



Full Length Research Paper

Assessment of Policy Frameworks and Stakeholders' Needs for Development of Afaan Oromoo

Alemayehu Fekede (PhD)^a, Chimdi Wakuma^{b*}, Abera Degefa (PhD)^c, Teshome Egere (PhD)^d and Melkamu Dumessa, (PhD)^e

^a and ^e, Assistant Professors, Jimma University; ^b and ^d, Associate Professors, Jimma University; ^c, Associate Professor, Addis Ababa University

^{b*} Email: chame.wakuma@gmail.com

Submission Date: April 3, 2023

Acceptance Date: June 25, 2023

Abstract

This study deals with the assessment of policy frameworks and stakeholders' need for development of Afaan Oromoo. The study was based on qualitative methods with descriptive analysis as an overall design. In order to understand the policy framework pertaining to language status planning by political actors in Oromia National Regional State and those at the Federal Government level and other possible actors, qualitative method is suitable. Regarding data collecting techniques and sources, twenty informants (two from each stakeholders/offices) have been purposively selected. These are drawn from Oromia regional parliament (Caffee Oromiyaa), cultural affairs standing committee, Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau, Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau language Development Unit, 3 universities in Oromia offering PhD degrees in Afaan Oromoo programs namely Addis Ababa, Jimma and Wollega), Oromia Justice office and Oromia Legal Institutes, Oromia media institutions and Oromia Education Bureau and Oromoo Writers Association executive members and Ethiopian Languages and Cultures Academy. This sampling method was preferred because the research needs relevant informants who are capable of giving detail information on the matter. Besides, five authorities and experts from Ethiopian Culture and Tourism Minister were purposively selected and participated in the study. The findings of the study revealed that the 1995 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has set the legal framework for addressing the demands for equality of language rights better than ever before. The constitution gives equal recognition to all indigenous languages. The existing language related policy and legal documents seem relatively better compared to pre 1991 situations in terms of legal framework and policy issues. Yet, it is still far from fulfilling the interest of the people. The people, civic organizations, political groups, different professionals have been voicing their concerns for improvement and implementation of the legal frameworks and policy documents. The Oromoo youths deprived of work and other opportunities in Finfinne and other federal state offices due to lack of Amharic Language proficiency as it is the only official working language stipulated in the federal constitution as the only federal working language in practice.

Key Terms: Afaan Oromoo, development, framework, language policy, stakeholders

^{b*} Corresponding author.

Sakatta'a Hammatoo Imaammataafi Fedhii Dhimmamtootaa Dagaagina Afaan Oromoo Irratti

Axareeraa

Qorannoon kun daagaagina Afaan Oromoo ilaalchisuun, hammatoo imaammataafi fedhii dhimmamtootaa sakatta'uu irratti xiyyeeffata. Bu'uurri qorannichaas sxaxa ibsaafi mala akkamtaadha. Afaan karoorsuufi sadrkaa afaanii murteessuu ilaalchisuun hojiiwwan siyaasaafi hammattoowwan imaammataa sadarkaa Mootummaa Biyyaalessaa Naannoo Oromiyaaafi sadarkaa Mootummaa Federaalaatti, akkasumas dhimmamtoota biroon raawwataman hubachuudhaaf malli qorannoo akkamta mijataadha. Malleen ragaan ittiin wliiti qabamaniifi maddeen raga qorannichaa ilaalchisuun, ragaawwaniifi tooftaawwan mala qorannoofi saxaxa filatmeef mijatan hojiirra oolaniiru. Biiroowwaniifi dhimmamtoota dhimma afaaniifi imaammata isaa irratti kallattiin, yookaan miti-kallattiin hirmaannaa qaban iddattoo kaayyeffataatiin (digdama, tokko tokkoo biiroowwaniifi dhimmamtoota filataman irraa lama-lama) filatamani hirmaatan. Haaluma kanaan, namoonni raga kaayyoo qorannichaaf galtee ta'u gumaachuu danda'an biiroowwan, yookaan dhimmamtoota filataman keessaa lama-lama akka afgaaffii gadi-fagoo irratti hirmaatan ta'eera. Isaanis, Caffee Oromiyatti koree dhaabbii dhimma aadaa, Biiroo Aadaafi Tuurizimii Oromiyaaatti kutaa dagaagina Afaan Oromoo, Yuunvarsitota Oromiyaa keessaa sadarkaa Digirii 'PhD'-tti Afaan Oromoo irratti/Afaan Oromootiin hojjetan, (Yuunivarsiitiwwan Addis Ababaa, Jimmaafi Wallaggaa), Biiroo Haqaa Oromiyaa, Inistiitiyuutii Seeraa Oromiyaa, Dhaabbilee Miidiyaa Oromoo, Biiroo Barnootaa Oromiyaa, Waldaa Barreessitoota Oromoofi Akkaadaamii Afaanota Itiyoophiyaati. Iddattoowwan kunneen kan filataman, namoota dhimma qoratamu irratti raga amansiisaa argachuuf gargaaran hubannoo keessa galchuuni. Dabalataan, aangawoonniifi ogeessoonni Ministeera Aadaafi Ispoortii iddattoo kaayyeffataan filatamuun afgaaffii irratti hirmaataniiru. Akkasumas, Imaammanni Afaanii Itoophiyaa bara 2020 maxxanfame akka raga dookimantiitti madda raga qorannoo kanaati. Akka argannoo qorannoo kanaatti, Heerri Mootummaa bara 1995 raggaasifame, heera duraan ture irraa adda haala ta'een, hammatoo seeraa walqixxummaa afaanota Itiyoophiyaa fedhii naannoowwanii irratti hundaa'ee waan mirkaneesse qaba. Imaammatoonniifi seeronni sadarkaa gara garaatti jiran, kan bara 1991 duraa waliin yoo walbira qabamee ilaalme, fooyya'aadha. Garuu, har'as fedhii hawaasa bala'aa guutuu kan danda'e miti. Uummanni, jaarmiyaaleen siivikii, dhaabbileen siyaasaa, ogeessoonni gara garaa, fooy'ainsa imaammatoota jiraniifi hojiirra oolmaa isaa barbaadu. Sababiin isaas, dargaggoonni Oromoo Finfinneefi sekteroota mootummaa federaalaa guutummaa biyyaa keessatti hanqina dandeettii Amaarinyaa irraa kan ka'e carraa hojii dhabaniiru. Kunis, ammayyuu, Heera Mootummaa Federaalaa irratti afaan hojii mootummaa federaalaa jedhamee kan seeraan bekamuu afaan tokkicha ta'uu isaa irraa kan ka'edha.

