

## **Communication Challenges between Hearing Impaired Students and EFL Teachers in Inclusive English Language Classrooms: Biftu Nekemte Senior Secondary School in Focus**

Dessalew Getnet<sup>1</sup>

*Principal Investigator: (MA in TEFL; MA in Journalism & Communication) Lecturer, Department of Journalism and Communication, Debre Markos University, Amhara Region, Ethiopia.*  
Mobile: +251-913886349

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study aimed to explore the communication challenges between hearing impaired students and EFL teachers in Inclusive English Language classrooms. To achieve its objectives, the study used Biftu Nekemte Senior Secondary School as research site and employed qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, in which classroom observation, interview and document analysis were used. Tools for collection of qualitative data were used to gather data from the study participants. Six lessons were observed to generate data on classroom interaction and to improve tools for interview. An English teacher, four hearing impaired students from profound to severe impairments and a hearing impaired students' counselor participated in the interview. Teacher's lesson plans and students' texts were analyzed and used to check the consistency of the plans with teaching materials and the lessons observed. The study found out that the students with hearing impairments are placed in regular classrooms without special organization that can meet the needs of both groups of students. The regular classroom teacher teaches the inclusive class without sign language interpreter. The communication challenge is more prevalent during English language classes especially, listening and speaking lessons. Unlike the findings in the literature, students at all levels of impairment can understand teacher's speech; this makes difficult communication among hearing impaired students themselves. On the other hand, the problem of making sounds is so difficult that automatic vocalization and reproduction is found to be problematic; there is problem of substitution of consonants, omission of sounds and transposition of letters. Since there is no sign language interpreter in the classrooms, the challenge is weighty. To improve these problems of communication intermission, issues related to teachers and facilities need to be reorganized to transform the conventional classrooms to classrooms suitable for the hearing impaired. Teachers need to be trained with sign languages besides the qualifications to teach the language (English). Materials and plans for lessons need to be designed to consider the needs of the hearing impaired students.*

**Key words:** hearing impairment; Inclusive education; mainstream classroom; EFL

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Hearing impairment is the third largest disability in Ethiopia, next to leg problems and blindness. It is one of the disabilities that were a barrier to join schools (Country profile on Disability, 2002). Nowadays, the people's attitude about hearing impairment is changing and thousands of students with hearing impairment are at schools (Demisew, 2014).

According to Moravkov (2011), students with hearing impairment have two options to get their education. These options are attending schools specialized for teaching the students with hearing impairment or mainstream schools and learn with hearing students. The first option focuses on developing culture of including the hearing impaired in education. In Ethiopia, the education of children with disabilities such as visually and hearing impairment have been served by special schools for the last four decades. However, in recent years the accessibility of education for people with disabilities has ensured in special needs education. This special needs education in Ethiopia initially was initiated by overseas missionaries (Tirusew, 2005). The other option to learn is joining mainstream classes or inclusive education. A lot of causes lead to choose inclusive education. These causes are normalization, deinstitutionalization, early intervention and early childhood programmes, technological advances, civil rights movement and resulting litigation, advocacy groups, separated nature of special schools and classes, disproportionate representation and educational reform (Berg, 2004; Salend, 2001; Lipsky & Gartner, 1997).

Inclusive education is associated with the mainstream participation of learners with impairment and having special needs education (World Education Forum, 2010). It is a wide transformation intended to include

students with disabilities in mainstream regular classrooms. In this reform, school curriculum, teaching methods, organization and resources need to be adapted to ensure that all learners, irrespective of their ability can successfully participate in the regular classrooms (Mitiller, 1995 in Tewodros, 2014).

Similarly, Berg (2004, p. 11) describes mainstreaming as “the placement of students with disabilities in general education setting only when they can meet traditional academic expectations with minimal assistance.” The basic premise of the mainstreaming movement is that principles of anti-discrimination, equity, social justice, and basic human rights make it imperative that students with disabilities and special needs should enjoy the same access as all other students to a regular school environment and to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum (Prakasha, 2012).

Even though inclusive education means the inclusion of all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions to the mainstream regular classroom, in this study inclusive education refers only to the inclusion of students with hearing impairment in inclusive or mainstream classrooms.

