A Pannon Egyetem

Modern Filológiai és Társadalomtudományi Karának tanulmánykötete

„Humán tudományok: jövőbe vezető utak”

Szerkesztette: Tóth József

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Tartalomjegyzék

Előszó

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A Pannon Egyetem Modern Filológiai és Társadalomtudományi Kara a Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Veszprémi Területi Bizottsága Nyelv- és Irodalomtudományi Szakbizottságával közösen adott otthont 2021. november 8-9-én a Magyar Tudomány Ünnepe 2021 tiszteletére rendezett „Humán tudományok: jövőbe vezető utak" elnevezésű kétnapos nemzetközi tudományos konferenciának. A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia által minden év novemberében megrendezett Magyar Tudomány Ünnepe 2021. évi mottója „Tudomány: iránytű az élhető jövőhöz". A Pannon Egyetem Modern Filológiai és Társadalomtudományi Kara a „Humán tudományok: jövőbe vezető utak" elnevezésű konferenciájával szervesen illeszkedett az országos programsorozathoz. A Kar tudományos konferenciája ezen központi gondolat köré szerveződött, kiemelve a tudomány jövőformáló szerepét. Az elhangzó előadások megmutatták, hogy a nyelv-, az irodalom- és a kultúratudomány, valamint a nevelés- és a társadalomtudomány mely területeken haladta meg korábbi eredményeit, azok mennyire váltak a tudomány jövőt formáló értékekeivé. A kutatók számára a jövőben is adott a fejlődés folyamatos fenntarthatóságának lehetősége, újabb tudományos eredmények létrehozása, formálva az emberek gondolkodásmódjának megváltoztatásával jövőbeni életünket. A több szekcióban (1) Nyelvtudományi, 2) Irodalom- és kultúratudományi, 3) Társadalomtudományi, 4) Neveléstudományi) elhangzott 24 hazai és külföldi kutató előadása mellett külön szekcióban 15 előadással helyet kaptak a Többnyelvűségi Nyelvtudományi Doktori Iskola doktorandusz hallgatóinak témához kapcsolódó kutatási eredményei is.

Jelen tanulmánykötet, amely nem a konferencia köteteként szolgál, az elhangzott szerteágazó kutatási témák azóta tovább érlelt gondolatainak összegzésére vállalkozik. A kötet betekintést enged a Modern Filológiai és Társadalomtudományi Kar Intézeteiben folyó jövőformáló kutatómunkába, amelyet a különböző tudományágak, mint a nyelv-, az irodalom- és a kultúratudomány, valamint a társadalom- és a neveléstudomány egymásmellettisége és egymáshoz kapcsolódása jellemez. A tanulmányok megmutatják a különböző diszciplínák jövőformáló és így az egyes tudományterületek fejlődését előrevetítő erejét.

A kötet szerkesztője hálás köszönettel tartozik a tanulmánygyűjtemény létrejöttéhez hozzájáruló egyetemi oktatóknak és az egyes témák ismert szakértőinek. A szerkesztő köszönetet mond egyrészt a tanulmányok szerzőinek, karunk oktatóinak és a Többnyelvűségi Nyelvtudományi Doktori Iskola hallgatóinak, másrészt a kötetben található tanulmányok szakmai bírálóinak, akik a következők voltak: Dr. András Ferenc, Dr. Bátyi Szilvia, Dr. Bónus

Veszprém, 2023. január 5.

Dr. Tóth József
a kötet szerkesztője

KERESA KUMERA CHALI / ANDREA PARAPATICS

The history of language policy in the education system of Ethiopia

Abstract
The paper focuses on the historical development of language policy in the Ethiopian education system from the reign of Emperor Minilik II (1889-1909) until nowadays. The historical study of language policy in education was based on written documents from different sources (i.e dissertations, journals, and education and training policy documents). Ethiopia, as a multilingual and multicultural country, has faced the critical problem of developing and implementing language policy in education. The various governments that ruled Ethiopia since the reign of Minilik II followed various language polities in education that suit their political orientation. The language politics of Minilik II, Hailesellasie I, and the Derg regime were similar on the ground level: they all implemented a policy of using one language. The current government, however, is quite different in its approach and implementation regarding the question. After the new constitution was introduced in 1994, Ethiopia has been divided into eleven regions along ethnic-linguistic borders. Although the constitution gave every nation the right to use and develop their language and culture, only Amharic, Tigrinya, Somali, and Afaan Oromo became major regional languages.
Keywords: constitution, education, Ethiopia, history, language policy

1. Introduction

Ethiopia has been labeled as possessing a long history of three thousand years and more. Language and language use in Ethiopia's education system has passed through a long and complex history of development. Ethiopia is a multilingual, multicultural, multiethnic, and multi-religious country with different social structures and practices. Kings, Emirs, Sheikdoms, Queens, Emperors, Empresses, Juntas, and Prime Ministers that ruled Ethiopia have followed different language polities that would outfit their political ideologies. Ideologies are inherent in any form of language use (Liddicoat, 2020). In practice, ideologies construct beliefs about languages and how they are used and create affordances or constraints on language-related practice (Lo Bianco, 2005). There are different levels in language policy and planning (hereafter, LPP). Across these levels, there are two main types of LPP (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997).

