

# The Importance of English Communication Skills for Ethiopian Military Observers and Police Officers in International Peacekeeping Missions

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**Abstract:** Globalization has placed a growing importance of integrated skills of English language communication. This paper reports on findings of the importance and still challenges of ME for Ethiopian military and police officers in peacekeeping missions gathered via frequent observations and focus group discussions. It also shows that the growing international peacekeeping missions in the globe undergone by the Ethiopian armed and unarmed forces has been paired with the use of English as a lingua-franca of international communication. The language stands as a vehicular and bridge for them in an international geo-political scenario marked by the globalization of conflicts beyond national borders and consequently by the integration of armies in multinational and multicultural coalition forces. For the Ethiopian officers, this new international arena has meant its increasing participation in international peacekeeping missions which has involved the deployment of large number of officers and equipment, and the integration in multinational structures. English language can help facilitate the necessary interconnections in different sectors. However, this paper indicates that the military missioners are still suffering from their poor English language skills performance to conduct their daily routines. This research sheds light on how to overcome such inherent and nested English language difficulties and conclude the practical and effective solutions to the problems for those officers.

**Keywords:** Service, Contingent, Military Observer, Peacekeeping, English as a Lingua Franca

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## 1. Introduction

The demand for peacekeeping throughout the world has increased by 400% since the end of the cold war. According to the UN data, 10,000 peacekeepers were deployed in different parts of the world since 1993. By 1998 that figure has increased to 80,000 and in the middle of 2010, it stood 101,000. Ethiopia is located in the strategic place of east Africa, one of the most conflict-prone areas of the globe, has a history of troop contributing country (TCC) to the UN peacekeeping missions. Since its first participation in Korea in the 1950s under Kagnew Battalion led by Brigadier General Mulugeta Bulli, Ethiopia has deployed troops in peace support missions in UN Operations in Congo (UNOC, 1960), UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR, 1993), The AU Mission in Burundi (AMIB, 2003), Cote-d'Ivoire, Chad, Haiti, Mali, and UN Observer Mission in Liberia (UNMIL, 2003).

Currently, it has contributed to such missions in UN Africa Mission in Darfur (UNAMID, 2005), UN Missions in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS, 2011), and UN Interim Security Force in Abyei (UNISFA, 2011). In April 2017, Ethiopia was the largest contributor with 8,342 personnel, of whom 67 were from the Ethiopian Federal Police, 101 military experts and 8,174 troops. Ethiopia also contributes to the AU Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), which brings its contribution to above 11,000 by 2017.

Nowadays, Ethiopia is becoming the major TCC first in Africa. Its continuing commitment to both the UN and AU Commission peacekeeping is demonstrated by the Ethiopian government's Peace Support Training Center (PSTC) which will become a center of excellence, meeting the highest standards and working towards regional and continental cooperation.

The Ethiopian Ministry of National Defence (EMOND) and

the Ethiopian Federal Police Commission (EFPC) recognizes that in order to carry out peacekeeping responsibilities effectively, it is essential for Ethiopian peacekeepers to be able to communicate in English to internationally recognized standards as English is the lingua-franca of peace support missions. In line with this need, intensive training in peacekeeping related English has become mandatory [1].

The word communication comes from the Latin term “comunicare” meaning to do something jointly [2, 3]. Despite the fact that scientific literature acknowledges origins and overall meaning of the word communication, there is still a difficulty in discovering common, coherent and precise definition of the term. Various language scholars have defined communication in many ways. Two of them by name, Balaji and Gopi said, “communication refers to the exchange of thoughts and ideas with the intention of conveying fruitful information either through verbal or non-verbal means” [4]. This means effective communication is all about conveying messages to other people clearly and unambiguously. Thus, communication is a process of generating, transforming, and transferring information between entities, groups, and social organizations.