Inclusion of hearing impaired students in inclusive classrooms has both advantages and challenges. Inclusive education is important to increase confidence in the teaching and learning efficacy, to aware hearing impaired students as positive role models for all students, to meet the needs of all students with or without disabilities and to associate with new classmates (Berg, 2004). Therefore, both teachers and students are expected to do a lot to get the function. On the one hand, the teacher, as he/she faces two sorts of students in the class, has to revise his/her methodology and approach to enable both groups proportionally. On the other hand, the hearing impaired students strive to learn along with their hearing peers. The shift towards inclusion in mainstream classrooms has the challenges of changing existing attitudes and values of key players, lack of understanding, lack of necessary skills, limited resources and inappropriate organization (UNESCO, 2005). Stoppok (2005) states that hearing impairment changes the condition of early language acquisition, which requires curricular adaptations to provide teachers with support when planning and organizing English lessons. Foreign language learning for students with a hearing impairment might not be as effective if only subject specific goals are taken into account. Cross-curricular goals, on the other hand, including the development of tolerance and cross-cultural understanding will elicit interest and promote enjoyment during exposure to the foreign language.

In areas English language is used as a medium of instruction, hearing impairment has double effects: the problems in English language learning and the academic achievement of learners. The statement given by Standley (2005) intensifies this argument. The statement is, “All educational process that is mediated by language will be negatively impacted” (Standley, 2005, p.11). This in turn affects the language development of students, their literacy acquisition and educational outcomes.

In the context of inclusive EFL classroom, English language enables the students to fully participate in the education and successfully accomplish other subjects’ requirement. In Ethiopian secondary schools in general and in Regional State of Oromia in particular, English is being given as a subject and medium of instruction for all subjects except the mother tongue (Afan Oromo) and the national working language (Amharic). Therefore, the level of proficiency and mastery in English language in one or another way affects students’ academic achievement. In Biftu Nekemte Secondary School, both hearing and hearing impaired students learn English language as a subject and use as a medium of instruction for other subjects. To master or learn the language at the best level and to be benefited from the other courses, their English language learning has to be fertile. Therefore, studying English language learning and teaching practices at the targeted school in which hearing impaired students learn with hearing peers is very important. To this effect, the communication challenges that teachers and hearing impaired students face in inclusive EFL classroom were explored.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Both local and international researchers have conducted study on learning and teaching of hearing impaired students in inclusive education. For instance, Jordanian researchers El-Zraigot and Smadi (2012) conducted a study on “challenges of educating students who are deaf and hard of hearing in Jordan” and found out that students with hearing impairment are considered exceptional learners. They require special service offered by qualified and skilled teachers to respond to their unique needs.

Tewodros (2014), Demisew (2014), Wondosen, Yitayal and Semahgn (2014), and Shimelis (2011) have conducted studies on inclusive education of hearing impairment. Demisew (2014) identifies the barriers towards inclusive education. Some of the problems are organization of education, an inflexible curriculum, problems of language and communication, and lack of human resource development.

Having such challenges to meet the needs of all students in the inclusive classroom is not an easy process because it requires a lot of struggle and commitment to overcome barriers (Wondosen, Yitayal &

Semahgn, 2014). Although barriers are present to implement inclusive education in schools, currently hearing impaired students are learning in inclusive classrooms with.

According to Tewodros (2014), hearing impaired students face challenges after they are assigned to regular classes. These challenges occurred due to lack of knowledge of Ethiopian Sign Language, lack of motivation of teachers to learn Ethiopian sign language, lack of resources and unavailability of resource room. Moreover, Shimelis (2011) found out that teaching hearing impaired students and learning as a hearing impaired students is challenging because of the use of inappropriate linguistic expression.

All the above stated researchers worked on the general education of hearing impaired students. The researcher couldn't find studies on communication challenges in EFL inclusive classroom in particular as his effort goes. The intention of the researcher was, therefore, to explore communication challenges of teachers and hearing impaired students face in mainstream EFL classrooms. Consequently, the focus of the study was on English language teaching and learning. The rationale to focus on English is, since the academic success or failure of hearing impaired students is fundamentally dependent on the medium of instruction, English. The most important aspects of communication are writing, reading, speaking and listening. Fundamentally, speaking and listening is crucial for classroom communication, which is hypothesized as greater challenge of teaching and learning EFL in an inclusive classroom.

The research questions that have been addressed in the accomplishment of the study are the following:

1. How classroom communication is implemented in teaching hearing impaired students in inclusive EFL classrooms?
2. What are the communication challenges of teaching English language for students with hearing impairment in inclusive classrooms?
3. What are the communication challenges of hearing impaired students' in learning English language in inclusive EFL classrooms?

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

The research generally aimed at exploring challenges that teachers and hearing impaired students face in inclusive English listening and speaking skill classrooms.

