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**THE SOCIO-CULTURAL MILIEU, LANGUAGE USE,  
LANGUAGE ATTITUDE, AND ETHNOLINGUISTIC IDENTITY  
IN MESQAN**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Various sociolinguistic studies highlight the intrinsic bond between culture and language. However, variations exist in line with the angles from which the studies explain the link. This thesis approaches the issue from a different perspective, with a focus on the reciprocal influence between the socio-cultural context and language as reflected in language use, language attitude, and ethnolinguistic identity. Addressing this issue in the context of the Gurage cluster, which comprises linguistically heterogeneous groups, makes it interesting to discern the interface.

Mesqan is an ethnolinguistic group within the Gurage cluster. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques were employed to obtain information in rural and urban areas, namely, Mesqan Woreda, Butajira town, and Yirgalem town. Mesqan is generally used in informal domains of day-to-day interaction, and Amharic is the language of education and administration. Highly valued cultural and social events impose norms of interaction and interpretation on language users, and strict adherence to the rules is sanctified by the exclusive use of their ethnic language, i.e. Mesqan.

Language attitude and language use mutually influence each other; however, high level of attitude towards the in-group language neither necessarily points to high degree of use in various domains, nor essentially shows high level of proficiency. Hence, the relationship between language attitude and language use is not necessarily reciprocal. Similarly, there is an inherent link between language and ethnic identity; nonetheless, the bond is stronger in a situation where the ethnic language is dominantly used as a mother tongue in various domains, and serves as a key index of ethnic identity; and, it is weaker in a context the ethnic language holds a symbolic role in the identity construction. The extent to which the speakers have positive attitude towards their in-group language also determines the place language holds in the construction of ethnic identity.

The complexity and fluidity of ethnic identity within the Gurage cluster and the role language plays in the identity construction, and a sociolinguistic and grammatical description of the secret language of the *Moyät* 'a group of people who follow a traditional belief' call for a comprehensive study in the future.

DEDICATED TO MY MOTHER,

ZEMZEM SHIRAGA



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## ABBREVIATIONS

ABE	Alternative Basic Education
BoFED	Bureau of Finance and Economic Development
Cf.	Cited from
CSA	Central Statistics Authority
CSPRO	Census and Survey Processing System
EC	Ethiopian Calendar
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Freq.	Frequency
IPA	International Phonetic Alphabet
Km	Kilometer
n.d.	no date
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
SE	South Ethio-Semitic
SNNPRS	Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional State
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
Yrs	Years

## GLOSSARY OF LOCAL TERMS

Most local terms are phonemically transcribed using IPA.

abäk'	Leader of a group of people who follow a traditional belief called <i>Moyät</i> . The Abäk' is a senior Moyät who closely supervises new recruits and provides instructions.
agär	Land or country of origin
äjamma	Occupational group engaged in tanning
Awrajja	Sub-provincial district made up of several Woredas (since 1991 named Zone)
Č'uk'uššä	Arranged marriage initiated by the parents of the would-be groom
dado	Gathering of married Muslim women
däm <sup>w</sup> am <sup>w</sup> it	A goddess of fertility and a female divinity in the Gurage traditional belief system
däräma	Contribution of money
Derg	Literally 'committee'; from 'Provisional Military Administrative Committee', used to refer to the Ethiopian regime of 1974-1991
Emm	Mother
Ėkk'ub	A common voluntary association for mutual support in basic saving and credit services to members through a rotational lottery based system
Enset	False banana; staple food in Gurage areas
Färagäzännä	The adjudication of disputes relating to personal and family laws in accordance with religious and customary laws

Fuga	Occupational group engaged in woodwork and pottery. The Fuga have a low position at the socio-economic hierarchy. They are known for powers of magic and sorcery, and are greatly feared.
Geta	chief, lord, landlord
Got'	A block or Sub-Kebele, i.e., an administrative unit below the <i>Kebele</i> . It is not a formal administrative division, but it is used for dividing a <i>Kebele</i> into smaller groups of villages in rural areas; commonly used for rural development activities.
Gudda	A binding agreement between individuals or groups to avoid conflicts, hostility, and ensure mutual support and solidarity among the members involved
፳snäyn	A religious gathering of Muslim neighbors held in small groups every Monday. Elderly Mesqan do not engage in agricultural or commercial activities on Mondays.
፳ddər	A mutual support saving association mainly for funeral expenses
Kebele	Originally, it meant small geographical unit but it is widely used after the nationalization of land to denote an area of peasant/urban dwellers' association during the Derg; also used for administrative council/committee of an administrative unit (Vaughan, 2003:11)
nəččä	Abduction
Lik'a	A religious gathering in which Muslim Mesqan get together monthly
Maga	Village/local elders who participate in the first stage of a traditional mediation process. The elders are drawn from both parties to start the mediation. Maga literally means 'young/immature'.
Mänzuma	Religious song
Mäsk'äl	Finding of the True Cross (for Orthodox Christians)

Moyät	A believer who is possessed with the spirit of dämwamwit – the goddess of fertility
Moyätəñña	The secret language of the Moyät used when they are in trance.
muzakära	Religious teaching at a Muslims' gathering
k'ät'k'ač'	Blacksmith, an occupational group
k'at'bare	An annual religious feast or Mäwliid celebrated by certain Muslims in January near Wolqite town, where their religious leader Yäk'at'bare Sheikh was buried and is still venerated
Raga	Elders who serve as local judges and arbitrate disputes in the community. They represent the second stage of traditional mediation transferred from the Maga. It literally means 'ripe/mature'.
Sänga	Territorial unit in the Mesqan area
Sera	Traditional set of rules governing various aspects of societal norms
Shängo	Social meetings in rural areas
Səmmutt Sänga	Literally 'eight horses', referring to the political administrative division into eight territorial units.
Shariya	Islamic law (Arabic)
Sheik	Islamic scholar (Arabic)
Sebat bet	Literally 'seven houses'; refers to the West Gurage group, specifically: Chaha (also Cheha), Ezha (also Eza, Izha), Gumer, Gura, Gyeto, Muher, and Inor
Solaat	Prayer (Arabic)
Wereda	District

Wərs	Surrogate marriage – a custom by which the husband of a woman is required or has the right to marry her sister when she became a widow
Wäläba	Descendants of prestigious families; pure lineage
Wak'	The religious leader of the Moyät
Wänno	The most common collective labour arrangement for coping up with agricultural seasonal labour requirements
Yafär säb	People of the land, the first settlers
yäšäbe sera	Customary rules of marriage

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides a general introduction into the thesis which deals with the link between the socio-cultural context and language use, attitude, and ethnic identity in Mesqan. First, the major and specific objectives of this research are presented and then the contribution of the research to the Gurage languages in general and to Mesqan in particular is discussed.