Jechoota Ijoo: Afaan Oromoo, dagaagina, ammatoo, imaammata, dhimmamtoota

1. Introduction

Modern Ethiopia is characterized by amalgamating diverse linguistic, cultural and religious groups into a single state. Among the four language phyla widely spoken in Africa, the Afro-Asiatic and Nilo-Saharan are found in Ethiopia. The Afro-Asiatic language phylum constitutes six language families of which three of them (Cushitic, Semetic and Omotic) are spoken in Ethiopia. The Cushitic branch is further divided into four groups: North, Central, South and East. Afaan Oromoo is one of the lowland groups within the East Cushitic group (Hayward 2000, p. 75). It is spoken in Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania and Kenya. There are at least 85 distinct ethno-linguistic groups in Ethiopia, from which more than one-third of the population speaks Afaan Oromoo as first and/or second language.

Even though Ethiopia has been a multilingual and multicultural polity since its formation, these diversities haven't been given appropriate recognition by the successive rulers of the country until the end of 20th

century (Alemayehu and Wondowsen, 2020). The one language assimilationist policy pursued by the successive Ethiopian rulers has prevented the growth and development of other languages of the country. Consequently, all other Ethiopian languages could not serve their speakers in the spheres of education, public media, judiciary, commerce, science and technology and in all other areas of key language use domains, by promoting one. Particularly, in view of the fact that Afaan Oromoo is widely spoken by significant majority in Ethiopia and across some African countries limiting the domains of use of the language is not justifiable. The trans-boundary use of the language could have helped in strengthening Ethiopia's diplomatic ties with the neighboring countries in the Horn of Africa like Kenya to foster regional integration.

Inside Ethiopia, Afaan Oromoo is used as a lingua franca and as a day-to-day means of communication by a great many people of various ethno-national groups other than its native speakers. It is used as the working language in Oromia National Regional State. It is a medium of instruction in primary schools (grades 1-8), and is taught as a subject in primary and secondary schools (grades 1-12) in the Region. It has also become a field of study in higher institutions from diploma to tertiary degree (PhD) levels for the training of professionals in the areas of language teaching, journalism and communication, and even for the Regional culture and tourism offices. Quite a big number of scholars from different disciplines have conducted considerable number of studies on Afaan Oromoo since the beginning of the twentieth century (Griefenow-Mewis 2001, p. 9; Mekuria, 1993; Tolemariam, 2009 p. 6). Despite these facts, the successive Ethiopian regimes have resisted the language to get a legal base to serve as the working language of the state at national level. This limitation has been imposed on Afaan Oromoo through different policy documents including the constitutions of the country, in one way or the other over the long years. As used in this study, "Language policy is basically an officially mandated set of rules for language use and form These set of rules for the use of the language are established by the government ... (Bakshi, 2015, p. 46).

Yet, professionals, and all concerned bodies have been exerting their demands to use Afaan Oromo as one of the federal working languages in contemporary Ethiopia. Such linguistic right claims and the use of Afaan Oromo in Finfinne and at federal level are among the concerns of the speakers. Moreover, the question of the Oromo people's and the youth in Oromo protest demanded to make the language one of the federal working languages besides to Amharic for federal offices and in Finfinne.

Therefore, it is necessary to devise Afaan Oromo development strategy based on empirical research so that all concerned individuals, institutions and bodies work for its continuous progress in every domain. For this, examining enabling policy frameworks, evidence based stakeholders' demands, identifying government short term and long term goals are important. Here, stakeholders are Oromia level top government bodies, such as Caffee Oromia, Oromia Education Bureau, Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau, Federal Ministry of Culture and Sport, Research Institutes and Universities affiliated with Afaan Oromoo. Yet, the benefit of having multiple official working languages benefits not only the speakers of the languages, but also the wider Horn of African societies, including nations and nationalities of Ethiopia. Witnessing this, the New Ethiopian Language policy underlines under its preamble that it has "a significant potential for fostering multinational cohesion and building a single socio-economic ties between the peoples and nations of the Horn of Africa (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2020, p. 3).

Generally, whether a country is multilingual or monolingual, there should be a system for the use, preservation and development of the language/s through careful legal based policy and strategic planning. As a result, it is important to analyze and assess existing policy frameworks that enable the wider use of Afaan Oromoo and further developments in relation to stakeholders' needs and looking into strategy for the development of Afaan Oromoo. Therefore, this study examines the long term and short term needs of the National Regional State of Oromia in terms of status and wider domains of the language use, together with

responding to the growing need of the public and the time. In line with this, the objective of the study is to examine the enabling legal related contexts in relation to stakeholders' needs to shed light on the opportunities that follow the new Ethiopian Language Policy.