Specifically, the study attempted to:

- Investigate the general classroom communication in inclusive EFL classrooms;
- Assess challenges facing teachers in teaching English language for students with hearing impairment in inclusive classrooms; and
- Identify the challenges students with hearing impairment face during learning English language in inclusive classrooms.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 The Research Design and Approach**

The study aimed to explore the challenges teachers and hearing impaired students face in inclusive EFL classrooms. To achieve its objectives, this study used exploratory research design. The justification to select exploratory research design is that this study wants to explore challenges in EFL classrooms for students with hearing impairment in inclusive education context. Qualitative research approach was employed in this study. Qualitative research is very important to explore issues of the study; understanding and interpretations of social phenomena while it happens in its routine setting and this approach provides a unique tool for studying what exists in practice. Thus, the study qualitatively analyzes issues related to the challenges in English language teaching and learning that is visible in everyday happenings.

### **2.2 The Study Area**

The study area was Biftu Nekemte Secondary School. Biftu Nekemte is one of the state run schools in Nekemte city. The reason for the selection of the school as a study site was its experience of implementing inclusive education since 2011. Currently, the school registered 27 (13 Grade nine and 14 Grade ten) hearing impaired students at mainstream classrooms. There is no other senior secondary school that practices such sort of inclusive education in Nekemte. Thus, to explore issues regarding English listening and speaking skill teaching and learning for hearing impaired students in mainstream classrooms, the school is considered as an appropriate site for the study.

### **2.3 Population and Sampling**

The populations of the study were 13 grade nine students with hearing impairment, an English language teacher and an interpreter. Consequently, the sources of data for the study were four students with hearing impairment, the teacher and the interpreter. The sampling technique the researcher used is purposive

sampling method because the students are selected in a way that represents different groups of hearing impairments; profound, moderate and severe. In general, the researcher has used 6 participants as sample for the study. The reason for selecting grade nine students as cases is because of their freshness for inclusive classroom and because they were coming from the special needs school.

#### **2.4 Data Collection Instruments**

To collect the data, interview, observation and document analysis have been employed. Interview is one of the data collection instruments that the researcher has employed in the study. It is designed to collect in-depth data about the challenges of teaching and learning English language for hearing impaired students in inclusive classroom. Semi structured interview was used to get detailed information by probing and asking follow up questions. Six subjects of the study were interviewed. The interview with the teacher and the interpreter and hearing impaired students counselor was conducted in Amharic and the transcriptions were translated into English. The interview with the students was completed through the help of interpreter and the sound of the interpreter was recorded for analysis and the transcription has been in Amharic. Then the Amharic transcription was translated into English.

The other tool of data collection is observation. The rationale behind using observation in this research is, therefore, to explore the classroom practices of teachers and students in English classes. Each of the lessons of English listening and speaking skill Language sessions- listening, speaking were observed three times. All observations were recorded with the checklist that has been adapted from Johnson (2011) placement and readiness checklists for students who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Document analysis was used in the research to analyze documents that provide information on the challenges hearing impaired students face during English listening and speaking skill learning. Therefore, teachers' lesson plans prepared for teaching of lessons from September to April were subject to the document analysis. The sort of data the documents provide were, the teacher's preparation to help both the hearing and hearing impaired peers at the mainstream classroom. The purpose of analyzing these documents is to clearly identify how the teacher prepares lesson plans that can meet the needs of both hearing impaired and hearing peers. By using availability sampling technique the researcher used documents employed from September to April 2015/16 Academic year.

#### **2.5 Method of Data Analysis**

The data that have been collected through interview, observation and document analysis were analyzed qualitatively. The units of analysis for the study were audio interviews, observation checklist records, and lesson plans. The data collected through the three instruments were analyzed thematically. The data collected from the students' interview through the aid from the interpreter was transcribed and the transcript was translated into English by the researcher.

### **III. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1 Data Analysis**

In this part of the study data from observation, interview, and document analysis were analyzed and presented under the following three major themes: classroom setting and communication, teaching and learning English listening and speaking skill.