Accordingly, status planning deals with the use and functions of language varieties whereas language in-education planning deals with language teaching and learning. While the second type, language-in education planning may open or close spaces for languages in educational contexts and foster or inhibit opportunities for the development of literacy or expanded registers in particular language varieties and for overall educational success (Liddicoat, 2013). An all-important decision of language education policy concerns the choice of medium of instruction

(Tollefson, 2008, p. 3) which determines the language(s) to be learned, for how much time, etc. Since the 1950s, there have been some important developments in the field of language policy and language planning studies.

As knowing the past helps to understand the present, knowing the history of the language education policy of a given country helps us to understand the type/s of language education policy a country had in the past and the developments undergone. For this reason, by examining the history of language policy in the education system of Ethiopia, which is the part of our thesis/dissertation that aims to explore language policy and practice in higher education institutions of Ethiopia towards multilingualism, we intended to review whether the rulers who ruled Ethiopia from the time of Emperor Minilik II (1889-1909) to nowadays considered an inclusive language education policy in such a diversified(multilingual, multicultural and multiethnic) society or not. Besides this, the relationships and differences (the type/s of language policy) among the language education policy of each regime were assessed. Therefore, in this short review paper, language policy in general, types of language polities from the views of different scholars, and the history of language policy in the education system of Ethiopia from Emperor Minilik II (1889-1909) to nowadays are presented comprehensively.

2. On language policy

2.1. A brief and general summary

Language policy is the outcome of planning processes intended to address possible language conflicts regarding which languages to use and to develop in multilingual spaces such as public institutions, nation states, or even supra-national bodies. In multilingual communities, where the languages of various members have varying statuses, language polities take care of providing (or withholding) language rights.

Language policy, whether it is explicitly or implicitly given, is the "primary mechanism for manipulating and imposing language behaviors as it relates to decisions about languages and their uses in education and society" (Shohamy, 2006, p. 66). In addition, it is stated that through language policy, "decisions are made regarding the preferred languages to be used, where, when and by whom" (ibid). Shohamy (2006) makes a distinction between overt and covert language polities. Overt language polities refer to "those language polities that are explicit, formalized, *de jure,* codified and manifest" while covert language polities refer to those that are "implicit, informal, unstated, grassroots and latent" (49)". This distinction between overt and covert policy, it is argued, is used to elaborate the differences between the narrow and broader meanings of the term "language policy". It is noted that the explicitness of a policy does not

guarantee that a language policy will be implemented. Very often the application of policy as it is clear in language use is in opposition to stated polities. Language policy, that is, the outcome of "decision-making about language" is inextricably connected to linguistic culture (Schiffman, 1996, p. 5). In this work, linguistic culture is defined as follows:

"[the] sum totality of ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices, myths, religious strictures and all other cultural "baggage" that speakers bring to their dealings with language from their culture. Linguistic culture is also concerned with the transmission and codification of language and has a bearing also on the culture's notions of the value of literacy and the sanctity of text" (Schiffman 1996: 5).

Thus Schiffman (1996) advocates an approach to the study of language polities that incorporates both the overtly declared polities and the covert *de facto* language polities. Schiffman believes that this approach will assure due recognition of the mismatches between what is provided in the law and what happens in practice. It is argued that defining language policy with an emphasis on its explicit and overt features is inadequate. According to the author, such a definition ignores or overlooks the cultural notions about language that may profoundly affect the implementation of a language policy.

Shohamy (2006) also works with this distinction in the reference to "real" and "declared" language polities. The author contends that the real language policy is one that can be observed, understood, and interpreted. It is contrasted with the declared policy that is given in official documents, even though in many instances it is not reflected in the language practices of a given community. Language policy exists even where it has not been made explicit or established by authority.