Effective communication is no doubt important, crucial, and decisive factor for the life of a military officer himself or herself, his or her personnel, and their ability to succeed in operations of great importance [5]. Consequently, Likaj stated that officers, non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and professional soldiers should know and master well the military terminology used in their branch, specialty: land, air or naval force [6]. S/he also highly recommended that officers and NCOs should be trained well to improve their basic communicative skills as well as overcome the problems they face as users of English as a foreign language when they are engaged in different briefings, training, joint exercises and multinational missions.

At present times, in addition to the technical military knowledge, the PSTC in EMOND looks for sound communication skills of pre-deployed military personnel. Therefore, the professional profile of any Ethiopian modern peacekeeper should include good command on English communications skills. In order to conduct their job effectively in the mission areas, peacekeepers should own the English language competence to international standards.

Most of the military documents and/or journals in peacekeeping sectors and headquarters (HQs) are written in English. Moreover, most commanding officers in various HQs also conduct their briefings and written reports in English. Hence, contingent commanders, police officers and Military Observers (MILOBs) should at least master the basic English ability to deal with the countless briefings, meetings, and telephone calls. Finally, they have to submit their important and consolidated reports in English. On top of these, the most important thing is to socialize with English language people around them [7]. As socialization requires communication, this is where we put English language in use. Military personnel are always operating their daily tasks in teams. Without proper communication in the team, they will never

sustain everlasting peace and create the world today. Indeed, communication skills are considered to be valuable career enhancers [8]. Through conversation in English language, we are able to communicate with other people in the community. For this reason, the police officers and MILOBs require competence in their English language in order to succeed in their prospect career.

In a nutshell, English language competence is proved to be a significant aspect of soldiers’ life and prospect career. Without English language, soldiers will speak Amharic language, their native, which is hard for English natives and foreigners who work with them. As different peacekeepers are deployed in the mission area, English language is the medium of instruction which helps their effective communication.

### ***1.1. Statement of the Problem***

It is vital that professionals in the army and police officers have “soft-skills” like the ability to socialize, communicate and express themselves to implement their “hard-skills” [9]. However, there has been an issue that several senior officers are still left undeployed even though they have the required strategic military competences. This is due to the problems of lack in communication skills in English. For this reason, even if all of them are very good technically, some were unable to express themselves and consequently failed to pass the predeparture test held in PSTC in Addis Ababa. They find it hard to speak in English, and have difficulties in terms of their pronunciation, (military/police) word power, the use of correct grammaticality, and fluency [10]. In line with this, the worst issue is when they do not want try to speak the language because of their anxiety, anger and fear of making mistakes. They lose confidence when they are tasked to introduce themselves, give instructions or briefings, participate in seminars and present certain tasks which demand their language proficiency skills in the workplace.

From the researcher’s personal experience of post-deployed peacekeepers in debriefing rooms, the UN senior sector officials’ claim that the officers could not perform well certain tasks alone when they are on-duty. When compared with their field-craft skills and language skills, they are incongruent and usually fail miserably to fulfill the basic requirements of passing mark in the predeparture test at the PSTC and end-of-course proficiency test. Yet, there is ample evidence that military personnel lack the required standards of integrated communication skills, particularly when compared with the needs of international peacekeeping missions. That is the reason why the UN and AU are looking for excellent and multifaceted peacekeepers that are not only strategic in military science but also can carry-out various tasks and have good oral and written communication skills. It is because such skilled peacekeepers would be more beneficial to the organizations.

This study sheds light on bridging the communication barriers Ethiopian peacekeepers come across when they are learning the language in the EMOND and EFPC Language Training Centers as well as when they are deployed in conflict-prone areas of Africa for peace support missions. It

is hoped that after revealing the result of this study, course designers could design more relevant materials and activities to brush up learners' language weakness and meet their needs in international standards.