As Mesqan is embraced by the Sebat bet Gurage or Gurage proper, understanding the Mesqan language and the identity of the speakers requires an examination of what really constitutes the Gurage and where the Mesqan could be placed within it. Accordingly, a concise review of the Gurage people, the languages spoken by them and their identity is given in the following sections. The description of the study areas specifically focuses on the rural Wereda of Mesqan and the towns of Butajira and Yirgalem. In setting the socio-economic and linguistic context of the study, salient features of the Mesqan people and their native language are also described. Finally, an outline of the thesis organization with a brief summary of each chapter is provided.

### **1.1 Objectives of the Research**

#### **1.1.1 Major Objective**

The major objective of the study is to explore the relationship between the socio-cultural context and language use, attitude, and ethnic identity of the Mesqan ethnolinguistic group.

#### **1.1.2 Specific Objectives**

- Assess salient social structures, institutions and cultural features in order to understand factors that influence or are associated with language use in different settings;
- Explore actual language use patterns of ethnic Mesqan in various domains and sub-domains;

- Examine the language attitudes of ethnic Mesqan towards Mesqan and its relationship with language use;
- Explore the interrelationship between language use, proficiency, mother tongue, and language attitude, and ethnic identity; and,
- Investigate the symbolic and functional role the Mesqan language plays in articulating a sense of Mesqan identity to determine the role language plays in the construction of ethnic identity.

This study mainly explores the socio-cultural context in which Mesqan is used as a native language and its influence on actual language use in different speech situations. It deals with a sociolinguistic analysis of language use patterns in different domains and settings, and the language attitude of the speech community towards Mesqan and other languages. Moreover, it explores the ways in which the Mesqan language is currently used among Mesqan speakers and the symbolic and functional role the language plays in articulating a sense of Mesqan identity. Of interest were the different ways in which the socio-cultural, economic, and political realities impact on Mesqan language use and other different effects on the people's perceptions towards their language.

## **1.2 Significance of the Study**

The study is hoped to contribute to our understanding of the Gurage group of languages. It will produce new insights in the social setting of a specific Gurage group which hitherto only exists for Chaha (i.e. Shack 1966) and new data on language use in a multilingual setting and their interpretation regarding identity. Particularly, in the case of Mesqan, except for few descriptive notes made in comparative studies of Gurage languages, studies on the language and the people are scarce. Hence, this study is believed to contribute to the documentation of the socio-cultural and sociolinguistic features of the Mesqan community and help to understand shared cultural and linguistic elements of the neighboring ethno-linguistic groups like Marek'o, Kistane, Silt'i, and Dobb'i (Gogot). It could also serve

as a reference for researchers interested in conducting in-depth linguistic and anthropological studies on Mesqan. Moreover, it is hoped that the findings on the attitude of the speech community towards the language can inform decision makers involved in language planning and language development efforts in the Mesqan Woreda.

In view of the state of the documentation of the Mesqan language and culture, which is one of the least studied in the Ethio-Semitic group, the present study is hoped to contribute to the documentation of sociolinguistic features of the Mesqan and to an understanding of the language and culture interface, and relevant factors associated with their interaction. Setting the context for the issues on Mesqan in the thesis, it provided information about the Gurage cluster. It drew attention to the complex nature of studies on the Gurage owing to the intricacy of social, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic identity issues.

### **1.3 The Gurage**

The origin of the term “Gurage” has vague interpretations in linguistic and cultural anthropological research works (Goldenberg 2005: 924). Aleqa Tayye’s (1946 EC: 48) often quoted etymology of Gurage, as derived from the name *Gur<sup>2</sup>a* in Akalä Guzay, in Eritrea was refuted on linguistic grounds by Hetzron (1972: 7). He uses the label Gurage as a geographical term but not as a genetic linguistic term. The inconsistency in the use of the term Gurage is also noted in Worku Nida (1991:14), who maintains that the term Gurage refers to the various groups that inhabit or originate from the “Gurage land” proper. Indeed, the inhabitants refer to themselves as Gurage; other Ethiopian groups also identify them as Gurage. It should be noted, however, that the different groups and sub-groups tend to identify themselves in their specific clan or sub-clan categories such as Mesqan Gurage in addition to the generic term Gurage. The term Gurage in most linguistic descriptions, thus, refers neither to a common historical or cultural unit nor to a single language (Meyer, 2011:1221).

Socio-economic Profile 2007:1), and thus, the Gurage are found in the Gurage Zone Administration, in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS).

According to the National Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia (2010:24), the number of self-identifying Gurage both in urban and rural areas in Ethiopia are 1,867,377 of which 792,659 live in urban areas. The current the Gurage Zone is composed of fifteen Woredas (districts). These Woredas are organized roughly along the constituent ethnolinguistic groups, i.e. Chaha Woreda, Soddo Woreda, Mesqan Woreda, etc. The largest population subscribes to the Gurage nationality, followed by Libido (Maräk'o) and the K'abeena which belong to the Cushitic family (see Appendix 1). Apart from these, the Gurage Zone is home to different nations and nationalities, among others, Amhara, Oromo, Kambata, and Hadiya.

The Gurage are well-known for their hard work and skills as traders, many of them own shops in Addis Ababa and other cities, returning to their home area only for a few days each September to celebrate the most important Gurage holidays *Mäsk'äl* 'Finding of the True Cross' for Orthodox Christians or *Id Al-Arefa* for Muslims. While over 50% of the Gurage claim allegiance to Christianity and another 40% to Islam, many Gurage also participate in traditional religious practices such as offerings to a deity called *Wak'*. (Ezkiel, 2003:698).