2. Language Policy: Coceptual Framework

The starting point of language development is determined by status planning which is solely dependent on political decisions. The professional contribution of linguists towards the use of the language in various contexts follows the status determination of the politicians. Based on the role of politicians and linguists, there are basic issues and practices leading to language development. These are corpus planning and acquisition planning (professionals' duty) and status planning (politicians' duty) (Kloss, 1969). Corpus planning is about the internal development of a language (grammar, lexicon etc.), while status planning involves the external or functional development of a language in a society. Here, the term 'status' is commonly used as a synonym for function that is under the direct influence of the existing political will. Subsequently, others have expanded this model to include additional dimensions, such as 'acquisition planning' (promoting and spreading language learning) and 'prestige planning' (creating favorable psychological background for long-term planning), through entertainment industry, and other means. Haugen (1983; 1997) distinguishes this basic category in his model of language standardizing which includes selection of a 'norm' speech variety for the purpose of codification, codification of a standardized code or written norm, and elaboration.

Language planning is an old phenomenon, though it is relatively new as a discipline. The term was used for the first time by Haugen in 1958 in relation to his work on Norwegian Language Policy (Gruyter, 2006, p. 2385). Crystal (2008, p.269) notes that language planning is a thoughtful, systematic and theory-based effort done by studying the several languages and dialects, "and developing an official language policy concerning their selection and use.

In the same token, Myers-Scotton (2004, p. 379) points out that, "language policy is a civil war of languages." This indicates the extent to which language planning and /or policy issue is firmly connected with politics of competition. Myers-Scotton further notes that "in language planning, as in politics, it is useful to ask who benefits from any given arrangement" (p.379). This is for ideological and political reasons, some governments impose their own language choices on societies without giving due attention to facts out there on the ground. For Spolsky (2009, p. 1) "Language policy is all about choices. If you are bilingual or plurilingual, you have to choose which language to use. Even if you speak only one language, you have choices of dialects and styles." He also stresses that language policy issues are determined mostly considering social or political facts rather than linguistic realities (p.1).

Wardhaugh (2006, p.357) states that status planning "changes the function of a language or a variety of a language and the rights of those who use it." This kind of planning has a lot to do with societal and political issues. On the other hand, status planning involves the external or functional development of a language in a society to be determined by government as policy. Hence, the status planning is a base for professionals to act for implementing the language use policy based on the framework. Furthermore, there is a third category of language planning, usually known as acquisition planning in which a national, state or local government system aims to influence aspects of language use through education such as literacy, language of instruction and language as a subject in schools at various levels.

Language policy depends on “specific documents, laws, regulations or policy documents that specify different language behaviors (Shohamy, 2006, p. 45). But, language policy may not be always written. Which means the real language policy of a political and social entity can be understood not only based on officially declared policy statements. There are other devices that are used to indicate the hidden language policy, from the language practices of different language users, usually “in covert and implicit ways” (Shohamy, 2006, p. 45).

Many countries have legally stipulated, or *de jure* language policy. There are also countries with *de facto* language policy. In some countries monolingual language policy is considered as a best tool for creating a homogenous strong nation, regardless of the linguistic rights of minorities. In some others, multilingual and inclusive policies are chosen based on the existing linguistic landscape. Whatever the choice, there are “political and ideological forces behind language policies” (Shohamy, 2006, p. 48). When the official language at federal or any other level is legally accommodative enough in multilingual countries, it can be considered as enabling legal framework. On the other hand, if the policy and related legal frameworks are not accommodative enough, it could be regarded as limiting in multiple ways. “Official language, by acting as a gatekeeper for accessing education, jobs, and elite political networks, imposes costs of participation due to its linguistic distance from popular speech and due as well to the low exposure people have to that official language in everyday life.” (p. 41).

Ethiopia has issued and adopted a new language policy in 2020 which is the first of its kind in the country’s history of language policy. This language policy is very progressive and accommodates the rights of every language and promotes recommended five languages to be the federal working languages. This is a historical landmark in the context of Ethiopia’s linguistic human rights. Yet, the policy should be critically assessed to identify the enabling factors having regard to the needs of stakeholders..

As Mesfin (2014, p.18) states, the history of Ethiopian language policy have two categories: *defacto* and *dejure*. According to this categorization, the *defacto* language policy was the practice in pre-1955 Ethiopia, which discontinued by the revision of the 1955 revised Haile Sellassie Constitution. However, Mekuria (1994, p.99) contends that the first official language related decree was a decade before the revision of the constitution. Particularly, after his return from exile, the Emperor announced in his Imperial Decree, No.3 of 1944, which “regulated the work of foreign missionaries and made Amharic the medium of instruction throughout the country [...] the decree made it a requirement for the missionaries to use only Amharic for teaching and preaching.” The Decree was meant to reverse legally the language right the Italians had recognized during those five years of occupation (Mekuria 1994, p.100).

For the last several years, Amharic has been used as the court language of the Ethiopian Christian state and as the language of literature. Though the language was used widely by Ethiopian rulers of the Zemene Mesafint as well as Emperor Tewodros, including Emperor Yohannes of Tigray, Amharic got its letter de noblesse under Menelik. But it was Emperor Haile Selassie who elevated it to an official status by stipulating it under article 125 of the Revised Constitution of Ethiopia expressly stating that “the official language of the Empire is Amharic” (Milkias, 2011, p.264).