Even where there is a formal written language policy, its effects on language practices are neither guaranteed nor consistent (Spolsky, 2004, p. 8). Thus, it is through the study of language practices that the covert language policy may be determined. A framework has been proposed that shows the difference between policy and practice. First, it is referred to as *language beliefs* which are the ideologies that underlie each language policy. Second, there is the *language practice* which he defines as the ecology of language that focuses on the actual language practices that take place in the particular context. Third, the term *language management* is introduced to refer to the formulation and proclamation of an explicit plan or policy, usually but not necessarily written in a formal document, about language use in institutional settings.

As noted by Calvet (1998), the possession of authority is very important in the formulation of language polities. That is to say, language policy is the responsibility of the government.

2.2. Types of language polities

Language polities differ from place to place and from time to time according to the political orientation of governments and the nature of the society that exists. Language policy seems to be dichotomized into overt (explicit, formalized, de jure, codified, manifest) polities and covert (implicit, informal, unstated, de facto, grass-roots, latent) aspects of the policy; what usually gets ignored, of course, are the covert aspects of the policy. That is, many researchers (and policy-makers) believe or have taken at face value the overt and explicit formulations of and statements about the status of linguistic varieties, and ignore what actually happens down on the ground, in the field, at the grass-roots so far. Fortunately, there is recognition in some quarters that some kind of dichotomy must be recognized; Gessinger (1980) posits a difference between explicit and implicit policy in the following way:

> "[the] narrower and broader meaning of the term language policy should not be confused, however, as they are different in one essential point: language policy in a narrow sense I call it explicit language policy is social decision-making that is directly geared toward those contexts of the lives of the speakers that are transmitted by language, whereas structural language policy denotes those actions of social groups or state administrations which incorporate those contexts of life (that are demonstrably linguistically conveyed, into the all-encompassing context of general political practice" (Gessinger, 1980, pp. 22-23 cited by Schiffman, 1996, p. 14).

That is, Gessinger (1980) distinguishes between explicit and structural, the latter being a kind of incorporation of linguistic conditions into the basic assumptions of the political fabric and modus operandi of the state. This is slightly different from what I am calling linguistic culture, but certainly, his structural language policy would be one component of what linguistic culture would entail.

Before we proceed, it would be proper to ask: "Why do countries need a language policy?" for obvious reasons, the use of language for various purposes such as education, administration, communication and so far in monolingual nations does not create problems. However, as Getachew and Derib (2006) argued in multilingual nations like Ethiopia, the issue creates problems, and the use of language is mostly supported by a language policy.

3. Historical development of language policy in Ethiopia's education system

As mentioned in the introduction part earlier, knowing the past helps to understand the present, and knowing the history of the language education policy of a given country helps us to understand the type/s of language education policy a country had in the past and the developments undergone. In the next sub-sections, we will briefly discuss an overview of the historical development of language policy in the Ethiopian education system by dividing the section into four periods, i.e., during the reigns of Minilik II, Haileselassie I, the military junta (commonly called the "Derg") and the present government.

3.1. During the reign of Minilik II (1889-1909)

The Ethiopian language education policy (LPP), in the relatively modern sense, was introduced by Emperor Menelik II (1888-1910), the founder of modern Ethiopia. Like Tewodros and Yohannes, Menelik also used Amharic for writing his chronicles (Meyer, 2006). The focus on Amharic as a symbol of national unification was given due attention further during his reign, which is well-known principally for the spread of Amharic among the non-Amhara ethnolinguistic groups. Obviously, the greater momentum given to Amharic was mainly connected to its strong association with the dominant political power and its relatively better stage of development. Amharic was used to be not only a means of communication but also one of the ways of strengthening state power. In the effort to combat illiteracy in Ethiopia, the first large-scale literacy program called *Hullum Yimmar* 'Let all learn!' was introduced during the reign of Menelik II in 1898 and his daughter Empress Zewditu in 1921.

According to Sineshaw (1997), it is believed that Amharic was used by its native speakers and speakers of other languages during these adult literacy programs. The establishment of the printing press for the first time toward the end of the 19th century in Dire Dawa and then in Addis Ababa made Amharic the only language to be used in printed media (Pankhurst, 1963). In education, the first modern school, namely Menelik II School was established in 1908 using French as a medium of instruction. The use of a foreign language as a medium of instruction was witnessed in Ethiopia for the first time. Later, foreign-based missionary schools started to flourish and were able to use other foreign languages such as English, German, Swedish, Italian, etc. Missionaries were also allowed to translate the Bible into, for instance, Afaan Oromo and Tigrinya. These relatively liberal language guidelines were perhaps connected to the overall ambition of the Emperor to modernize Ethiopia. Despite the fact that all the institutional and non-institutional supports were geared toward the entrenched use of Amharic for both written and oral communication, the state polities were not explicit on language issues.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which had a virtual monopoly on education at the time, critically opposed the establishment of a secular school for fear that schooling would spoil the social and religious values and norms of the society and/or of the church (Heugh et al., 2007, p. 45). The aim of the modern school, thus, was limited to teaching European languages such as French, English, and Italian. The secret of teaching these languages was that they would be important to keep the country autonomous by providing it with elites who could negotiate the interests of the monarchy through the "so-called international tongues" (Heugh et al., 2007, p. 45).