*Enset* 'false banana' is the staple food of the Gurage, grown by almost every rural household. The Gurage live a sedentary life based on agriculture, involving a complex system of crop rotation and transplanting. Cash crops include coffee and khat.<sup>1</sup> Animal husbandry is practiced, but mainly for milk supply and dung.

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<sup>1</sup> *Khat* also spelled *Č'at* (Arabic *Qāt*, Latin *Catha Edulis*) is a flowering evergreen shrub native to East Africa and Southern Arabia, more specifically to Yemen, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Madagascar and Tanzania. The leaves and young shoots are chewed fresh to permit absorption of its soluble ingredients, which are known to produce pleasurable, stimulating and euphoric effects. Traditionally, the leaves were chewed either by Muslims engaged in religious studies and worship, or in groups, mainly of older men

Gurage households are grouped together in compact villages which are the matrix of socio-economic organization and political authority. Gurage social structure is based on patrilineal descent groups, which range in depth and size from the extended family, to sub-clan and clan; villages are collections of related patrilocal households. Territory is identified with clan, but not all who live in the same district belong to the same clan (Markakis, 1998:129).

The Gurage languages belong to the Semitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic family. In line with the linguistic classification, there is no general agreement on how many languages or dialects there are within Gurage, particularly in the West Gurage group. However, in his article on the Gurage languages, Goldenberg (2007:924) notes that, "The Ethio-Semitic languages (Chaha, Endegegn, Ennemor, Ener, Ezha, Geto, Gogot (Dobbi), Gumer, Mesqan, Mesmes, Muher, Soddo (Kistane), Silt'i, Wallane, Zay) spoken by the people of Gurage are categorized as Gurage languages. Silt'i (not strictly speaking a Gurage language since the people do not consider themselves Gurage), Zay, and Sebat Bet Gurage." He further notes that Gurage is not primarily a linguistically defined group, and the designation Gurage with reference to the languages suffers from the same inconsistencies as with reference to the ethnic-social communities.

Owing to the diversity of languages, choosing a common language has been a challenging issue in Gurage Zone. As Tsegaye (2006:74) notes, "... making choices in favor of one dialect or language for education, printing, legal status, religious use, etc. was a difficult task for the zonal administration." Hence, Amharic remained the

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socializing with others of the same age group, status or profession for increased alertness, energy and the capacity for concentration. Today several million people have become habitual chewers, irrespective of gender, age religious or ethnic affiliation, owing to the fact that *khat* can be transported much more rapidly to distant places. *Khat* is today unquestionably, the most important cash crop in many parts of Ethiopia (Ezkiel, 2003:697).

official working language for administration, medium of instruction, and judiciary purposes at the Zonal level and in all Woreda except for Libido and K'abeena.<sup>2</sup>

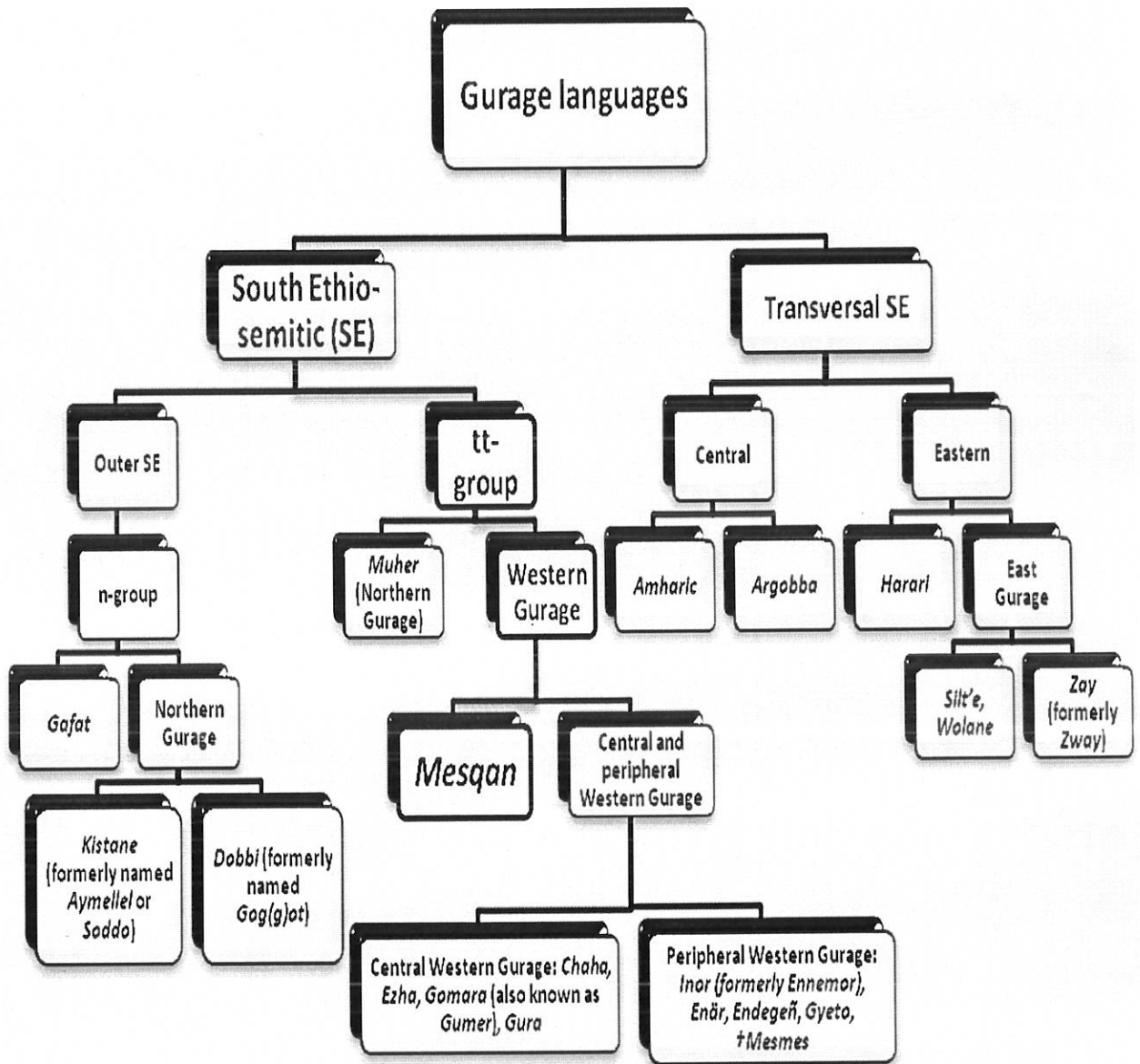
Leslau (1992) assumes that there was a proto-Gurage language from where these clusters and dialects originated, but the nature of their differentiation is not clear. Moreover, while few scholars (Leslau 1992 [1965], and Ullendorff 1955) believe that Gurage is a dialect cluster belonging to a single language, others (Hetzron 1972, Hudson 2000) strongly reject this hypothesis. For them, Gurage is a geographical term. Within this area, people speak several Semitic languages but on the borders, Cushitic languages or the Omotic Yemsa is spoken (cf. Hetzron 1972: 6).