The revised constitution in 1955 recognized Amharic as the official language of the Empire. And this could be taken as the basis for the first *de jure* language policy of Ethiopia though there was still lack of corresponding explicit operational plan. The Constitution has given Amharic the legal and practical status to be used as medium of communication for a country wide use. As a result, Amharic came to enjoy

uncontested supreme political, cultural and linguistic status in Ethiopia (Mesfin, 2014. p. 18). This had its own detrimental effects on other languages of the country, including Afaan Oromo. Other languages have been legally denied the opportunity of being used in formal/official settings. That was how; Amharic only came to be used in the whole country exclusively as the lingual franca in all the public sectors such as in the medium of education, media, judiciary and administrations different from all of the other Ethiopian languages.

Following the 1974 Revolution, the Dergue came to power and declared that the time was “for all nations, nationalities and ethnicities to enjoy the freedom of maintaining, using and developing their language together with many political and economic benefits” (Getachew & Derib, 2006, p. 47). According to Mikias the 1987 Dergue’s constitution ensures that the equality, development and respectability of the languages of nationalities is well emphasized.” (2011, p. 265). In the constitution, the Dergue promised to tackle one of the long standing grievances of the various nationalities with regard to the suppression of their languages during the imperial regime (Mekuria, 1994, p.107).However, the prominence of Amharic remained unchanged. As provided in the 1987 Dergue Constitution “without prejudice to Article 2 sub-article 5 of this Constitution, in the People’s Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the working language of the State shall be Amharic.” In other words, both in legal and practical terms, the Dergue opted for the perpetuation of Amharic as the official language. Since “...there was no other Ethiopian languages given any official status, nor there was any implication in the constitution that other Ethiopian language could be used for official purposes”, Amharic continued to serve as the only and exclusive officail language in Ethiopia (Mekuria 1994, p. 107).Of course the Dergue can be credited for its extensive campaign of organizing adult literacy program in nationality languages.

However, Ethiopian for the first time experienced an unprecedented sociolinguistic change all across the nation following the 1991demise of the Dergue and the coming to power of the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). Amharic , the former national language was reduced to the status of the federal working language. All regions endorsed their own offical working languages following the 1991government changes and the 1995 constitutional ratification. Yet the full implementation of the legal documents into practice as an enabling environment is still point of contention.

3. Methodology

This study was based on qualitative descriptive analysis method. The rationale behind employing the qualitative method was as Creswell (2009, p.15) states, it was to increase understanding of the social process-dynamics, opinions, attitudes and perceptions of people and the issues understudy. Accordingly, for the proper assessment of the policy frameworks and the needs of stakeholders’ qualitative approach would be appropriate. Qualitative method is suitable to understand the policy framework pertaining to language status planning by political actors in Oromia National Regional State, the Federal government and other possible actors. Both actors from Oromia and the Federal were equally considered for this study as their involvement would make the research more practical and conclusive.

Regarding data collecting techniques and sources, overall, twenty informants (two from each stakeholders/offices) have been purposively selected. These are drawn from Oromia regional parliament (Caffee Oromiyaa), cultural affairs standing committee, Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau, Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau language development unit, 3 universities in Oromia offering PhD degree in Afaan Oromo programs (Addis Ababa, Jimma and Wollega) Oromia justice and Oromia legal institutes, Oromia media institutions and Oromia education bureau and Oromo writers association executive members

and Ethiopian languages and cultures academy. This sampling method is preferred because the research needs relevant informants who are capable of giving detail information on the matter. Besides, five authorities and experts from Ethiopian Culture and Tourism Ministry were purposively selected and participated in the study. In general 13 of them were males and 7 were females. Moreover, 10 of them were government authorities working at Oromia and Federal level while the rest 10 were expertise in their language and linguistics fields.

The researchers have conducted in depth interview with the participants focusing on existing policy frameworks and stakeholders needs for further development of Afaan Oromo and further domain of uses. By further domains of use, it means federal level official uses, using at high school and beyond as language of instruction among others. The interview data was recorded and then transcribed verbatim, based on the principle of communicative translation and then translated into English and thematically categorized for analysis in line with the core objectives of the study. In addition, the language policy of Ethiopia, indorsed in 2020 was also used as a data source. For the purpose of interpretation and discussion, the data were integrated and discussed qualitatively to shed light on the status, corpus and acquisition planning of the language. All the data were collected from September 20/19-June 30/2022. Fortunately, the policy document that becomes an input for this study was published in February 2020. For the purpose of the research ethics, ethical clearance was secured from the concerned office of Jimma University. Moreover, all views of the participants were kept confidential and code was used where their ideas were used as policy related and language issues in Ethiopia are sensitive.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 The Needs of Oromia and Stakeholders to Improve the Status of Afaan Oromoo

The 1995 constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has set the legal framework for addressing the demands for equality of language rights better than ever before. The constitution gives equal recognition to all indigenous languages. The regional states have the right to choose their own respective working languages. Furthermore, the right of every nation, nationality and people of Ethiopia to use, preserve and develop, its language has been guaranteed by the Constitution. Consequently, Oromia National Regional State was constituted to serve and promote the interests of the Oromoo people one of which is the development of Afaan Oromoo.

The Oromoo people demand and need Afaan Oromoo to be legally recognized to be used for wider domain of use in the bureaucratic system like justice, commerce, sciences and technology. Accordingly, the Regional State has shown its commitment to execute these interests of the Oromoo people through legally recognizing Afaan Oromoo as the official language of the regional state. It also declared Latin as its official script designating it as *Qubee* Afaan Oromo. What is more, the Regional State is bestowed with the mandate to develop, and preserve and further expand the various domains of uses of Afaan Oromoo in Oromia bureaucracy, education, and media and in other domain areas.