### 1.2. Significance of the Study

This study will benefit several groups of people who are on-duty under EMOND Peacekeeping English Project (PEP) Language Training Centre, such as military English teachers, the coordinators, the curriculum designers of the training centre, the testing team, the British Council (BC), and the military personnel themselves who are learning or using the language. In all the military and police language centers in Ethiopia, the approach is based on wide range of language learning resources, both specific to teaching the military such as *Campaign series*, *Law enforcement series* and more general. All civilian teachers are the front line people who are responsible for teaching the NATO standard agreement (STANAG 6001) curriculum '*Campaign Series English for the Military and Law Enforcement*' courses and beyond. Having this in mind, any military English teacher has to play a pivotal role by taking a responsibility to help the army personnel in developing their communicative skills. This study will help these teachers in understanding the problems faced by their students, thus would find ways to overcome the problems in order to produce quality trainees with a good command of English.

As for the BC, PEP or PSTC, their curriculum designers would design course contents and supporting materials that are related to students' needs and standards. This would probably enhance the learners' abilities to apply their knowledge in real life situations because they are learning approximately 90% of the contents are relevant to their profession. However, their course contents should have included 10% need based and culturally relevant explicit integrated communicative skills practice. This will lead to generate fluent peacekeepers that are more balanced in communication skills and their technical field.

Finally, this study would also benefit English language learners themselves because it provides a clear view of their needs and ability in all skills using the English language. They could improve their speaking, listening, reading, and writing communication skills by focusing on overcoming the areas that they have identified problematic to them.

### 1.3. The Rationale

English is very important for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) users because it is widely spoken all over the world. Contingent Commanders and MILOBs whose mother tongue is not English, mastering military English language competence is an important aspect not only for their prospective career but also for their personal life. D. H. Joshi noted that one reason is that English is part of the important tools in academic, prospective career, and real life situations [7]. The other reason is that the officers are able to communicate with people in the community where they work

and live. Hence, military personnel cannot afford to ignore communication basics in the globalize world, especially in peace support missions, they need a specific set of language skills for their success in their duty stations.

The success of any peacekeeper depends on the ability to communicate effectively in the contemporary world of peacekeeping missions. In this scenario, effective communication in English language holds the key. The success of Ethiopian peacekeepers in different peacekeeping missions in the world for about 70 years and the last 14 years in Africa is attributed to the fruitful mix of their strong military knowledge and with little command of English language skills. This language gap must be filled out to sustain the forthcoming missions.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The information provided in this paper was derived from a larger experience of the researcher in teaching English for specific purpose (ESP) among Ethiopian senior military officers. The study investigated the importance and still challenges of military English among Ethiopian blue berets, especially, its use at class, achieving better results in end-of-course proficiency and in passing predeparture tests, and carrying out tasks in international peace support missions in conflict-prone areas.

### 2.1. Type of the Research and Instruments of Data Collection

This research deals with the combination of the researcher's personal experience, observations, and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with ME students, pre- and post-deployed military and police officers in Ethiopia which is purely qualitative. The observation method provides the long-term experience of the researcher as a military English teacher. The FGDs with the officers were conducted as soon as they had completed their twelve months courses together with the post deployed officers. They were asked to comment on various aspects of English, including questions regarding the use of English in their classroom practices; in peacekeeping/combat missions such as the use of English to report, email, read correspondence, attend meetings, deliver speeches, socialize, making telephone conversations, giving instructions/briefings, participating in seminars, etc; and passing their end-of-course proficiency and predeparture tests; and questions related to the use of authentic resources enabling them to use in the language learning centers. The officers were also asked about their prior language learning experiences before arriving in the Peacekeeping English Language Projects and its effects in the new language school and peacekeeping mission.

### 2.2. The Study Participants

The research was carried out in the PEP, at the Defense Language Training Centers in Ethiopia where English language proficiency courses and tests are conducted in all PEPs in accordance with the specific standardized agreement

(STANAG 6001) levels, which is a NATO agreement among member countries (though Ethiopia is not) for an acceptable linguistic competence. All of the participants were military personnel and police officers who attended ME and law enforcement courses at PEP and those who have already accomplished their peacekeeping missions. All of them were military and police officers of the Ethiopian army and EFPC who served for more than 30 years.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

Data collected through observation (personal experience) and FGDs were analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis ... 'a method which is suited for analyzing social phenomenon that is qualitative, interpretative and constructionist [10].