Hetzron (1972: 119) presented the classification of the Gurage languages along with other Ethio-Semitic languages as follows:

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<sup>2</sup> Mareqo and K'abeena use their respective mother tongues as medium of instruction and administration. While Mareqo is written in a Latin-based script, K'abeena uses the Ethiopic script.

Figure 2: Classification of Gurage Languages (Based on Hetzron 1972: 119)



## 1.4 Gurage Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity is a contentious issue in the case of the Gurage, to which Mesqan belongs. There are divergent views on whether Gurage constitutes an ethnic group or it refers to an amalgamation of different ethnic groups. There are two opposing views regarding Gurage ethnic identity.

On the one hand, there is a view that the Gurage do not constitute an 'ethnic' group. Based on primordial views of ethnic identity markers, Markakis (1998:144) contends that on the score of different components of identity such as genealogy, religion, language, territory, history, etc., neither singly nor in combination could serve to anchor an identity for the Gurage as an 'ethnic' group. The pattern of social organization among the Gurage comprises an intricate network of relationship, and he identifies three distinct bases of identity formation in the Gurage: the *bet* 'clan' - the main basis of identity among the Western Gurage; territoriality - more important for social and political organization among the Kistane in the North, whose region is divided into *agär*,<sup>3</sup> and religion - the cornerstone of identity among the Silt'e. However, as a group, religion cannot be taken as a distinguishing marker of ethnic identity for the Gurage. Tsegaye (2006:75) contends that considering the presence of Christianity (Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant) and Islam almost in all areas in the Gurage, religion in general crosscut the features of language diversity and its variations. As religious communities and language groups do not coincide in the Gurage, religion could not be taken as the main marker of the people.

The Gurage people are divided into groups because of geographical barrier (The chain of Mount Gurage) resulting in difference in languages, pattern of settlement, religion, and ways of production. According to Tsegaye (2006:76), the post-1974 cultural emancipation policy of Ethiopia brought to the surface the differences within the Gurage people. It allowed for the Silt'i language to be used for teaching

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<sup>3</sup> In the Kistane case, religion provides a prominent dimension to their identity, albeit not the dominant one.

in the Literacy Campaign, while Amharic was used for the rest of the Gurage people. As Markakis (1998:138) notes, “The focus on culture was bound to have a dissolving effect on the Gurage identity, given the diversity that prevailed in that realm. The natural tendency was esoteric, with each group focusing on its own specific cultural endowment rather than on the Gurage universe”. As a result, only the *Säbat bet gurage* ‘Seven houses of Gurage’, which include the Chaha (and Gumär), Ezha, Gyeto, Muher (and Aklil), Inor, Endegegn (and Enär), and Mäk’ork’or, commonly refer to themselves as Gurage (Worku, 2005:929), while the Mesqan, Dobbi, Silt’e, Wolane, and Zay call themselves by their respective names (Goldenberg, 2005:924).

On the other hand, there is a view that Gurage is an ethnic group comprising groups which speak the same language but with minor dialectal differences. According to this view, the Gurage share common ancestors, culture, history, social organization, etc. Despite seemingly objective diversity and variation in language and religion, there are common attributes ascribed to the Gurage people as a group. The Gurage people share a similar culture in aspects of marriage and divorce, music and dance, type of food, holiday preparation and celebration (Tsegaye, 2006:273-274). Congruent with this thinking, Shack (1966:37) mentions that Gurage culture is essentially uniform. Apart from the varied forms of language and religion, there exists a common set of artifacts, a common technology and mode of production, a common design in house building and patterns of settlement, and a common form of economic and social organization. The maintenance of these traditional forms of culture, which distinguishes Gurage from other ensete cultivating tribes, is to the Gurage of paramount importance. Bahru (2008:62) also notes that the *enset* culture, which they share with a number of southwestern peoples and the tradition of political fragmentation, unites the Gurage.

The Gurage people have had a similar traditional administration ever since the weakening of the central power in southern Ethiopia in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In the absence of centralized administration, people were following their local tradition of administration rules and regulations in the area of farmland, grazing land, herding

of cattle, local conflict resolution mechanisms, *Āddar*, etc. Among the Gurage these traditional administration regulations were called *Sera* and they were supervised by elders who had the traditional title of *šum* 'inherited office' (Tsegaye, 2006:75). Similarly, Dinberu et al. (1987 EC: 283) believe that the Gurage shared similar culture in aspects of marriage and divorce, music and dance, food, holiday preparation and celebration. This view has been strongly supported by the Gurage Zonal administration. Reference to each group in the Gurage Zone is designated as *Chaha Bete-Gurage*, *Mesqan Bete-Gurage*, *Kistane Bete-Gurage*, etc.

## 1.5 Demographic and Socio-Economic Description of the Study Areas

### 1.5.1 Mesqan Woreda

The Mesqan Woreda is one of the fifteen Woredas in the Gurage Zone of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRSS). The Woreda is located about 130 km from Addis Ababa, 165 km from Awassa, the regional capital, and 265 km from Wolqite, the Zonal capital. According to Mesqan Woreda Finance and Economy Development Office, the Woreda has an area of 50177 sq. km and comprises 41 Rural Kebele Farmers' Associations and one small town, Inseno.