##### **3.1.1 General Classroom Setting and Communication**

###### **3.1.1.1 General Classroom Setting**

In Biftu Nekemte Senior Secondary School, students with hearing impairment are admitted to learn in the regular classrooms with hearing peers. In grade nine, Section "L" 13 (6 male and 7 female) students attend lessons for all subjects. Although inclusive education needs upgraded infrastructure, the school seems to be merely named inclusive without special facilities that meet the needs of both the hearing and hearing impaired students. The classroom is the conventional classroom; there is no special facility different from others. The teachers are the regular teachers who have no any awareness or got adequate pre-service and in-service training about how to teach hearing impaired students. Textbooks are the regular textbooks published for regular students. The plasma broadcasting, which used to give a 20 minute lesson for a period and an interpreter of sign language, is not functional since November 2015. With such type of situation, hearing impaired students learn with hearing peers under a similar setting. What's more, the teacher simultaneously teaches students having different abilities. In this situation, it is possible to satisfy either the hearing or hearing-impaired students. An English teacher, and the interpreter and hearing impaired students counselor say that teachers who is teaching at the inclusive classroom usually leaves the class halfheartedly because they are unable to help the students.

### **3.1.1.2 Classroom Communication**

In inclusive classroom, communication is crucial and its impact is visible when giving and following directions, attending and comprehending classroom instructions, giving feedback, responding to questions and comments, discussing in groups and asking questions. Hearing impaired students in the inclusive classrooms are expected to have communication with their interpreter, teacher, peers and everyone else. However, in Biftu Nekemte Senior Secondary School ELT classrooms, hearing impaired students communicate only with their teacher and their peers. In ELT classrooms there is no interpreter because in the school there is only one interpreter who is professionally teaching Mathematics. Despite the interpreter's profession, which is teaching mathematics, he is serving students in interpreting science subjects and counseling students with hearing impairment.

Regarding the absence of an interpreter in ELT classroom, the counselor and interpreter of students with hearing impairment states, "I used to interpret ELT classrooms. It was tiresome and unsuccessful because of two reasons. The first reason was I'm not familiar with English language teaching methodology and English language signs. The second reason, when the teacher speaks in English, I interpret it in the Ethiopian Sign Language (Amharic), which creates great confusion on the students" (April 2016: Key Informant Interview).

As it is stated above, although inclusive education has been applied in the school, the communication between hearing impaired students and the conventional teacher is not supported by interpreter. As the respondent states, the reason is related to lack of professionals on the area to translate to English or who can communicate UK or USA sign languages. For that reason, the communication between the English teacher and the students was found to have three-steps: first the teacher gives direction orally; then the hearing students in the classroom start acting upon the given direction; and finally the hearing impaired students follow directions by observing others. This means students' with hearing impairment in the inclusive English listening and speaking skill classroom do not follow directions independently. They are always following their classroom peers' activities though the direction is not clear for them. They imitate others actions in the classroom.

The other aspect of communication in the classroom determines students' engagement in the activities. Students with hearing impairment are fully engaged and attend the classroom instructions. They watch actively every movement of the teacher towards the blackboard and write down whatever he writes. Sometimes, they write only words, incomplete sentences in non-sense manner. These show the students are fully engaged in the writing activities of the teacher. One of the respondents of the study gave the following statement about the engagement he has in the classroom.

I'm fully engaged in the classroom since teachers enter into the class. I'm writing everything that the teacher writes on the blackboard enthusiastically. Occasionally, I try to see the notes of my hearing mates who sit next to me so that I can understand why the teacher writes even a word. Therefore, I give attention to every classroom activity (Male profound hearing impaired student, April 2016: Key Informant Interview).

Like the profound hearing impaired student, the other students who can read lip or speech reading (severe hearing impaired) and use hearing aids (moderate hearing impaired) gave similar responses. However, the female profound hearing impaired students stated that sometimes she is not engaged if the lesson is not clear or if she misses certain points.

As a matter of fact, to strengthen how the students are engage in their learning, the feedback to the teacher when the context is not clear is one aspect. When the teacher writes something, which is not clear to them they look to other students for assistance. This means that hearing impaired students in different corners of the class communicate using sign language to make the point clear. They shout "Ahhh" to give cue for the teacher to look and offer help for them. Then, the teacher goes to their desk and the student indicates the specific content that is not clear for him/her. This indicates that hearing impaired students recognize when certain information is misunderstood and how to ask for assistance.

Hearing impaired students' classroom attention has relation with comprehension of classroom directions and lessons. The teacher usually uses similar activities to make the instruction clear. According to the teacher's weekly lesson plan, the objectives, the activities, and the approach he uses are similar for all inclusive and non-inclusive classrooms. Particularly, during classroom observation the researcher identified as the teacher uses similar activities. In classroom discussions, hearing impaired students have comprehended most familiar information regarding the activities. For example, they understand working in group as a group of six (two desks in one) though the teacher instructs to work in pairs.