## 3. Teaching Basic Communicative Skills in Military English

Teaching and learning in Military English (ME), as a branch of ESP, is considered quite challenging for civilian teachers and ME students. These military students who attend English courses in all the PEPs are all adult learners and at the same, professionals in the military field. Listening skill as compared to the other skills is found to be very difficult for them because people (who speak English) have different accents and the students' ears were not able to sensitize easily with the native speakers' pronunciation. Military students were supposed to master secondary school English knowledge (intermediate in the Ethiopian context), but most of them were below the required level. Therefore, this became an obstacle in developing the skills equally to all the class members. The teachers of ME have to work individually with each of the students in order to identify their gaps in any skill and to help and/or counsel them overcome these problems.

In all PEPs, three of the skills including grammar and vocabulary except listening are tested at the end of every two units to evaluate their progress and four of the skills are tested at the end of ME courses to evaluate their proficiency level. The testing system aims to assess the overall English language proficiency of military and civilian personnel as well as police officers who will use English as a lingua franca or as an international language for peacekeeping operational purposes. End-of-course proficiency and predeparture tests are based on the course book, but aims at assessing a candidate's overall ability in the four language skills on NATO STANAG (standardized agreement) competence i.e., in the most widely used international system for testing the military, known as STANAG 6001 (Edition 3,2009), under which proficiency tests are developed in individual countries. Therefore, they are expected to communicate on standardized ME. Taking in to account all these prerequisites, ME students have to be well prepared and learn better before the administration of those high stake tests. In fact novice ME teachers have to take teacher training courses first on how to manage adult learners and deliver the courses such as using the students and teachers

as a resource, predicting, adapting and using authentic materials and generally, teaching beyond the course book effectively. ME teachers focus on the principles of process language teaching approach in the military rather than the desired products, which are expected to come eventually at the end of the course.

Teaching ME means to teach and to recognize well all the military terminologies, UK, US, and NATO acronyms, vocabulary and shorts, functional English and everything that has to do with the army; however, learning the specific vocabulary related to this field is another challenge both for the novice teachers and ME students. On certain occasions, military students, who are senior professionals in the army, recognize these specific terms better than their teachers. So, a good cooperation between the teacher and ME students will result in a productive way of teaching and learning the military terminology which will be used in the class in all skills.

Communication for ME students involves a lot of professional activities such as training abroad or homeland, participation in an international conferences, presentations and giving military briefings, exercising with joint and multinational troops deployed in peacekeeping or combat missions. That is why enhancing English communication skills are essential. Mastering the integrated skills of English enables them to communicate effectively whenever it is required [6]. Majority of the officers who were attending the courses mentioned that the whole year's language training has been inspiring them and it has been enjoyable work with textbooks and authentic materials. According to their feedback in the FGDs, most language aspects were taught effectively. Even though the language aspects' contents taught in the language school are military based, there are still challenges in mastering and using them daily because of contents' cultural irrelevances.

In order to deliver the required activities at class, and prepare updated teaching materials that are related to ME and peacekeeping missions, teachers carry-out need assessment analysis in advance what the students' needs are, what gaps they need to fill them out and what their objectives are. After identifying all these elements, the teacher will plan, prepare, and bring to class authentic and adapted materials that will fulfill the students' expectations and needs. After doing so, teachers check their students' understanding of the authentic and updated materials. This is said to be counseling.

### 3.1. The Military and English Language Training

Teaching military English is based on the communicative approach to foreign language teaching, which emphasizes the development of language skills. It also concentrates on developing these skills in the context of the changing role of the military as peacekeepers on multinational peace support missions. The importance of English language training for the military has grown enormously for more than two decades: the changing role of the military and changes in defense relations [11].

### 3.1.1. *The Changing Role of the Army*

Military forces today are increasingly deployed on humanitarian assistance and peace support operations, often, though not exclusively, under the auspices of the UN, NATO or AU Commission. Nations contribute peacekeeping forces and these different national contingents and MILOBs come under a central command or headquarters to execute their missions effectively. Often, English would be the operational language of this mission: official language that different contingents and MILOBs use to talk to each other as well as to communicate with peacekeeping headquarters. In addition, peacekeeping troops will frequently need to liaise with non-governmental organizations and overseas counterparts that are operating in the mission area.