The Mesqan are organized into eight territorial subunits: *Wurib*, *Aborat*, *Mikaelo*, *Emm Mesqan*, *Inbor*, *Goiban*, *Yetebon*, *Yet'eqer*, which form the *Səmmutt Sānga Mesqan*<sup>4</sup> literally, 'eight horses of Mesqan', i.e. the 'eight districts of Mesqan'.

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<sup>4</sup> *Səmmut Sānga Mesqan* 'eight horses of Mesqan' was a political administrative division which was formed after the Mesqan subdued to Menelik II in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the landlords (called generally *balabat*) divided the Mesqan land into eight territorial units *Sānga* - referring to *horses* (as they were horsemen) but not to *oxen* as commonly believed - to facilitate the collection of taxes. *Emm Mesqan* was assigned *Loko Sānga* 'leadership' to represent all the *Səmmut Sānga*. Since then the name has been widely in use in different ways referring to the divisions. Following the Derg regime's reorganization of the administration in 1975, the *Səmmut Sānga* divisions were replaced by farmer associations with a different structure. Currently, the Woreda has 41 rural K'ebele farmers associations, of which the Dobbi ethnic group constitutes only one

According to Mesqan Woreda Finance and Economy Office (2011), there are a total of 162 mosques and 32 churches in Mesqan Woreda.

The National Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia (2010: 57) shows that Mesqan Woreda has a total population of 170,016 (83,361 male and 86,655 female), which is the second largest population in Gurage Zone next to the Enemor and Ener Woreda. The Mesqan Woreda consists of two ethnic groups, namely, Mesqan and Dobbi. According to the Woreda Farmers' Association Office, the Mesqan reside in 40 rural Kebele Farmers' Associations, and the Dobbi, which are the minority, reside in one rural Kebele.

As shown in Figure 3 below, the Mesqan Woreda borders the Kistane Woreda in the North, Gedebano, Wolene, and Muher Aklil Woredas in the west, Libido Woreda in the east, and Silt'e Zone in the south. The Mesqan Woreda also has borders with Oromia in the east in an area that lies between Kistane and Libido. The official administrative town of the Mesqan Woreda is Butajira.

The Mesqan Woreda is located in a fertile plain of arable land at the foothills of the Gurage Mountains. Owing to the suitable climate, a high variety of crops and vegetables, grain, *ensete*, fruits, and khat are cultivated in the Woreda. Above all, Mesqan Woreda is one of the major producers of pepper in Ethiopia.

According to the Mesqan Woreda Education Office, the first elementary school was established in 1943 in Butajira town. In the Mesqan Woreda, *Qoto* Primary School was the first school which was established in 1973. Currently, there are 60 regular schools in the Woreda: 25 schools from grade 1-4, 33 schools from Grade 1-8, one high school from grade 9-10 and high school from grade 11-12. There are 73 kindergartens of which 52 have classrooms; the remaining 21 are tree shades. There

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k'ebele farmers association. According to the Woreda Finance and Economy Office, Dobbi rural kebele has 6750 inhabitants. Bustorf (2007:847) omits *Inbor* from the list and includes *Gid'e* as one of *Səmmut Sänga*. However, as *Gid'e* was small, it was combined within *Inbor* and does not represent a *Sänga*.

are alternative basic education (ABE) centers administered by two NGOs; and, 91 adult education centers run by the government.

Table 1: Enrolment of students in Mesqan Woreda by grade and sex

Grades	Male	Female	Total
1-4	11709	11677	23386
5-8	8105	8241	16346
9-10	798	474	1272
11-12	24	28	52
<b>Total</b>			41056

SOURCE: Mesqan Woreda Education Office, 2011

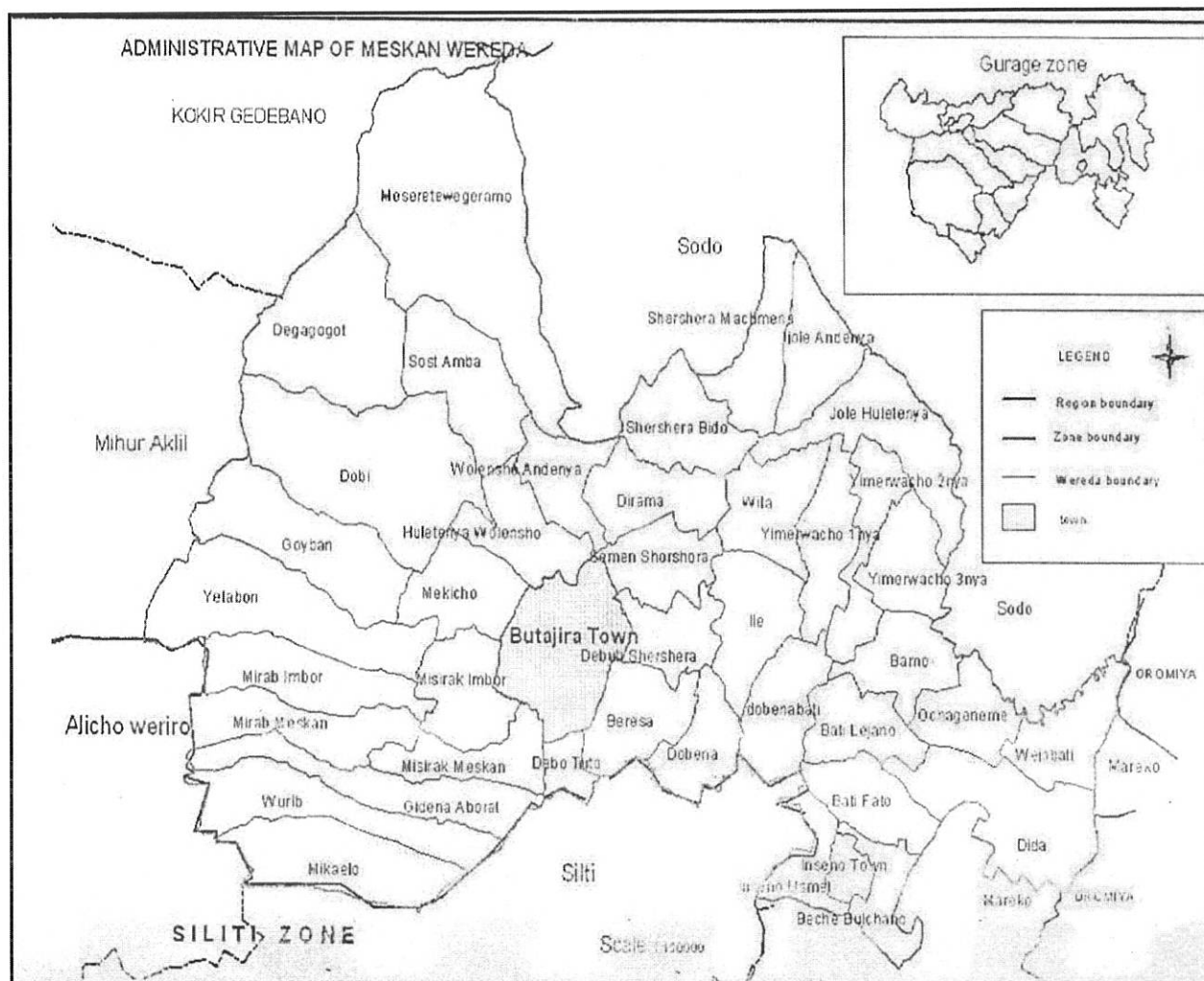
Table 2: Enrolment of students in non-formal education in Mesqan Woreda by sex