Hearing impaired students are not active in classroom communication. They are disengaged when the teacher asks questions. Similarly, they are not providing comment on other students' response and comments on learning activities. Moreover, in group discussion and cooperative learning they are attentive participant but not productive.

### **3.1.2 Communication Challenges of Teaching English Language for Hearing-Impaired Students**

The English teacher at Biftu Nekemte Senior Secondary School has a two years' experience of teaching English at inclusive classroom perceives teaching as helpful for hearing impaired students without imposing extra challenge on their hearing peers. The teacher's role in language learning of hearing impaired students is important because the teacher tries to help by exerting maximum effort at the classroom though he does not have special preparation in terms of techniques of teaching the subject matter, teaching material and designing activities.

The teacher at the inclusive English classroom does not have any special preparation to teach students with hearing impairment in the particular classroom setting. The teacher's weekly lesson plan shows the absence of this preparation. In the teacher's lesson plan, the following flaws are visible. First, the lesson plan for the inclusive classroom and the regular sections is similar. Second, the activities or expected activities are similar and redundant. Third, there is no teaching material or teaching aid throughout the lesson plans. Fourth, the lesson plans are not updated and session based; they are the replica of the first week plan. Therefore, in spite of having many roles in teaching English language to hearing impaired students, the teacher does not have special support.

After having collected the data through observation and analyzing the teacher's weekly lesson plan, the researcher wanted to see how if the teacher was interested in teaching students with hearing impairment in the inclusive ELT classroom or not and asked the teacher during interview. His response is presented as follows:

If English was not a compulsory subject, I would not teach for hearing impaired students in ELT inclusive classroom. My reasons are the subject's complexness and the students' nature. This means, on one hand, language in general is complex to learn. English as a foreign language is too complex because it associated with knowledge, skill and culture of the language. On the other hand, the students nature of keeping silence is not an inevitable condition for language teaching as language requires exposure, usage and drilling (The English teacher, April 2016: Key Informant Interview).

Moreover, the teacher in inclusive classroom did not get training on how to teach English for hearing impaired students and hearing students simultaneously. He was implementing the conventional approaches of teaching he had been using for hearing students. Lack of awareness on how to teach students' with hearing impairment leads to lack of interest and makes the teaching practice challenging. Based on the data the researcher has collected, the teacher has tried to help students like a layperson rather than professional though he was enforced to teach at the inclusive classroom.

In ELT inclusive classroom the teacher taught English for hearing impaired students though they had already lost their hearing. Thus, hearing impaired students in inclusive classrooms are idle while their hearing peers learn how to listen and react on the instructions given by the teacher. Although students with hearing impairment are not interested to learn the language, it is mandatory to listen to learn. Therefore, when the teacher teaches skills of language, he has to know the difficulty students face.

The challenge across skills is varied. Listening skill is related to speaking skill in areas such as timing, rhythm, pauses, volume, intonation and others. However, the teacher at Biftu Nekemte inclusive classroom did not teach listening skills as part of English subject because of his own reasons.

I have two reasons why I'm simply jumping the listening part of the subject or invite students to read at the class or at home. The first reason is that the newly published grade nine textbook incorporates the listening material at the end of the textbook (as an annex). So students prefer reading the listening activity text from their textbook instead of listening what their classmates or I read aloud. The second reason is teaching listening skills has to be media-supported. Hence, with the absence of media equipment to record and replay the listening text it is senseless because it is not different from the reading part of the subject (The English teacher, April 2016: Key Informant Interview).

From the above statement it is implicit that both hearing and hearing impaired students, on one hand, are not lucky to learn the listening skills as part of the subject. Hence, all the skill areas that are expected to be acquired in the listening part are overlooked. On the other hand, the teacher taught listening by writing on the blackboard using colored chalks.

Particularly, for the sake of severely hearing impaired students, the teacher did the following. He opened the door and windows to get enough light. He spoke with a moderately recognizable pace. He made eye contact. Therefore, there was no environmental factor that hinders the student from lip reading.

In general, upon the data collected through the study's data collection instruments, teaching listening skills to students who are hearing impaired students is difficult and challenging. Some of the challenges the teacher faces are 1) preparing audio-visual material that enable hearing impaired students to see the pace, tone, pause, silence, rhythm, timing and visual displays simultaneously, 2) preparing captions for every narrations, and 3) developing listening materials which are suitable for hearing impaired.