### 3.1.2. *Changes in International Defense Relations*

Increasingly, the armed forces of different countries work and train together. When soldiers, sailors, or airmen go on exercise, they need to communicate in a common language, and English has become a military lingua-franca of joint and combined exercises, international business, technology and aviation. It is spoken by 1.8 billion people, of course some are military, in the world and the number is still rising [7].

### 3.2. *Core Needs of English as a Lingua-franca in Global Peacekeeping Missions*

There are many specific reasons why military personnel will need to know or learn English language before their deployment in peace support missions. Here are a few examples from my teaching experience as a military English teacher for about a decade and my experience from Certificate in English Language to Adults (CELTA) training I took in the British Council, Ethiopia.

- (1) Senior military personnel is preparing for deployment to a conflict affected country. S/he is going there as a commanding officer of a national contingent, military or staff observer. While s/he is conducting her/his daily routine, s/he will need to attend meetings, give and listen briefings held in English at the peacekeeping headquarters' briefing rooms. S/he will also need to speak regularly on the telephone, read correspondence written in English, read and write emails, and read information circulated only in the UN's local Outlook software or Outlook.
- (2) A junior serviceman/woman is assigned to a multinational headquarters. S/he is a driver and will need to understand the instructions that NCOs and officers from other countries give him. He will need to read orders, make a conversation on the telephone, and complete forms. He also needs to know how to address the senior military officers and civilians that he is transporting.
- (3) A military officer is assigned as a staff officer to the headquarters of an international defence alliance in a certain mission. His job involves reading and writing consolidated incident and situational reports, making and receiving telephone calls, giving and attending

briefings and reading correspondence written in English. During his tour of duty in such posts, he will also need to socialize with officers and NCOs from other countries.

- (4) A serviceman/woman from a technical branch is sent on a course to learn how to operate an expensive weapon or machine system that his/her country has of lately acquired. The course is taught in English and all the manuals are written in English.
- (5) A senior air force officer is assigned to an embassy abroad. Although English is not the first language of the countries, the staffs from such embassies all use English in their daily contacts.
- (6) A signal unit tasked to provide telecommunications services to the headquarters in a multinational exercise. The officer and senior NCOs responsible for the unit must negotiate for the provision of these services.
- (7) A junior officer is nominated as a liaison officer dealing with non-governmental organizations in a peacekeeping mission. His job is to determine their logistics needs, including transport and convoy escort. He might also be in charge of civil military cooperation (CIMIC) which demands him English language.
- (8) Senior police officers also need integrated police English language skills to prevent human trafficking, drug smuggling, and halt weapon of mass destruction; money laundering; conduct crime investigation and checkpoint border guarding, to maintain law and order as well as assess internally displaced people (IDP).

All the above specific English needs of any police and military personnel in a peacekeeping support mission will vary according to service, job experience, specialization and rank they have. Service refers to military English learners including personnel from the army (a term in English used anonymously with ground forces). Language training at PEP is primarily for military and police officers and civilian who can be deployed as contingent commanders, military observers, public information officers, and staff officers. Due to the increasing demand of officers that require them higher level of English language skills on international peace support operations, the PSTC in Ethiopia is working vigorously to produce high caliber English language users in the mission areas. Increasingly, policemen/women are also deployed in international peacekeeping and humanitarian missions who will serve as individual check-point border guards, advisers or Formed Police Unit.

In case of job experience, learners are students at military language school, preparing for marching beyond their borders to sustain peace in war torn areas. Alternatively, they are serving soldiers, NCOs, or officers taking course in their unit or a civilian or service school. There are a number of differences between these groups- serving soldiers may be getting ready for specific mission in a conflict prone area; students at military academics or language schools such as the PEP language schools in Ethiopia will almost certainly be preparing to take progress, mid-course, proficiency and predeparture tests.

