still holds significant discourse value within the broader communicative landscape.

These findings underscore the linguistic patterns of the speakers, with Afaan Oromoo serving as the primary language of communication, while the use of Amharic and English remained peripheral.

5. Discussion

This research provides valuable insights into code-switching between Afaan Oromoo and English in informal community interactions in Dambi Dollo, Ethiopia. The analysis shows that Afaan Oromoo overwhelmingly functions as the matrix language in bilingual discourse, with English frequently appearing as a source of lexical provider.

The analysis revealed that speakers maintained the grammatical integrity of Afaan Oromoo, even when inserting English words. This finding is based on the Morpheme Order Principle and the System Morpheme Principle from the MLF model, which state that the main language controls the sentence structure and basic parts of speech in bilingual conversations. Although English and Amharic words were included in

Afaan Oromoo sentences, they did not alter the main grammar of the conversation, indicating that Afaan Oromoo remained the primary language used.

The numbers show that most of the speech is in one language (86%), while speech that mixes languages makes up a smaller part (14%), mainly by adding Amharic and English words into Afaan Oromoo conversations, indicating that even though people switch languages, they mostly stick to using Afaan Oromoo.

6. Conclusion

This study provides significant contributions to understanding code-switching between Afaan Oromoo and English in informal community settings in Dambi Dollo, Ethiopia. The results show that Afaan Oromoo is the primary language used in conversations, and the way sentences are structured follows Afaan Oromoo rules, even when English words are used. The study reinforces the Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model, which explains how bilingual speakers maintain the grammatical integrity of one language while introducing elements from a second language.

Future research could extend these findings by examining larger datasets and considering how social variables such as education, occupation, and social networks influence code-switching patterns. Additionally, it would be valuable to investigate how cognitive processes enable bilingual speakers to navigate multiple languages without disrupting the syntactic structure of their matrix language, thereby further advancing our understanding of the cognitive and social mechanisms behind bilingual language use.

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