Teaching speaking skill for hearing impaired students was beyond the routine teaching procedure because the students who were hearing were familiar with how to speak while hearing impaired students were not. Thus, in teaching speaking, the teacher faced a challenge to teach intonation, stress, and pronunciation. During the observation, the researcher realized that the teacher taught speaking skills by writing on the blackboard. What the teacher added in teaching speaking was using colored chalks to show stress and use a symbol (˘) to show how the words were pronounced.

In order to know about the importance the respondents sees in teaching speaking skill for students who cannot speak, the researcher asked the interpreter and the hearing impaired students counselor. He addresses that speaking part of the subject is key because it provides an opportunity to learn how to communicate in through speaking with anyone who cannot use sign language. Consequently, teaching speaking skills is crucial. It needs to address how to teach speaking for both groups of students without benefiting one at the expense of the other. The English teacher at inclusive classroom tried to teach the students by writing dialogues and conversations. There was no special teaching material for teaching of speaking skills. The teacher instructed the students to prepare a dialogue in their groups. In this situation, hearing impaired students were less engaged than the hearing peers. In the groups both hearing and hearing impaired students were working in the same group, the hearing impaired students are passive participants of the group.

According to the English teacher, teaching speaking skills focused on writing. Regarding this, he stated that:

Speaking part of the subject aims to enable students to orally communicate effectively. Despite the aim, I tried to teach hearing impaired students to communicate in a written form. This type of practice helps hearing impaired students to prepare for examinations in which speaking skills are presented in written forms (The English teacher, April 2016: Key Informant Interview).

Although the teacher helped the students to learn speaking skills in written forms, it was time taking and he was unable to help both groups simultaneously. In this occasion, hearing impaired students learned how to speak through writing while hearing peers learned through reading what their teacher was writing, instead of preparing their own dialogue or conversation. This benefited one group at the expense of the other. When it is compared with the situations hearing impaired students are in, the moderate hearing impaired student were able to speak more than the severe and profound hearing impaired students. That was why the teacher used the moderate hearing impaired students as supporters to teach speaking skill for others.

The teacher faced challenges during teaching speaking skills using different approach for both hearing and hearing impaired students: writing everything on the blackboard; teaching how to pronounce words; helping each student to instruct to write their own conversation; preparing captions and audio as a teaching aid; and compensating for hearing impairment by using sign language.

### **3.1.3 Communication Challenges Hearing Impaired Students face in Inclusive English Language classrooms**

Hearing impaired students at Biftu Nekemte senior secondary school have similar educational background. They started learning English from pre-elementary level at the boarding school, which was established and run by Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Eyesus. Starting from the boarding school to the end of the primary education, it was special needs education in which hearing impaired students had learnt in exclusive classroom. They had teachers who were professionals in teaching Ethiopian and USA Sign Languages and the subject matter.

After joining grade nine in the inclusive classroom setting, environmental and teacher related factors started to make the learning environment tougher. Although hearing impaired students feel about how to cope with their academic activities, compared with the hearing peers, they are free because hearing peers in the classroom are friendly and supportive. Every hearing student in the classroom is enthusiastic to help their hearing impaired peers.

Regarding English language, most of the students like the English subject. During their primary school at the boarding school their medium of communication was English because their teachers were foreign missionaries. They were using English inside and outside the classroom. In the secondary school, the knowledge of English is everything for the learning. That is why they believed they learn English though it was not compulsory subject.

Despite students' interest and experience of English learning, the transition from special needs education to inclusive education was challenging. To familiarize oneself with the hearing peers, hearing teachers and lack of facilities in the classrooms were challenging. The books the students use, and the teachers who teach them are new to them. In the words of a female profound hearing impaired student "the school is like market for us because you see a lot of people but no communication" (April 2016: Key Informant Interview).

The profound hearing impaired students are not interested to learn listening skills, one of the challenges of hearing impaired students in a regular classroom. Nevertheless, the severe hearing impaired student is interested

to learn how to listen. A student who can 'listen' by lip reading states that he is very interested when people are speaking. In his ability to read the speech via lip movement the way the speakers speak and the facial expression is interesting. From this it can be elicited that listening is beyond getting verbal messages.

The moderate hearing impaired student stated that he is familiar with the relationship between volume and listening. When people speak loudly, but not shout, he can listen. The pauses are also clear to him. He stated, "I'm always eager to listen not what people say but how people say something" (April 2016: Key Informant Interview).