Besides the European languages, the curricula of the first school included languages like Arabic, Amharic, and Geez; and subjects like Arithmetic, Science, Physical Education, and Sports (Anshu, 2004, p. 3). This indicates that the first curriculum of modern education in the country was dominated by language education. Generally, Menelik's preference for Amharic, similar to his predecessors, was not supported by any written legal document and, hence, what continued was a covert and implicit kind of LPP.

3.2. During the reign of Haile Selassie I (1930-1974)

Evidence indicates that French served as a sole medium of instruction (hereafter, MOI) until 1925 when the second government primary school (Teferi Mekonnen Primary School) was opened (Marew, 1998: 208). It was no sooner than the opening of the school that English shared the status as the second foreign language used as the MOI. Since then, the two languages (French and English) remained languages of instruction until the Italian occupation of Ethiopia in 1936 (ibid.).

In fact, the choice of this second MOI was not without reason. The first reason was that there was no school using a foreign language as MOI other than the few traditional Church and Quran schools that used Geez and Arabic respectively. The second reason was that the then contemporary traditional schools were limited in all respects, and educational objectives were to train able elites, who would facilitate the running of a modern state and speed up the centralization process (Simon, 1993: 26). Thus, under the pretext of using English as an additional MOI, the emperor was able to enlist both Britain and America for the establishment of new schools and modernize the old ones (ibid.).

After the Italian occupation, however, the modern system of education was completely disrupted (Bender, 1976, p. 320). Bender further states that after the Italian invaders occupied Addis Ababa in May 1936, they decided, from the start, on rejecting any kind of national language for the invaded country (ibid.). Consequently, by an edict of 1936, they propagated

six main local nationality languages to be the media of instruction in the six administrative units of their east African empire by making Italian the principal language of instruction (Heugh et al., 2007, p. 46).

Thus, Tigrinya and Arabic in Eritrea, Amharic in Amhara, Amharic, and Oromo in Addis Ababa, Harari and Oromo in Harar, Oromo and Kaficho in Sidama, and Somali in Somali were used in their respective areas (ibid.). The language policy implemented by the fascists was not for pedagogical purposes, but rather to make it conducive to divide-and- rule the nation based on ethnic and religious spheres. Such a policy was considered a separatist movement that considers Italy's attempt to combat "nationalist sentiments" (McNab, 1989, p. 78).

After Italy's evacuation of the country in 1941, English got the status of being the dominant MOI at all levels of education (Simon, 1993: 26). As a result, the Ethiopian and the British governments came to an agreement in 1942 to import both teaching materials and examinations from Britain and this agreement continued until 1958/59 (Anshu, 2004: 4; Heugh et al., 2007: 46). In the early 1960s, however, Amharic has officially declared the language of instruction of primary education (Grades 1-6) as a result of the 1955 Ethiopian constitution, which stipulated that Amharic shall be the official language of the country (McNab, 1989: 79).

The change of MOI from English to Amharic at the primary level was on the ground of a study conducted by the Department of Research and Curriculum Development (DRCD) in the early 1960s. According to Heugh and colleagues (2007, p. 46), there were two reasons for the change of the language of instruction at the primary level from English to Amharic. The first reason was that children became handicapped by having to learn a foreign language that more than 60% of them would not need to use after leaving school (Stoddart, 1986, pp. 9-10). The second rationale was that much of the content of the courses was incorrectly or inadequately conveyed because of the language barrier (Heugh et al., 2007, pp. 46-47). This change, without any doubt, enabled Amharic-speaking learners to begin from the known and learn through a familiar language, which is pedagogically sounder than beginning from the unknown and learning through an unfamiliar language at early stages (ibid.).

Among other reasons, the exposure of Emperor Haile-Sellasie, his dignitaries as well as the educated elite to the outside world, particularly, in countries such as Japan, Germany, England, and the USA has significantly contributed to favoring monolingualism over multilingualism. A good indicator of the excitement of the emperor in monolingual nations was the 1931 first written constitution which was drafted on the earlier Japanese model and undoubtedly affected the guidelines regarding language (Habib, 2004). For the emperor and the policymakers under his imperial rule, whereas multilingualism or linguistic heterogeneity was perceived as painful,

monolingualism or linguistic homogeneity was perceived as a painless path to unity and development. Such a perception coincides with the positivist approach of LPP and planning which equally views linguistic heterogeneity as a problem (Ricento, 2000).