Non-formal Education	Male	Female	Total
Kindergarten	3616	3029	6645
Alternative basic education	112	220	332
Adult education	3354	3924	7278
<b>Total</b>			14255

SOURCE: Mesqan Woreda Education Office report, 2011

The same report indicates that 55,311 students have been enrolled in regular schools, kindergartens, alternative basic education centers. As in all other Woredas in the Gurage Zone, Amharic is the medium of instruction and administration in Mesqan Woreda both in the rural and urban areas. It was mentioned in the interviews with the Woreda Education Bureau that ethnic-Mesqan teachers and facilitators are assigned in the rural elementary schools, adult education, and alternative education centers to facilitate language problems which monolingual students may face during the first years of school attendance.

Figure 3: Administrative Map of Mesqan Woreda



SOURCE: Mesqan Woreda Finance and Economy Development Office, 2009

### 1.5.2 Butajira Town

Butajira is the administrative capital and commercial town of the Mesqan Woreda in the Gurage Zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region. It is one of the 22 reform towns of the SNNP Regional State. Butajira was founded 1928 by Ras Mulugeta. Butajira is located at the base of Zebider massif, 135 km from Addis Ababa to the south via Addis Ababa-Kistane road. The town is surrounded by eight rural Kebeles: in the north Welensho, and Semien Shershera; in the east by

Debub Shershera; in the south east by Beresa; in the south by Misrak Mesqan and Debub Tuto; and, in the west by Limich and Meqicho, and Misrak Inbor kebeles. According to the National Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia (2010:24), the total population of the town is 35,509. Though formal figures are not available for the ethnic membership of the constituent population of Butajira town, key informants estimate that there are more than 22,000 (65%) Mesqan residing in Butajira town, followed by Silt'e constituting about 4000 (12%) of the urban population. Other residents of the town mainly include Kistane, Amhara, Oromo, Tigre, Libido, and Hadiya. There are 14 mosques and 11 churches in Butajira town (Butajira City Administration, 2010).

The market of Butajira, known locally as *Arb Gäbäya* 'Friday market', is among the big markets of the Southern Region. Large number of people, estimated to be 12,000 – 15,000 mainly from the Mesqan Woreda, and from Oromia, Addis Ababa, Silt'e Zone, Kistane and Marek'o Woredas come to the market every week. As a centre of commerce, Butajira accommodates about 100 incoming and outgoing vehicles and about 106 passenger vehicles every day (Structural Plan of Butajira, 2009).

Recently, owing to its relative proximity to Addis Ababa, active commercial exchange, and other factors, the town has become attractive for investment and for people from different places to live in. These growing interests coupled with the ideal landscape surrounding the town are allowing for elasticity of the urban area in every direction. As a result, the rural Kebeles of the Mesqan Woreda, which are small, appear to be swallowed by the growing urbanization trends.

### **1.5.3 Yirgalem Town**

Yirgalem (also spelled Yirga Alem) is the administrative center of the Dale Woreda in the Sidama Zone of Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRSS). According to the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia, the official estimate of Yirgalem's population in July 2006 was 43,815. Yirgalem is one of the 22 town administrations in the SNNPRS situated 45 km from Awassa, and 315 km

from Addis Ababa. The town is located at an elevation of 1,776 meters amongst coffee plantations and enjoys an excellent climate with tropical flora and fauna.

The first Mesqan settlers, who came to Yirgalem as merchants engaged in coffee business, settled there around 1915. It is after the 1940s that most Mesqan migrated to Yirgalem. The first ethnic Mesqan who came to Yirgalem was Ato Tira who settled in the outskirts of the town in a place called Met't'e. A search of the sources consulted found no detailed statistical data on the ethnic composition of the town. According to key informants in Yirgalem, it is estimated that there are about 5000 Mesqan in Yirgalem. More than 75% of them reside in *Arada*<sup>5</sup> and the rest in *Sidetegna*<sup>6</sup>. Those who resided in Arada can speak Amharic, Mesqan, and Sidama, while the Mesqan in Sidetegna only speak Amharic. In general, the youngsters speak Sidaama better than Mesqan.

There are about 150 Mesqan who settled in the rural areas of Yirgalem in places called Mesincho, Goida, Moto, and Awweda. They are engaged in farming. Most of them are Muslims and only a few are Orthodox Christians. Currently, third generation ethnic Mesqan live in Yirgalem.

## 1.6 The Mesqan People

The population of Mesqan<sup>7</sup> is estimated to be 196,000.<sup>8</sup> Dinberu et al. (1987 EC:31) mentions that the Mesqan also reside in Kambata-Timbaro, Alaba, Sidama, and

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<sup>5</sup> Arada is an Amharic word meaning 'a sloppy place that drives everyone to valley'. It is the name of a place which used to be the heart of Yirgalem town as a market place in the old days.