To this effect, the Region has established Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau (OCTB) to cherish the Oromo culture and language. In addition, the Regional State mandated Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau with the mission and objectives of working on Oromoo language research through planned academic research and studies. Such researches are meant to promote Afaan Oromoo use, preservation and development for wider domain of use in Oromia through immediate oversight and follow up by *caffee* Oromia's Social Affairs standing committee monitoring and evaluation maintaining harmony with the national strategic growth and development plan of the Regional State.

As formal institution responsible for the development of Afaan Oromoo, our bureau has supported the drafting of the New Ethiopian Language Policy. Because, we believe it supports the development of our language. This is one of the key questions of our people and also intellectuals. Our professionals in this bureau have commented on the draft, and we did so because we know the interest of our people. That is not just making the federal working language. Making the language of federal government is one. There are many more demands related to making it the language of emerging technologies. We are determined to work with everyone to increase the area where our language should serve. (OC (informant code), September 2021)

Additionally, the Region also mandated Oromia Education Bureau to use the language as the medium of instruction for Oromoo children and to teach as school subjects in the entire Region. By empowering these two Regional bureaus namely the Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau and Oromia Education Bureau, the region is doing its level best to promote the use, preservation and development of Afaan Oromo. The Region also encourages different media organizations to use Afaan Oromoo for broadcasting services in the Region and beyond. This indicates the commitment of the Regional State to use, preserve and develop Afaan Oromoo based in line with the demands and needs of the Oromoo people. The region has also found the Oromoo Culture Center to research and work on Afaan Oromoo and work on standardization of Afaan Oromoo as a whole and on terminology from different dialects spoken across Oromia in different domain of uses.

Thus far, Oromia Culture and Tourism has been working on corpus development such as developing dictionary, collecting and documenting the oral proverbs and folktales and other oral histories of the Oromoo society for the corpus planning. The Regional State has also recognized Afaan Oromoo to be the official language of the regional bureaucracy in its constitution and put into practice in wider domain of services for the Oromoo people as it is a token of the Oromoo people national identity. In the same manner, to make Afaan Oromoo be used in different levels and in its various domain areas, the Oromia National Regional State has both short and long term demands and needs. Therefore, the short term needs and demands of the Oromoo people in general and the Oromia regional state in particular entail the wider use of the language in different domains. In this regard, the region has stipulated the both short term and long term needs and demands to fulfill. Accordingly, the former Oromoo Culture center head has the following to say:

In general, the Regional State has implemented the use of Afaan Oromoo as official bureaucratic language of the Region, medium of instruction for school children, language of justice system in Oromia and made its level best to do academic research on the language to make suitable for writing, and wider use in its communication in Oromia and further to develop the language. In sum, the short term needs and demands of the region are to formally upgrade its use at different levels in its wider domain of uses at Oromia level. (TK, (informant code), December 2021)

On the part of the Regional National States of Oromia, the efforts so far may not be undermined. Yet, it is clear from the responses of the stakeholders from research institutes and academics that what the government of Oromia has been doing so far is not as expected. This might be due to various political and economic factors as many of the stakeholders stated. There are severe criticisms being leveled against Oromia Regional State for its failure to establish a single body/Center/ with the full authority to work on the development of Afaan Oromoo including its standardization for uniform use in Oromia. Even under the current socio-political condition it was thought Oromo people and Afaan Oromo is favored.

However, an Institute of Oromo Studies alias (Dhaabbata Qorannoofi Qorannoo Oromoo) established by *Caffee* Oromia recently states that the institute is making different efforts to fulfill the needs and demands of the Oromoo people in general and the Oromia Regional State in particular. Accordingly, the long term needs and a demand of the Oromoo people is to use its language as one of the working languages of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Afaan Oromoo speakers demanded for many years the language to be used

at different levels in different domain of use such as in bureaucracy, medium of instruction, commerce and in the fields of sciences and technology in all offices and ministries of Federal Government. In this regard, the key informant at the Oromoo Cultural Center succinctly elaborated that:

In the long run, we are working to address the needs and demands of the Oromoo people. We work to promote Afaan Oromoo use, development and preservation not only in Oromia alone, but also in other regions of the federal states. We want to make one of the official working languages of the federal state. We want to make one of the official working languages of Finfinne city. We work to make it competent language at global echelon as it is the language spoken in different parts of Ethiopia and across regions in the horn of Africa. We are doing our level best to make it a lingua franca of communication in different neighboring East African countries (DT (informant code), September, 2020).

4.2 Existing Conducive Policy Frameworks

Based on the Ethiopian Federal constitution, the Oromia National Regional State declared Afaan Oromoo to be the official bureaucratic language of the region, medium of instruction for school children and offered as school subject beginning from kindergarten up to high school level. The federal government owned three universities are also offering degrees in Afaan Oromoo up to PhD level. Some more universities are offering Afaan Oromoo from Bachelor to Masters Degree level. Moreover, the teacher training colleges administered by Oromia Education Bureau use the Afaan Oromoo as language of instruction.

Furthermore, Afaan Oromoo is spoken widely in different regional states in Ethiopia. It is also spoken as trans-boundary in the horn of African countries such as North Kenya, Tanzania, Somali and Sudan and South Sudan. It can be a means of communication to gather these speakers in different countries to work together in commerce and other activities for the regional development. In fact, this issue has got consideration in developing the New Language Policy that planned to include Afaan Oromoo and other languages to the Federal Official Working Languages.