Fishman (1966, p. 60), in his comparative work between linguistically homogenous and linguistically heterogeneous countries, has concluded that "[l]inguistically homogenous polities are usually economically more developed, educationally more advanced, politically more modernized, and ideologically-politically more tranquil and stable". For Fishman (1966) and his proponents, developing nations are fertile grounds for obtaining an "indispensable and truly intriguing array of fieldwork locations for a new breed of sociolinguistics" and to better understand language diversity and its ramifications. The extraordinarily high levels of development of monolingual countries such as Germany, Japan, France, etc. are mentioned at the forefront. The synopsis of empirical evidence could bolster Fishman's claims of considering monolingualism as a safe way to develop. However, whether or not linguistic homogeneity is an asset whereas linguistic heterogeneity is a nuisance requires a deep-rooted understanding of the handling of issues pertaining to language management. Not every monolingual country is honored and every multilingual country is dishonored. The unstable situations for over two decades in monolingual and monocultural Somalia prove that language uniformity alone cannot guarantee development.

> Cooper (1976, p. 187), who was one of the scholars involved in the survey of Ethiopian languages in the early seventies, capitalizes on the vital role of a common language by saying, "It was without saying that, in a linguistically diverse nation, a shared language can serve as an agent of unification, a facilitator of economic development, and a symbol of nationhood. The government of a linguistically diverse country, therefore, often has an interest in promoting the shared knowledge of a single language". To maintain his power and to see a stronger and more civilized Ethiopia, therefore, the Haile-Sellasie government sought to establish a national official language for all Ethiopians. In doing so, however, the quest for other languages was not taken seriously. The language ideology generally revolved around empowering the central government while the power of local elites was considerably disregarded.

Nonetheless, this language policy-in-education of the imperial government was criticized and opposed because it had the goal of assimilation by using only one language (Amharic) throughout the country despite the country's linguistic diversity (Hameso, 1997, p. 157).

Meanwhile, in 1962, the Ministry of Education and Fine Arts conducted a general assessment of the elementary education system and came up with some recommendations in 1963/4. Tamene (2000) states that one of the recommendations made was:

> "[T]o introduce English at Grade 3 on the ground that introducing two languages, namely, Amharic and English, simultaneously at grade one would be demanding for non-Amharic speaking children. Based on the recommendations, the new English curriculum was designed in 1963/4 for the secondary level. According to this curriculum, the secondary English curriculum covered 6 years with the first 2 years (Grades 7 and 8) being 'exploratory' years, which later became junior secondary level. It is stated in the document that intensive courses on English language skills would be given at Grades 7 and 8 for nine periods a week" (Tamene, 2000, p. 13).

However, towards the end of Haileselassie's reign, there was not much attention given to the quality of education in general and to the improvement of English education in particular because of the political situation that existed in the country. To exemplify, the university students' movement under the slogan "Land to the tiller", which led to an action towards liberation that would take full account of the question of nationalities and languages was aggravated and resulted at the end of the system in 1974 (Balsvick, 2005, p. 278).

3.3. During the "Derg" regime (1974-1991)

Between 1974 and 1991, Ethiopia was declared a republic under the name: the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (henceforth, PDRE) and was ruled by the Provisional Military Administrative Council (better known as "Derg committee") and then by the socialist/communist-oriented Ethiopian Workers Party.

After the Military Government took power in 1974, it promulgated that the problem of nationalities could be resolved if "each nationality has the right to determine the contents of its political, economic and social life; uses its own languages, etc." (McNab, 1989, p. 84). Thus, during the National Literacy Campaign in the non-formal education that started in 1975, fifteen Ethiopian languages (including Amharic) were used as the MOI while Amharic continued to serve as the MOI in formal primary schools (Heugh et al., 2007, p. 88; McNab, 1989, p. 184). The languages were Afaan Oromo, Tigrinya, Tigre, Wolaitta, Sidaama, Hadiya, Kambaata, Afar, Saho, Gedeo, Somali, Kafinono, Silt'e, and Kunama. These fifteen languages (including

Amharic) which amount to about 95% of the total population were used as mediums of instruction.