Serving soldiers will have a wide range of military knowledge and experience; students at military academies may well be dealing with English in subject matter with which they are not familiar in their own language and culture based on the intentions to solve immediate problems associated with English language.

Army specialization refers to a huge number of specialized roles in the military, including infantryman, driver, diver, cook, intelligence analyst, embedded journalists and many more. Different ranks commonly need to perform different tasks via English.

Each service, specialization and task has its own terminology; but both contingents and MILOBs have certain core needs. Generally, they will need to be able to explain problems, give suggestions, and correctly address superiors and subordinates. They will need to acquire communication skills such as giving or attending a briefing (s), using the radio, watching to English TV channels and videos, referring to a map data and attending meetings. It is generally expected that military personnel should be equipped with a balance of technical knowledge in communication in addition to the soft and hard military skills they possess.

The following receptive and productive skills are the most important communication skills that are to be practiced and developed by the young and adult servicemen/women so as to achieve better results in mission areas.

### 3.2.1. Good Speaking Skills

Speaking is maintaining face-to-face communication in typical everyday situation and very important for a person's professional survival and growth. The need for giving due attention to English speaking skills is of utmost importance in the present scenario with an objective to make the job aspirants gainfully stationed. Effective speaking skills are incredibly important to the peacekeeper. It has been stated by the top commanding officers of PSTC in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the primary things they look for when sending troops to peacekeeping missions is how well they are able to communicate with foreigners.

As stated earlier, military personnel must possess good command of speaking skills to face and attend interviews, team discussions, take oral examinations, make conversation over the phone and make technical presentations (briefings). Presentations skills are improved by practice repeatedly [12]. The personnel should be able to present themselves effectively in all these activities. Hence, peacekeepers should be consciously practice and develop their speaking skills without wasting their precious time more than any time else as there is still a huge gap. Majority of them have disclosed that their potential in spoken English is still at its infant stage. This was proved when they are asked to speak in English; they intend to respond in Amharic.

### 3.2.2. Good Listening Skills

Listening is understanding common familiar phrases and short simple sentences about everyday personal and survival needs. Speaking and listening are indispensable to each other. It lies upon the peacekeeper to nurture good command of

listening habits. This skill has been often neglected for centuries, but now-a-days it is gaining momentum by different language institutes; however, it is found still a big challenge for adult learners as they are strongly familiarized with their first language. A successful communication process is not only comprising of talking but also includes listening. It should be noted that one should not forget an important adage in English related to listening - *"one cannot become an effective communicator unless one becomes an effective listener"*. Many ESOL/ESL studies have also revealed that business people spend 45% of their working time for listening. As a rule of thumb, service personnel, usually members from the army, remember while listening to someone is to listen deeply with any kind of defensiveness [13]. Active-listening enables peacekeepers to avoid misunderstanding, confusions, and misinterpretations. J. A. Kline further affirmed that listening is crucial in the workplace [14].

### 3.2.3. Good Writing Skills

Without any hesitation, good writing is blessing. Good writing skills are very much essential for effective communication in the life of the army. In this competitive world, military personnel should know how to write different effective formal and informal letters, write brief reports, memos and e-mails as well as other documents on practical, social, and professional topics and special needs of competence. It also enables her/him to write simple personal and routine workplace correspondence and related documents, phone messages to meet immediate personal needs and complete forms as well. In the workplace of the Ethiopian army at homeland, numerous papers are written and presentations are held in Amharic, the national language. Due to this, it has identified that mastering the skill in English still needs to go ahead extra practice. Not mastering the skill is stifling communication between or among co-workers when they are peacekeepers.