The Oromos in Finfinne has a special demand to learn in their mother tongue and use the language in the office too. In addition, there is a wider demand of Afaan Oromo from the Oromos living in Dire Dawa administration, in Benishangul Gumuz, Gambella, Harari, Somali Regional State and Kamise Zone in Amhara Regional State. They have been demanding to teach to their children Afaan Oromo as mother tongue education in line with the education policy of the federal state. Besides, following the recently revised education and training policy, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education has decided Afaan Oromo to be taught as second language in other federal regions.

Though the existing language policy and legal framework documents seem relatively better in comparison to the pre1991 language use issues, it is still far from fulfilling the interest and demands of the Oromo people. The people, civic organizations, political groups, different professionals have been voicing their concerns for improvement of the language use rights in Ethiopia. Due to language use policy, the Oromoo youths were deprived of work and other opportunities in Finfinne and other federal state offices as they lack Amharic Language proficiency. One of the key informants explained the negative impact of not having Afaan Oromoo as one of the federal working language as follows:

The fact that Amharic being the only official federal working language has marginalized the Oromos and other ethnic groups who speak Afaan Oromoo from different job opportunities. Most educated Oromos did not get employed at federal level as Amharic is the working language. It is the major obstacle to Oromos and other Oromoo speaking community to play their role at federal level. We (the Oromoo and other ethnic groups) who speak Afaan Oromoo were pushed from different opportunities in employment and business where we are supposed to work and making a

living. It deprived us of our right-to-work and earn a living since Amharic is stipulated as the only working languages of the federal government in the 1995 constitution. (KC, (informant code), January 2021)

The use of more than one language as the federal government working languages creates suitable environment for further regional integration and multinational democratic state building in Ethiopia. With regard to policy framework, the federal government has issued a new language policy for the use, preservation and development of Ethiopian indigenous languages. In this regards, the policy might have the following role to play:

Given that the trans-boundary languages spoken by the majority have a significant potential for fostering multinational cohesion and building a single socio-political community while also strengthening the socio-economic ties between the peoples and nations of the Horn of Africa, it is necessary to raise their functional status at Federal level. Likewise, given the current challenges facing language use and development, it is necessary to put in place an appropriate policy framework for systematically addressing language use issues. (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, p. 3)

In line with the policy framework, the Oromia Regional State has strong commitment to implement new language policy that stipulated Afaan Oromoo to be one of the Federal Government working languages. The Oromia National Regional State has undertaken different preparation to work toward the implementation of Afaan Oromoo as one of the federal working languages. Oromia Regional State has strong political will and commitment to upgrade the status of Afaan Oromoo to federal working language. This implementation needs political decision to promote the status of the language to federal working language and expanding its wider domain of use at federal level in different government owned offices and ministries as bureaucratic language and for wider communication and use in different areas such as education, business, sciences and technology at federal government echelons. With regards to this issue one of the key informants stated as follows:

The government of the region is trying to accomplish these needs of the Oromoo people in two ways. The first one is a political decision, so it needs political will and commitment. The second one needs the wider work of academicians and experts who conduct scientific research and make preparation that the political decision entails such as the development of Afaan Oromoo teaching materials and human resources issues who teach and implement the use of the language at the federal level in different domains of use. The Oromia Regional State is officially working with its stakeholders on political decision of the status of Afaan Oromoo to be one of the federal working languages. In order to realize the demands of the Oromoo people, the region is doing its level best and has strong political will and commitment (LE (informant code), January, 2021).

At the Oromoo Cultural Center in Finfinne, wider preparations are undergone to promote Afaan Oromoo to one of the federal working languages in Ethiopia. Moreover, the Cultural Centre is working with Oromia Education Bureau to be used as the medium of instruction in different regions outside Oromia based on the demands and need of the people in that particular region as stated in the language policy developed by the Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Through interview, the participants confirm that they have to make different preparation in advance to implement and realize the needs and demands of the Oromoo people in line with the new language policy framework. The key informants from the cultural center stated that:

To materialize the demands of the Oromoo people, we (our center) are making preparation in advance to meet the public needs and demands. We have mobilized different sectors of the regional state and the society and organized a big symposium in collaboration with Ambo University to make groundwork preparation for the full implementation of Afaan Oromoo as the federal working language. As Afaan Oromoo has been serving as the official bureaucratic language in Oromia Regional State for about three decades, we believe that it is mature enough to function as a bureaucratic language at federal level as it has been in practice in Oromia as an official language in Oromia. (CSK,(informant code), January 2021).

According to the informants, from Oromia government, this preparation is aimed at filling the gap that is the need of Oromoo people and Oromia National Regional State and the actual status of Afaan Oromoo. The officials from *Caffee* (Social Affairs Standing Committee) and Oromia and Oromia Culture have shown their commitment to work on the man dement of the constitution for the implementation of the recently endorsed new language policy of the federal democratic republic of Ethiopia. More than ever, the new language policy has shown the promising direction in creating the enabling environment for the use of Afaan Oromoo as one of the federal working languages for wider domain of communications.

There are various available policy frameworks that create conducive and enabling environment for Afaan Oromoo to be one of the federal working languages. First and foremost, the 1995 constitution has declared equal recognition for all indigenous languages and gave legal protection. Though, it hasn't given any status at Federal level, it has allowed the region, Oromia to decide the official language of the region for its own. This has moved Afaan Oromoo one step to be official working language at national regional level. This created a suitable condition for Afaan Oromoo speakers' the rights to use, preserve and develop their language. Second, the Oromia regional state's constitution stipulated Afaan Oromoo clearly as the regional official language and it shall be written in Latin script known as Qubee Afaan Oromo. Moreover, the federal government constitution in general and the Oromia Regional State Educational and Training Policy document also stated that children must learn their primary education in their mother tongue based on the UNESCO convention.