A weekly Oromo newspaper called Bariisaa "dawn" was in print for the first time in 1975 for the first time by the Ministry of Information. Most of these languages became written languages for the first time and hence the codification effort was quite a formidable experience. In 1974, the illiteracy rate in Ethiopia was almost 93%. Thanks to the mass adult education under the motto "National Work Campaign for Development through Cooperation" and to the use of several languages as mediums of instruction, in 1989, the illiteracy rate dropped to about 23% and as a result, the then government was honored by UNESCO (Sineshaw, 1997).

With all these drastic changes in the handling of Ethiopian languages, the Derg LPO still favored the majority or dominant interests at the expense of minority and non-dominant interests which of course violates the critical approach of language policy (CLPO) as promoted (Tollefson, 2006). CLPO emphasizes the central role of economic forces, the key role of government, the value of language rights, and the possibility of language maintenance and revitalization in LPO formulation (Ibid).

According to Bender (1985), the Derg followed quite much the same LPO as its predecessor in promoting Amharic as the national official language. Mother tongue education in informal education did not get the chance to be transformed into formal education (McNab, 1988). The medium for elementary education in all schools all over the country continued in Amharic. As a result, whereas the imperial regime was devoted to producing an Amharic-speaking educational elite, the Derg attempted to spread Amharic across the board (Negash, 2006). As mentioned above, unlike the imperial time, there were considerable improvements in issues pertaining to language treatments between 1974 and 1991. Though the state television was broadcast in Amharic and a small portion in English, Ethiopian radio was aired in Afaan Oromo, Tigrinya, Somali, and Afar among the indigenous and French, English, and Arabic among foreign languages. That was one step forward in language use in the mass media. The literacy campaign in fifteen Ethiopian languages was a major breakthrough for speakers of other languages and real excitement for all Ethiopians.

According to Negash (2006), when Ethiopia first joined the socialist camp in 1974, language and education policies were geared toward promoting socialist ideological goals. The education policy rested on the "education for development" motto based on the spirit of socialist ideology, which was a complete antithesis of the Imperial regime. The aims of education were to cultivate the young generation with Marxist-Leninist ideology, to develop knowledge of science and technology, integrate and coordinate problem-oriented research and produce productive

citizens (Negash, 2006). The socialist government, in its draft policy, underlined the wider use of the Ethiopic script by other Ethiopian languages with modifications where necessary (ibid.). Regarding foreign languages, the relationship with western countries was disrupted, and instead, the Eastern Marxist-oriented education system became operational. The role of English hence considerably declines as a medium of instruction in Ethiopian schools. Native speakers of English (American Peace Corps) whose number reached up to 400 at the peak of American-Ethiopian relations during the Imperial time stopped coming and those who were supposed to teach English in Ethiopian schools withdrew.

Furthermore, in the formal education sphere, the military government made some controversial changes in relation to the relative importance of Amharic as the MOI when compared with EMI. The changes were, on the one hand, there was a trial use of Amharic as the MOI in seventy experimental junior secondary schools (Grades 7 and 8) instead of EMI (McNab, 1989, p. 86). On the other hand, a pass mark in English, not in Amharic, in the Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination (ESLCE), was required for university entrance (ibid.). Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education conducted a study on Evaluative Research on the General Education System of Ethiopia (ERGESE) by Stoddart (1986) to get information concerning the use of MOI in the country's education system. Based on his field surveys, Stoddart (1986), who gave English the status of 'second language' in Ethiopia, explains the English language ability of the vast majority of Ethiopian students who use English as the medium of instruction as follows:

> "[E]ven in classrooms, students do not possess sufficient English to understand what they hear from their teachers or read in their textbooks, let alone to participate actively through speaking and writing. At best, it means that mere rote learning often prevails, with no critical and creative participation of students. And at worst, it means that some, possibly many, students whose English is not sufficient even for rote-learning, spend most of their class hours copying down notes that the teacher has written on the blackboard" (Stoddart, 1986, pp. 6-7).

The designation of English as a "second language" of Ethiopia by Stoddart (1986) is thus, misleading because, as the author puts it convincingly, Ethiopian students could not use the third language effectively even in classrooms let alone use it as a second language (Berhanu, 2009, p. 6). Stoddart's (1986) study also shows that the use of Amharic as the MOI in primary schools, especially with non-Amharic speaking children, and the use of English in junior and

secondary education as the MOI, were seriously affecting the quality of education. His report emphasized that the role of EMI was insignificant; so, it is no longer appropriate to call it EMI; "rather it has become a medium of obstruction" (7). As a result, he recommended that an additional period had to be assigned for Amharic and there is an urgent need of replacing English with Amharic as MOI in secondary schools (ibid).