The severe and the moderate hearing impaired students have a little opportunity to learn listening skills. Unlike them the profound hearing impaired students do not listen or speak. Profound hearing impaired students cannot identify any type of sound. In general, they are not subject to listening and aural skills.

Generally, students with hearing impairment, especially non-profound hearing impaired students, face the challenges of keeping attention throughout the class, writing and listening at the same time, listening what the hearing students ask and respond in the classroom, coping with the speed of the speaker, differentiating similar syllables, connecting meaning across sentence, and identifying when the speech starts and ends during exercising listening skill at the EFL inclusive classroom.

Like listening, hearing impaired students skill in one or another way has faced a communication challenge because of speaking. Since childhood speaking is developed via imitating what has been listening. People who are disable are challenged when they learn speaking. A severe and moderate hearing impaired students try to speak but the skill is not present. The challenges they face to speak are substitution of consonants that have the same syllabi such as "B" and "P", omission of letters such as "prent" to say "Present" and transposition of letters. Thus, whenever they try to speak they face these challenges.

Profound hearing impaired students are not familiar to voice making, except "Ahhh"-a cue to call, to get attention, and to tell. Voice making is challenging for them. In addition to voice making, profound hearing impaired students do not understand how people speak or make utterances. They believe that oral skill is not easy to learn. According to the male profound hearing impaired student:

Learning speaking skill is essential in language endeavours. However, there are no speaking skill exercises except side talking in the classroom. Also, during examination the speaking parts are prepared via writing. Thus, there is no greater difference between the hearing students and us. When I read the textbook about speaking skill in some places, it invites me to use different audio materials though it is not applied by the teacher (April 2016: Key Informant Interview).

From his statement it can be understood that speaking parts of the subject are not associated and supported by the necessary accessories and teaching aids. Besides, the speaking activities the teacher gave at the classroom are labeled as "side talk," which is totally against the objectives of the lesson (s).

Students who have hearing impairments face many challenges in learning speaking skills. Some of the challenges are inability to make appropriate voice for a certain utterance, recognizing how the skill is associated with sign language, pronouncing words, and attitude of students towards the purpose of speaking skills to hearing impaired students.

### **3.2 Discussions**

Similar to Demisew (2014), Abebe (2000) also confirmed that there is no smooth relationship between the two groups of students because of communication problems and feeling of incompetence. Abebe's finding is totally opposite to findings in this study. Communication can be a barrier to have relationship but it cannot be a factor to make the relationship not smooth. The communication barrier may lead to poor interaction as Nitsuh (2008) or lack of motivation to create relationship as Tewodros (2014) discussed. However, lacks of necessary skills, understanding and resource as well as inappropriate organization are prevalent. Practically, in this study, it is found that hearing impaired students are more sociable and friendly while their hearing peers are helpful without having the sense of incompetence between them.

In the implementation of inclusive education in the Ethiopian context both teacher and resource related factors are causing the challenge. Demisew (2014) found out the challenges to implement inclusive education are inflexible curriculum, problems of language and communication, and lack of human resource. Similar to UNESCO (2005) and Demisew's (2014) findings, the teacher related problems are fundamental in Biftu Nekemte inclusive classroom. The regular English teacher teaches both hearing and hearing impaired students without having basic training on how to help hearing impaired students in the inclusive classroom. The other problem is the appropriate organization of the school. The school has implemented inclusive education without having sufficient organization in human resource and facilities.

Regarding qualified human resource, in some countries like Jordan inclusive classroom for the hearing impaired students has got special service offered by qualified and skilled teachers to respond to their unique needs (El-Zraigot and Smadi, 2012). Although this is the experience of Jordan, the researcher found out that



there is no qualified and skilled teacher to teach English listening and speaking skills for hearing impaired students at Biftu Nekemte inclusive classroom. This can be related to the separation of qualification to teach English language for regular hearing students but does not have the skill to teach English for hearing impaired students.

Therefore, regarding the teacher related problems this study has come out with similar findings with Nitsuh (2008): the barriers to implement inclusive education successfully include insufficient preparation of the teacher, rigid and poor teaching methods, and lack of need identification process. According to the National Deaf Children's Society (2004) and Lazanova (2009), teachers must have specialist knowledge about hearing impairment. Thus, they must plan effectively to teach them. However, in the study it is found that the English teacher has no specialist knowledge and preparation, or he does not have plan to help students with hearing impairment.