### 3.2.4. Good Reading Skills

In addition to SLW skills, reading is also very important language skill which is required by any peacekeeper. Quick, efficient and imaginative reading techniques are essential to achieve peacekeeping missions. It is said that *'today's readers are tomorrow's readers'* - this means if learners master the skill without doubt, they can *'read between the lines'*. In response of the need to read large materials related to their career or different field of knowledge, military personnel should learn different reading styles such as - skimming, scanning, intensive and extensive reading and they must develop reading habit and reading interest which are important segments of communication skills. Mastering the skill helps to read simple connected written material directly related to everyday survival workplace situations; to read simple, straight forward, factual texts on familiar topics; and to read with almost complete comprehension variety of authentic written material on general and professional subjects, including unfamiliar subject matter.

### 3.2.5. Grammar, Structures and Vocabulary

In Campaign series course books, the vocabularies are always relevant to peacekeeping activities. The grammar and structures used are those which are needed by speakers of English to realize their communicative objectives in peacekeeping environments. Grammar is an enabling device which allows the learner to communicate. Structures are the language forms necessary to construct the sentences [15].

### 3.2.6. Body Language

Effective communicators are the people who perceive novice ideas what other people say and continuously give and receive wordless signals. All of our non-verbal behaviors - the gestures we make, the way we sit, how fast and how loud we talk, how close we stand, how much eye contact we make - send strong messages. Some convey hostility, and others show friendliness. This is an essential part of the communication process. Various studies show that the words account for only 7% of the message you convey whereas the remaining 93% is non-verbal. Hence, all servicemen/women must pay attention to the non-verbal cues and signals they send, receive, and with this effort their ability to communicate will improve. In addition to the aforementioned language skills, any personnel should also develop various important skills such as team work, leadership skills, critical thinking, problem solving skills, etc. With all these necessary skills, peacekeepers will undoubtedly become dynamic professionals and techno-craft personnel without any doubt.

### 3.3. Some of the Common Communication Barriers Among Peacekeepers

Having been in the language training field for about a decade, I have taught and interacted with hundreds of military and police officers at staff level and NCOs in their respective bases in Shire, Mekelle, Bahirdar, Hawasa, Debrezait, Harar and Addis Ababa PEP centers and come to know various hurdles or problems that are being faced by the adult military community. While conducting this research, some of the most common communicative problems expressed by the trainees are:

#### 3.3.1. Lack of Confidence

Of course, good communication skills are absolutely important for everybody for the successful career in any sector. Confidence is the key for any kind of achievement. Majority of the officers in the PEPs are found with lack of confidence to express themselves. Interestingly, I have come across a few trainees who possess BA/MA degree in other fields or preparatory completed are good at English speaking but unable to speak well when tasked to brief in front of an audience due to the lack of enough confidence.

#### 3.3.2. The Psychological Pressure

I have observed another serious communicative problem among language trainees i.e., the psychological pressure of making mistakes and errors in the presence of their classmate comrades or invigilators. By having such kind of feelings, the trainees are unable to communicate effectively as 95% of them

completed secondary education (grade 10) in distance education programme where face-to-face tutoring was difficult because their bases are stationed far beyond school sites.

#### 3.3.3. Lack of Exposure to English Speaking Community

Since their childhood, the language trainees have been speaking in their respective dialects or mother tongue, if not Amharic, and they do not have proper exposure to speak in English or engage to such topic of some casual conversational accents. The most common cry I hear is "I do not know English - I never did it at school" or, if it was tried at school in the form of so-called rule of language, and terminology that has all been forgotten because English instruction was mostly delivered using the officers' own language. On top of that they were out of school for longer periods of time due to frequent missions as regular army and seventeen years as paramilitary fighters. The officers thought that it would have been better if English had been taught at school just like teaching English in PEP though all the teachers are non-native English speakers. This created major problems when they join English-speaking environments, especially given the variety of English accents.

#### 3.3.4. Fear and Shyness

The surprising note is that all of the officers are basically tactful, strategic and world class mind warriors in their professional career, but poor in the segments of communicative skills. As a result of this, they do have fear and shyness while communicating with others. Due to this hurdle, they remain as ineffective and passive communicators believing that their English is poor and eye-contact problems which collectively lead them to stage fright.