From the recommendation, one can imply that the report ignored the status of English as a global language, which rather makes it need special attention. Thus, ERGESE should have recommended the way the provision of the English language could be improved in order to enhance students' TL proficiency other than suggesting it be given up at the secondary school level.

Generally, the language planning efforts during the Derg/PDRE regime were more progressive than that of the imperial time. As acknowledged by different writers, the equal state recognition given to all ethnolinguistic groups, their languages, and cultures has awakened the moral and psychological makeup of Ethiopian ethnic groups. The use of local languages in the literacy campaign, not only reduced the rate of illiterates but also left its trace as a good experience in the use of vernacular languages in education.

3.4. The present practice (1991 to date)

After the downfall of the "Derg" regime in 1991, the history of the Ethiopian nations and nationalities' languages has been changed. The handling of language issues by the EPRDF was reflected first in its four-day conference which was held from July 2-6, in Addis Ababa in 1991 (Ayalew, 1999). Among other issues, the conference adopted a policy guideline for the immediate introduction of primary education in the five main ethnic languages In addition, it was decided that the languages could be written in different scripts. Accordingly, the Latin alphabet replaced the Ethiopian alphabet for the Cushitic languages (where most minority language groups live) and the Ethiopic alphabet was retained for the Semitic language groups. Following the 1991 conference, Ethiopia has been reconfigured as a federal state consisting of nine regional states, namely Afar, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambela, Harari, Oromia, Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State, Somali, Tigray, and two chartered cities, namely Dire Dawa and Addis Ababa. Apparently, the division of the Ethiopian federal states ethnically carved prevails in how language plays a central role in the ideology of the current government (Meyer, 2006). Among other topics, Article 1, Section B, of the charter encapsulates that all ethnic groups have the right to preserve their identity, promote their culture

and history and develop and use their language. In such a way, the charter laid the ground for the constitution ratified in 1993.

The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) focused, among other questions, on the rights of nations and nationalities to use their languages. Articles 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, and 39.2 of the 1993 national constitution reveal that each ethnic group in Ethiopia can use and develop its language without any restriction. In article 5.1 of the constitution, assurance is given to all Ethiopian languages to enjoy equal state recognition. In this way, since 1993, Ethiopia is witnessing an official multilingual/pluralistic LPO which gives equal recognition to all languages in the country.

Article 5.2 states that Amharic shall be the working language of the federal government. Hence, since 1993, Ethiopia has had a working language but not a national official language. This article also portrays that the current government follows the same endoglossic LPO where an indigenous language has been chosen to serve as a working language of the central government within and with regional governments. Article 5.3 underlines that members of the federal state (regional governments) can determine their respective working languages. This proclamation has given the opportunity to emerge regional official languages, namely Amharic, Afaan Oromo, Tigrinya, and Somali.

The prime function of language is communication. The role of language in the smooth running of education is also extremely central and, hence, LPO issues in multilingual nations like Ethiopia have remained important educational policy issues (EHRC, 2003). According to Heugh and colleagues (2007), the multilingual policy introduced by the EPRDF-led government is perceived as the better resort to solve the linguistic hegemony of one language over many others and hence a solution to the problem around the long-standing linguistic human rights of Ethiopian ethnolinguistic groups. The sharp dichotomy of the present government LPO, unlike its predecessors, is its pluralistic multilingual LPO which encompasses the introduction of a new decentralized educational policy that has become operational since the introduction of the 1994 "Educational and Training Policy" designed and implemented with the aim of reducing poverty. The core issues in the "Ethiopian Education and Training Policy" regarding language use are the following: (1) Bearing in mind the pedagogical advantages of the child and the rights of ethnic groups to develop their languages, primary education will be given in the ethnic languages. (2) Ethnolinguistic groups can select either their own ethnic language or a language of wider communication as a medium of instruction. (3) The language of training of teachers for kindergartens and primary schools will be the ethnic languages. (4)

Amharic will be given as a subject on the basis of its historical status as a language of wider communication across the country.

Regarding English, the policy stipulates that, as a foreign language, it should be taught as a subject starting from the first grade and shall be the medium of instruction for secondary and higher education. Beyond its role as a medium of instruction in higher institutions, English is a medium of instruction from grades 5-6 in SNNPR and Gambella and from grades 7 and beyond in many other regions. In some schools, it serves as a medium for sciences together with indigenous languages which assume other subjects. This is what is called bilingual education in the real sense.