Moreover, the newly issued Language Policy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia clearly explains five Ethiopian languages to be promoted to the official federal government working languages. Consequently, the language policy states that "the federal government working languages shall be Amharic, Afaan Oromoo, Tigrigna, Somaligna and Afaragna" (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2020, p.14). Hence, different documents of the government both at federal and regional level provide Afaan Oromoo legal protection and recognition for its use; preservation and development in various domains of use. So Afaan Oromoo has recognition both legally and constitutionally. Therefore, suitable environment prevails for the use; preservation and development of Afaan Oromoo at regional and federal level and the language policy framework also support for its wider use and utilization in wider domains of communication in Federal government offices, beyond Oromia.

The currently endorsed language policy (2020) has a potential to create various opportunities for strengthening national unity and regional integration across the Horn of Africa as four of the languages are cross-boundary languages, namely: Afaan Oromoo, Tigrigna, Afar Af and Af-Somali. In line with this new development in the new language policy, the right of linguistic majorities is respected to use their languages as media of instruction, administration, justice, and mass communications in a more border scope than ever. Hence, the benefit is just not only for the speakers of Afaan Oromoo.

... the fact that speakers of some of the languages collectively constitute the majority of the population raises high their significance in promoting multilingualism, reinforcing multinational cohesion and building economic and socio-political polity. In addition, some of these languages are trans-boundary and shared by millions of people in the Horn of Africa, their potential role in fostering economic, cultural and diplomatic integration between Ethiopia and neighboring peoples and nations is considerable. (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2020, p. 2)

If Afaan Oromoo is promoted, the opportunity is for peoples and nations of the Horn as a whole, and also the neighboring countries in relation to diplomatic, economic, political asset that may arise as a result of better ethno-linguistic relations. Concerning various ethno-linguistic groups in Ethiopia, such policy framework encourages multilingualism and this in turn increases the lingua franca role of Afaan Oromoo, and also improves national cohesion. Supporting the view expressed in the policy document quoted above, an expert in Ministry of Culture and Tourism confirms that:

... having additional languages like Afaan Oromoo and even others as working federal language allows all those who have the required language skills to work in government bureaucracies far beyond their areas of birth and also allows them to live and do private business in communities who speak other languages without difficulty. ACT, (informant code), March 2021)

Therefore, as the new policy under its article eight sub-article four states that “to strengthen the bonds and relations between all peoples of Ethiopia, the Federal working languages shall be offered as education subjects” (2020, p. 20). This paves the way for many people of the country to be either bilingual or multilingual in using at least two of the indigenous languages of the country. To this effect, the Federal ministry of Education has already prepared the textbooks in the federal languages as additional subject to be taught based on their choice and needs of the respective regions of the federation to allow their children to learn. Hence, the benefit is multidirectional.

In the same way, the current language policy in education allows students to stay at school and learn successfully as well as to reinforce their associations with their peers, teachers, and community and with their family. This is an asset both for pedagogic and cognitive advantage for the learners. It is in line with this that, during the past three years almost all government primary schools in Finfinne (Addis Ababa) has started offering Afaan Oromoo as a school subjects based on their needs and wants in its public schools.

Though the Ethiopia Education and Training Policy endorsed in 1994 allows such educational practices, it has been forbidden to put Afaan Oromoo into practice in Finfinne, until the past few years. Therefore, in the last few years significant change has been made following the new general language policy.

Thus, respecting nationalities ‘rights in a comprehensive way in all areas of language, particularly in medium of instruction, administrations, justice, and learning as a school subject is constructive for bringing together all linguistic groups. It supports national unity in diversity through upholding mutual respect, equality, and fraternity. In relation to this, one of the officials of Oromia National Regional State expressed the opportunity the new policy might bring and the experiences the speakers went through as follows.

The development of language policy though too late to be endorsed, the opportunity that will follow would be so fundamental. It will open a window of multiple opportunities for all, and more for speakers of other languages. For speakers of Afaan Oromoo, it is pride to get service in their language and also to serve others in that language. As a result, Afaan Oromoo is developing more

than ever. It is becoming the language of science and technology. This time, when I say it has achieved this status, that long road might seem so simple. (AM, January 2020).

The above quotation reveals that the endorsement of the Oromia regional state constitution that guaranteed the legal protection and recognition for Oromoo speakers' rights to use their language, preserve and develop has undergone multifaceted ups and down to come to this historical fruition in Ethiopia. The long years of bitter struggle of the peoples of Ethiopia in general and the Oromoo people in particular have given birth to the new language policy that recognizes the multilingual federal working languages. Yet, this success was not achieved easily overnight; it is realized at the sacrifices of the dear lives of the gallants sons and daughters of the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia. It took more than half a century of bitter struggle to create democratic multinational federation of Ethiopia where people live through unity in diversity that accept and respect the liberty, equality and fraternity of the nations, nationalities and peoples.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

As we have discussed above, Afaan Oromo has undergone through successive repressive Ethiopian regime devoid of its right to use, preserve and develop owing to the suppressive monolingual language policy and linguistic homogenization through de jure and de facto language policies for the past several years.

In line with the analysis of the policy framework, the stakeholders need and demands analysis, documents analysis and expertise's and politicians' interviews, there are needs and demands from the Oromoo people. In the analysis we found out that there were many conducive policy frameworks in various governmental documents that encourage the wider use of domains for Afaan Oromoo use both in Oromia and at the federal level. Different documents such as the federal constitution of the 1995, the Oromia Regional State Constitution, the Federal Education and Training Policy documents of the 1994 and the Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau establishment document have mandated the office to expand the use, preservation and development of Afaan Oromoo and culture in Oromia. Finally, language policy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia issued recently by the Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2020 also laid a fertile ground for the wider use, preservation and development strategy of the language both at the Federal government as one of the working languages.