## 4. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore the importance and still challenges of integrated military English and law enforcement language skills of MILOBS and police officers in the international arena of peace support missions respectively. Interesting perspectives were forthcoming from the research that have proved the necessity of English as a medium of instruction in international peacekeeping/combat missions in which the Ethiopian armed forces participate as allies of TCCs.

English language is found to be a vehicular tool of the workplace and personal life while in mission where all of the officers have placed first its advantage in terms of its opportunity for successful usage to deliver effective presentations and/or briefings, read and write incident and situational reports, make a telephone conversations, read correspondence written in English, attend meetings and international conferences, etc in the workplace of military missions and international headquarters. For this reason, the growing peacekeeping mission in the globe undergone by the Ethiopian armed forces and unarmed officers have been paired with the use of English as a lingua-franca of international communication in peacekeeping as well as peace making and peace building missions.

How do the findings of this study help the concerned bodies, usually ME teachers, PSTC administrators, EMOND's Department of Education and the BC PEP coordinator and manager, understand better the English language difficulties of military personnel and enable them to find better specific language teaching approaches and implementing strategies for solving their language problems? In a nutshell, my observation provided the following findings:

- (1) Officers' prior English language learning experiences and the competences they own, have a negative impact on how well they can cope with the NATO STANAG 6001 proficiency test requirements of the PSTC.
- (2) The observations and FGDs with officers indicated that they did not have sufficient exposure to casual Basic English language conversations both in the classroom and outside classroom prior to coming to PEPs. Consequently, when they are sitting for an English class, they are suffering from learning all the integrated skills usually accompanied complaints.
- (3) Senior UN commanders are usually claiming for the language weakness of the Ethiopian military observers and staff officers' on-duty during their presence in peacekeeping missions.

## 5. Recommendations

The importance of ME as ESPs has been increasing from time to time in international peace support missions. The officers acknowledge and appreciate its importance to communicate their daily routines both in their duty stations and personal life. In order to achieve their objectives of communication and be successful in international peacekeeping arena, they have to comprehend first how the integrated skills function. First of all, they have to process the language used in all skills, then to relate them with their previous knowledge of the topic held under discussion. Processing the language and relating it will help them recognize what it is being said and it will enable them to react and participate in the communication.

Most of the military students find it hard to convey in English what they think it in Amharic because of their strong first language interference (L1 interference). In order to overcome this influence in the ME students, the English teacher should first make the students feel at home when s/he helps them speak in English. This could be achieved through selecting different funny activities such as warmers, pair works, syndicate group works, group discussions, role-plays, dialogue, debates, story-telling, and controlled practices.

The English teacher can also apply a student-centered Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches in the class. In such ways, the ME students are made to speak not only in the class but also outside it in peacekeeping missions. Choral repetition at classes and repeated exposure to the speaking and listening skills will prove to be beneficial. Above all, their teacher should encourage by asking them to try to become less hesitant and more confident while they are speaking with their comrades or else asking questions while

learning the language. They should be initiated to use English in and outside the class.

To develop listening skill among ME users, the English teacher and the ME students must effectively utilize the Self-Access Centers (SAC) which are equipped with listening language software and recommended language websites for listening with the help of headsets to listen and learn various pronunciations of new entries, rhythms, tones, and stress patterns of English language.

It is said that "Reading maketh a complete man, speaking maketh a ready man and writing maketh a perfect man" [16]. Writing is very important for ME students and professionals in all fields. They will require writing business letters, memos, email messages, proposals, minutes, reports, professional information summary (INFOSUM) and so on. Hence, military personnel of the present generation must equip with these skills of writing, considerate its importance and with continuous practice and hard work on it, they could genuinely boost their writing skills.

This study has proved that the officers' English language performance is at its infant stage, and need it to be brushed up to meet international standards of ME communications. So, the PSTC need to be more sensitive to the language difficulties experienced by ME students by committing to produce significant resources to addressing their students' language difficulties.

To sum up, I suggest ME teachers to be open-minded to new approaches of language teaching and pay more attention to teaching skills process, then the desired product will come eventually. To do so, engaging ME students in real life situations that are strongly related with their future career is mandatory.

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