The above guiding principles noticeably show the implementation of mother tongue education and the respected rights of Ethiopian ethnic groups to use their languages as instructional media and school subjects. The guideline also guarantees ethnic groups to use another language with wider currency until they make sure that their language is ready to be brought to school. As has been advocated strictly by UNESCO since 1953, MT (mother tongue) education is perceived as an unprecedented system of educating children. The promotion of ethnic languages to be used in formal education for the first time has been implemented since 1993 with Tigrinya, Afaan Oromo, and Sidaama. Currently, about twenty-two languages have been brought to school as instructional media and school subjects.

4. Conclusion

As to different language policy scholars, there are overt/explicit or covert/implicit language polities. Overt language polities refer to "those language polities that are explicit, formalized, *de jure,* codified and manifest" while covert language polities refer to those that are implicit, informal, unstated, grassroots, and latent (cf. Schiffman, 1996; Shoamy, 2006; Spolsky, 2004).

Despite the fact that Ethiopia is a multilingual country, a single language (Amharic) had been the medium of instruction at the elementary school level throughout much of the country's history. It was only in 1974, when the socialist government came to power, that the use of ethnic languages (also called *nationality languages* since the current government uses the latter terminology synonymously with *ethnic languages* in its official documents) for instructional purposes was considered as an issue. Why did it take such a long time for ethnic languages to become a policy issue in Ethiopia? One may find part of the answer to this question in the country's history, and mainly in its system of government.

For several centuries, Ethiopia had been under a feudal monarchy. It was thus quite inconceivable for the imperial regime to address ethnic issues that are enshrined in democratic

values. The government's determination to bury ethnic languages from the policy agenda may also correspond with the country's long history of independence. Successive imperial regimes advocated for the use of one national language as an instrument for maintaining the country's integrity. Introducing other languages for instructional purposes had been conceived as courting national disintegration. In all cases, the imperial regime/s was not longsighted enough to perceive the danger of imposing one national language on the multiethnic nation, which was like "a de facto declaration of war on the others" (Hameso, 1997, p. 2).

The socialist government that assumed the mantle of leadership in 1974 shifted from promoting one language as an instrument for national unity to encouraging the use of other languages as per its political orientations. One notable effort during this time was the policy decision to conduct adult literacy programs in fifteen ethnic languages (Ayalew, 1999). The literacy program (campaign) started in 1979 and ended only at the fall of the socialist government in 1991. The other noteworthy policy decision by the socialist regime was on transcribing these languages in the Ethiopic script (traditionally used for Semitic languages in the country) most of which were in an unwritten form hitherto. However, the use of these languages was limited to the non-formal education sector and the government did not push forward to use them as instructional languages in the formal system (Ayalew, 1999). Hence, Amharic (a Semitic language) remained the only national language that was used as the medium of instruction for formal education at the elementary level.

When the current government came to power in 1991, a potential condition was created for ethnic languages to reemerge as a major policy issue. Two factors, among others, accentuated the need for this change. The first was the political orientation of the government. Having replaced the totalitarian socialist regime, the government shifted to introduce a kind of "Western Democracy" and its accompanying values, such as Liberty, equality, justice, truth, and respect for human rights became the agenda of the government (Tefera, 1999). The second factor was the unparalleled premium placed by the ruling party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), on ethnic-based politics in the country's history. Mainly representing the Tigraway (Tigrian) ethnic group, EPRDF labeled the Amhara ethnic group as the suppressor and all the non-Amhara ethnic groups as the suppressed whose languages, traditions, and cultures had been subjugated (Tefera, 1999). However, this idea is a fallacy; for example, the 1955 Ethiopian constitution stipulated that Amharic shall be the official language of the country (McNab, 1989, p. 79). In this case, the Amhara ethnic group suppressed all the non-Amhara ethnic groups' languages, traditions, and cultures. In its attempt to readdress

inequalities, the current government vowed the issue of ethnic languages to be its top agenda and policy priority.

To sum up from what has been reviewed, the language education policy of Emperor Minilik II and Haile-Sellasie I had relationships in not formulating an inclusive language education policy for multilingual, multicultural, and multiethnic Ethiopia. They both had covert and implicit language education policy. In the same vein, although the "Derg regime" language education policy efforts were more progressive than that of the imperials time, the use of other local languages was limited to the non-formal education sector and the government did not push forward to use them as instructional languages in the formal system. This implies that the "Derg regime" language policy can be concluded as nominal. However, the current government made a drastic change towards ethnic languages to reemerge as a major policy issue. In this regard, about twenty-two languages have been brought to school as instructional media and school subjects. This indicates that the language education policy of the current government is overt or explicit Therefore, the language education policy of the nowadays of Ethiopia is by far more inclusive of diversity than that of the imperials and the "Derg regime". Finally, what requires inquiry is the language policy and practice in higher education institutions of Ethiopia towards multilingualism.

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