<sup>6</sup> *Sidetegna* is an Amharic word which literally mean 'refugee'.

<sup>7</sup> There is no official population figure for the Mesqan ethnic group. The National Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia (2010), presents data for the Gurage in general but not for its constituent groups. Thus, the estimated figure for ethnic Mesqan is made based on official data in the CSA (2010) for the Mesqan Woreda, data gathered from the Woreda Farmers' Cooperatives Office, and estimations of key informants.

Gedeo Zones in SNNPRSS, and around Meqi town, and Negelle Borena, in Oromia Region, and in Addis Ababa. Although there is no exact documented figure, the number of ethnic-Mesqan residing outside their native district, is estimated to be 25,000, and about 20,000 Mesqan in Butajira town.

According to Bustorf (2007:847), genealogical narratives trace the Mesqan back to basically four ancestral sources: (1) northerners led by Azmach Səbhat, who are said to have migrated into the Gurage region in the 14th century, (2) Atse Zara Yaqob, claimed as an ancestor of the early inhabitants of the region (cf. Bustorf 2006: 31f.), (3) different leaders of the jihad of Ahmad bin Ibrahim al-Gazi, some of which are also referred to as ancestors by the Silt'i, Wolene and Kistane subgroups, and since the Oromo expansion of the 16th century (4) Oromo intermingled with the people of Mesqan (For details see Chapter 3).

The livelihood of the majority of the Mesqan predominantly depends on mixed farming system and to some extent cattle breeding. The Mesqan grow mainly pepper, cereals, khat, vegetables, fruits, etc. They are also engaged in petty trade particularly on market days. Both men and women have frequent contacts with the nearby urban areas, which is currently facilitated by availability of transportation networks deep into the rural areas, and those who reside in towns are mainly merchants. Owing to the fertility of the land and the income they generate from production of cash crops and cereals, the majority of Mesqan lead a sedentary life in their homeland (Bahru, 1989), as compared to all other Gurage groups.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Though the source of the data is unknown, Gordon (2005:117), and Ethnologue (2009) mention that the population of Mesqan is approximately 25,000 people. This is possibly a typographic error, not an estimation.

<sup>9</sup> According to Fekadu (1970), migration to urban areas, referred as 'fanonet' has been a common practice among Kistane, Dobbi, and Sebat Bet Gurage.

## 1.7 The Mesqan Language

The term *Mesqan* refers to both the language and its speakers. According to oral traditions, the designation of Mesqan was from *Mäsk'äl* 'cross' (Meyer, 2007:845) following the name of *Masqala Eyesus Church*, which was built in Bidara Kebele, and later on demolished during the war of Ahmed Gagn in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Dinberu et al., 1987 EC:32, interviews with Sheh Shabir). The linguistic neighbours of Mesqan are Kistane in the North, Silt'i in the South, Dobbi and Sebat Bet Gurage (Muher) in the West, and Marek'o (Libido) and Oromo in the East.

As shown in the classification under Figure 2 above, Mesqan is a branch on its own of Western Gurage within South Ethio-Semitic (Hetzron, 1972:119). It is closely related to Central and Peripheral Western Gurage which comprises diverse languages and language varieties. According to Hetzron (1972:124), Urib seems to refer to a variety of Mesqan, but Abduljebbar (1984:40) noted that Mesqan has no dialect variation. However, based on information gathered from key informants there are regional dialect variation within Mesqan along the lines of their geographic distribution and settlement patterns because there are locally restricted interactions with neighbours which may yield specific varieties due to language contact, i.e., Mesqan – Libido (Maräk'o) in East but Mesqan-Muher in the West, and Mesqan - Kistane and Dobbi in the North.

With respect to the position of Mesqan in linguistic classification, there is no general agreement among linguists. Cohen (1983:17) classifies Mesqan as part of West Gurage in which Mesqan and Dobbi are grouped together on a comparative basis, Leslau (1969) classifies Mesqan together with Muher and Dobbi (Gogot) as a sub-branch of West Gurage based on linguistic classification. However, Hetzron's (1968:156, 1972:119) classification of Mesqan is different from both Cohen's and Leslau's. He classifies Mesqan as a genetic sub-branch on its own within the West Gurage group, dissociating Mesqan from Dobbi as the Eastern most representative of Western Gurage, and grouping Muher, Dobbi, and Kistane as Northern Gurage based on typological features such as the main verb markers.

While there is relatively various studies on the Gurage, as Bahru (2010:62) rightly points out, most of them generally suffered from insulation or extrapolation: either Gurage units are studied in isolation or a study of one section of the Gurage is presented as applicable to all, often disregarding the obvious linguistic differences and other peculiarities of the various groups within the Gurage. As a result, some of the groups have remained unnoticed for long in the sphere of linguistic and cultural studies. Mesqan stands out as a good example for this.

Mesqan is one of the scarcely studied languages within the Gurage group. Some of the works include Leslau's (1979:751-831) Etymological Dictionary of Gurage in which he listed more than 2000 Mesqan words, and also published a study on the verb in Mesqan as compared with other Gurage dialects (2004). Other descriptive works include Meyer's (2007) article on Mesqan Language, Getu Shikur (1989) on the verb morphology of Mesqan, and Abduljebbar Awol (1998) on the phonology of Mesqan as senior essays.

Apart from limited descriptions of Mesqan cited in some linguistic works on the Gurage in general, for comparative purposes, there appears to be no comprehensive description of grammar of Mesqan. So far, there are no documented sociolinguistic studies conducted on the Mesqan language and its speakers.

## **1.8 Organization of the Thesis**

The thesis is organized into seven chapters. Following the introductory chapter, the conceptual framework of the research along with the methodology is outlined in the second chapter. The framework defines basic concepts and highlights of the theoretical underpinnings of the research. It also elaborates on the analytical socio-cultural constructs, i.e., domains of language use, language attitude, ethno-linguistic identity, etc. The methodology section comprises the sampling procedures and the various techniques and tools used in the process of data collection, and information about the respondents in terms of key variables.

Chapter Three presents social structures, institutions and cultural features which help to understand factors that influence or are associated with language choice in

different settings. It provides genealogical narratives tracing the ancestral origins of Mesqan, a brief ethnographic account on the Mesqan social organization and cultural traits including gender and age, marriage, religion, and customary institutions.