Regarding facility, as the African Child Policy Forum (2011) found inclusive classrooms are physically inaccessible. According to the World Health Organization (2015), amplification system, interpreter, captioned films, assistance of a note taker, alternative communication methods and counseling are among the facilities. In Biftu Nekemte inclusive classroom none of the facilities are available especially in ELT classroom. The alternative plasma broadcasting is not functional. There is no sign language interpreter in ELT classroom. In this study the researcher found out that the inclusive education practiced at Biftu Nekemte Senior Secondary school is out of Lipsky and Gartner (1997) inclusive education models. According to them, inclusive education has three models; consultant, teaming and collaborative teaching. These models are based on the relationship between the subject teacher and the interpreter. But, in this study it is found out that these inclusive education models are not implemented in ELT inclusive classroom.

In relation to language teaching and learning, Tilahun (2005) states that hearing impairment affects speech development of students. The researcher found out that to bring speech development on hearing impaired students is unattainable. The reason is that as Osberger (1986) states teaching both receptive and productive language skills is challenging for the teacher and the students. The study found out that listening from the receptive skills and speaking from the productive skills are more challenging part of teaching English.

Teaching listening skill for hearing impaired students in general and profound hearing impaired student in particular is difficult. As Abrahms (2008) states sign language interference is crucial in teaching listening. In this study it is found out that there is no sign language interpreter in ELT classroom. In teaching and learning the speaking skill, the problem of making voice is highly visible. As Hoferkova (2012) found that hearing impaired students cannot automatically reproduce voice through vocalization. With moderate and severe hearing impaired students, it is observed that, there is a problem of substitution of consonants, sound omissions and transposition of letters. However, it is not highly existent as Lazanova (2009) states. The reason is that most of the students in the classroom are profound hearing impaired and they are not trying to speak.

## **IV. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **4.1 Summary of Findings**

Although teaching English language for hearing impaired students in inclusive classroom demands special preparation and diverse approaches, at Biftu Nekemte inclusive EFL classroom there is no any special preparation to teach hearing impaired students. Teacher and facility related problems are the challenges to implement inclusive education in EFL classroom. Teachers are supposed to teach hearing impaired students at least with the support of the sign language interpreter to minimize communication challenges. However, there is no sign language interpreter in EFL classroom and the class has been taking place with a regular class teacher. The teacher also does not have any special preparation in choosing methods of teaching, preparing of activities, and selecting and designing teaching material. In a nutshell, both the teacher and the students face communication challenges in the teaching and learning practice. The challenges are different across language skills.

The challenges the teacher faces in teaching English language to students with hearing impairment are associated with absences in preparing audio-visual material that can enables students to see the pace, tone, pause, silence, rhythm and timing; captions for every narrations; and teaching aids; and teaching how to pronounce words.

On the students' side, students with hearing impairment face challenges in EFL inclusive classroom. Moderate and severe hearing impaired students face the challenges of paying attention throughout the class, coping with the speaker's speed, and connecting meaning across sentence in learning listening (lip reading) skills. In learning speaking, hearing impaired students face challenges when they make voice and pronounce words.

### **4.2 Conclusion**

Based on the discussion and the above summary of the findings, the study draws the following conclusions:

- The implementation of inclusive education in Biftu Nekemte EFL classroom is a merely placement of hearing impaired students in the regular hearing students' (mainstream) classroom.
- With the absence of sign language interpreter, the practice of inclusive education in EFL classrooms creates communication intermission between the teachers and their students.
- The inclusion of hearing impaired students in English language classes is highly challenging the teaching of the hearing impaired as a result of lack of skills on the teacher's side to teach hearing impaired students.
- The inclusive education at Biftu Nekemte makes learning English language challenging for both the teacher and the students.

#### 4.3 Recommendations

Based on the above conclusion, the researcher states the following recommendation:

- Before the implementation of inclusive education the facilities and teacher related aspects should be reorganized to transform conventional classroom facilities and teachers to classrooms suitable for the hearing impaired.
- To solve the communication intermission, English language classrooms should have sign language interpreters. In addition to this, in-service training programs should be planned for language teachers and be part of the improvement program.
- An English teacher has the qualification of how to teach English for regular students. However, he/she does not have a skill to teach hearing impaired students. Therefore, the teacher education institutions need to incorporate the methodology for teaching of the hearing impaired students in their curriculum.
- In order to improve the students' language skills and to lessen the communication challenges facing teaching of language to the hearing impaired, well-equipped hearing impairment resource center should be established and give service to aid language learning.
- Facilities and human resources development programs should be carefully planned to minimize challenges to language teaching to the hearing impaired.

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