The needs and demands of the Oromoo people is pushing forward the Oromia National Regional State to work on the inclusion of Afaan Oromo at least at policy level as the one of the federal languages. The federal government is also working on the language policy that accommodates multilingual federal language policy in its language policy to clear a ground where nations, nationalities and peoples live peacefully. The endorsement of the multilingual federal working languages in country like Ethiopia where people of tapestry in culture and language live together in unity in diversity is helpful for mutual benefit. If the multilingual federal working language policy is implemented through constitutional amendment, the mosaic, multilingual and democratic federal state of Ethiopia will be so near in the horizon. This policy analysis has appreciated the different efforts made to make Ethiopia a cohesive society multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-scriptural federal state in the horn of Africa at least at policy level to promote unity in diversity, even so, its execution is lagging behind.

Reference

Addunyaa Barkeessaa.(2018). Fufiilee heddummina maqaa barumsaa Afaan Oromoo keessatti.*Gadaa Journal/Barrulee Gadaa*, ff.1-23.

- Alemayehu Fekede and Wondowsen Tesfaye. (2020) Multilingual Practices and Multiple Contestations in the Linguistic Landscape of Selected Towns in Oromia: A geosemiotic perspective. *Macrolinguistics*, Vol.8 No.1, pp.105-124
- Amanuel Raga and Samuel Adola. (2012). Homonymy as a barrier to mutual intelligibility among speakers of various dialects of Afan Oromo. *Journal of Language and Culture* Vol. 3(2), pp. 32-43.
- Bakshi, V. (2015). Language policy and planning: A critical analysis. *International Journal of English and Literature (IJEL)*, Vol. 5, Issue 2, pp. 45-52.
- Ministry of Culture and Tourism. (2020). Language policy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Addis Ababa.
- Ethiopian Statistical Agency (ESA). (2013). *Population projections for Ethiopia, 2007-2037*. Addis Ababa: UNFPA.
- Crystal, D. 2008. *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics (6th Ed)*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Debela Goshu. (2010). *The semantics of Oromo frontal adpositions*. Oslo: University of Oslo PhD Dissertation.
- Kebede Hordofa. (2009). *Towards the genetic classification of Afaan Oromoo dialects*. Oslo: University of Oslo PhD Dissertation.
- Gemetchu Megersa. (1993). *Knowledge, identity and the colonizing structure: The case of the Oromo in East and Northeast Africa*. London: London School of Oriental and African Studies PhD Dissertation.
- Getachew Anteneh & Derib Ado. (2006). Language policy in Ethiopia: History and current trends." *Journal of Education and Sciences* 2. 1, pp. 37-62.
- Gragg, G. (1982). *Oromo dictionary: Monograph 12*. Michigan: Michigan State University.
- Griefenow-Mewis, C. (2001). *A grammatical sketch of written Oromo*. Cologne: Rudiger Koppe.
- Gruyter, W. D. 2006. *Sociolinguistics: An International Handbook of the Sciences of Language and Society*. Berlin: Druckhaus.
- Haugen, E. (1983). The implementation of corpus planning: theory and practice. In J. Cobarrubias and J.A. Fishman (eds). *Progress in Language Planning: International Perspectives*. Berlin: Mouton. pp. 269-289.
- Haugen, E. (1997). Language standardization. In N. Coupland and A. Jaworski (eds). *Sociolinguistics - A reader and Course Book*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Hayward, R. (2000). Afroasiatic, In B. Heine & D. Nurse (eds.), *African languages: An introduction*, 74-98. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hudson, G. (2004). Languages of Ethiopia and languages of the 1994 Ethiopian census." *International Journal of Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies, Aethopica* 7, pp. 160-172.
- Kloss, H. (1969). Concerning a 'Language-Nation Typology', in Fishman, Ferguson, Das Gupta (eds.), pp. 69-85.
- Laitin, D. D. and Ramachandran, R. (2016). Language Policy and Human Development. *American Political Science Review*, 2016, vol. 110, issue 3, 457-480.
- Milkias, Paulos (2011). *Ethiopia (African in Focus)*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, LLC
- Mekuria Buicha. (1993). Beyond the Oromo-Ethiopian conflict. *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, 1(1), 1-16.
- Mesfin Wodajo. (2014). Sociolinguistic challenges of the post-1991 Ethiopian language policy. *Journal of Languages and Culture*. Vol.5 (2), pp.17-23.

- Myers-Scotton, C. (2006). *Multiple voices: An introduction to bilingualism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Spolsky, B. (2009). Prolegomena to a sociolinguistic theory of public signage. *Linguistic Landscape: Expanding the Scenery*. Eds. Shohamy, E. & Gorter, D. New York: Routledge, pp. 302-12
- Spolsky, B. 2004. *Language Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- Tadesse Jaleta. (2004). A contextual study of Guji-Oromo proverbs: Functions in focus. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University MA Thesis.
- Tolemariam Fufa. (2009). A typology of verbal derivation in Ethiopian Afro-Asiatic languages. Utrecht: LOT.
- Wardhaugh, R. 1986. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics (5th Ed)*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Acknowledgements

The researchers acknowledge the generous support received from the following institutions: Jimma University Research and Community Service, Institute of Oromoo Studies (IOS), The Federal Culture and Tourism Minister (CTM), Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau (OCTB), Caffee Oromia Social Affairs Standing Committee, Academy of Ethiopian Languages and Cultures and staffs of Jimma, Addis Ababa and Wollega Universities.