Findings of language use patterns in the Mesqan ethnolinguistic group is presented in Chapter Four. It examines the socio-economic determinants of language use and the extent how these influence language use, proficiency, and bilingualism. It presents a comparison of mother tongue speakers of Mesqan in rural and urban settings across different generations. The description of domains of language use employs *domain analysis* as a tool to identify the general language use situation and factors which contribute to the choice for each domain. The presentation of the data and their analysis in all the sections and sub-sections is followed by discussions with a summary of key findings. This holds true for all the chapters that follow.

Chapter Five examines language attitudes of members of Mesqan ethnolinguistic group towards their ethnic language. As the majority of the speech community is Mesqan-Amharic bilinguals, their attitude towards Amharic is also discussed. Attitudes towards use of Mesqan in education, graphisation of Mesqan and use in the Media are also treated to find out the perceptions of the speech community in that regard. Finally, the summary presents key findings vis-à-vis their relationship to language use. It is to be noted that in the course of the discussions, attention is paid to various factors determining formation of ethnic identity in relation to key variables such as age, gender, language ability, ethnicity, etc.

Chapter Six deals with issues related to language and ethnic identity. It identifies self-identification in terms of ethnic membership based on the place of residence, age, and educational status. It also discusses the correlation between language use, attitude, proficiency, and the formation of ethnic identity. The nature of in-group contact and ethnolinguistic identity in view of its relevance to language use, attitude, and proficiency is presented in the following section. The other important issue addressed in the subsequent section relates to knowledge of Mesqan history and culture as a precursor for ethnic identity formation in Mesqan. Finally,

prominent markers of ethnic identity in Mesqan such as religion, clan membership, language, common history, etc. are identified and discussed.

Chapter Seven provides summary and conclusion of the thesis based on the key findings presented in the preceding chapters.

## CHAPTER TWO: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Introduction

There are three major sections presented in this chapter: conceptual framework, methodology, and demographic and socio-economic characteristics of respondents. The conceptual framework defines key concepts used in the study, and relevant theoretical constructs used as a framework for the analysis and interpretation of the study findings.

In addition to highlighting the key issues investigated, the sampling procedures and the various techniques and tools used in the process of data collection, and quantitative description of the composition of respondents in terms of key variables that are expected to determine language use, attitude etc. are discussed.

The methodology outlines quantitative and qualitative approaches employed for the study, the sampling procedures, the sample population, the data collection tools, and the structure and content of the questionnaires used. Finally, it outlines the field organization before the beginning of the actual fieldwork, data management, and processing including data editing, coding, entering, and cleaning.

### 2.2 Conceptual Framework

#### 2.2.1 Definition of Key Concepts

*Language and Culture:* Language is part of a larger system as organized and structured as language itself –called culture. Culture is the total life way of a people, the social legacy (heritage) the individual acquires from his group (Kluckhohn, 1963) According to Banks (1988: 261), culture is defined as “a cluster of attributes such as values, beliefs, behavior patterns and symbols unique to a particular human group.”

Kim (2003) defines language as, “the system of communication comprising codes and symbols which is used by humans to store, retrieve, organize, structure and communicate knowledge and experience. It is the primary instrument in the expression, transmission, and adaptation of culture. Culture is inextricably linked to language. Without language, culture cannot be completely acquired nor can it be effectively expressed and transmitted. Without culture, language cannot exist.”

***Ethnic Identity:*** According to Trimble, and Dickson (1995), Ethnic identity is quite personal and individual, and it has many facets. It can be based on geography, nationality, ancestry, family, culture and sub-culture, religion, language, race, or any combination of these. Ethnic identity is treated as a conceptualization of one's membership of an ethnic group.

***Ethno-linguistic vitality*** is defined as “that [which] makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in inter-group situations” (Giles et al., 1977: 308). It refers to “structural characteristics such as socio-economic status, demographic representation, and institutional support pertinent to a language.”

***Ethnolinguistic Group:*** According to Jenkins (2006), the concept of ethnolinguistic group has been used to define “a human social unit that shares the same language and culture and uses the same criteria to differentiate itself from other social groups.” He further notes that while in reality one cannot expect to find human societies perfectly matching this theoretical construct, in many cases — especially in traditional local communities — actual social units do approximate the theoretical ethnolinguistic unit. Linguistic affiliation is commonly one major and salient component of ethnic identification (including self-identification) — although not the only one. Often, this coincidence of ethnicity and language is marked by a people calling themselves and their language by the same unique name.

### 2.2.2 Theoretical Considerations

As the study focuses on the relationship between the socio-cultural situation and language with a specific reference to language use, language attitude, and ethnolinguistic identity, there is not one theoretical construct which can embrace

the issues as a framework in their totality. Thus, the study employs the concepts of domains of language use, language attitude, ethnolinguistic vitality, language and ethnic identity, and in-group contact as analytical frameworks in investigating the relationship between the socio-cultural context and language use among Mesqan ethnolinguistic group.

#### **2.2.2.1 Domain Analysis**

Fishman (1972:442) defines a domain as “a sociocultural construct abstracted from topics of communication, relationships between communicators, and locales of communication, in accord with the institutions of a society and the spheres of a speech community.” Using domains of language use as an analytical tool, Fishman (1991) distinguishes between the two levels of language use: (1) the informal inter-generational usage at home, in the family and the near neighbourhood, versus (2) the outside ethnolinguistic influences, the language of education, the workplace, the mass media and the language of government services. He further maintains that without having a sufficiently safeguarded level (1), trying to control level (2) is equivalent to constantly blowing air into a tire that still has a puncture. He stresses the critical importance of the intimate family and local community level for the maintenance of a minority language.

According to Landweer (2011), domain analysis can also be used as one of the key indicators of ethnolinguistic vitality. She focuses on identifying the domains of life where language choice becomes a factor and determining in just how many domains each language is used. For domain analysis, culturally relevant domains are broken down into variable sub-domains. Speakers choose which language to use every time they interact within a given sub-domain. The cumulative choices then suggest which of the languages in the community's repertoire is the language of choice for each domain.

The home is the foundational social domain and within the domain of home, there are the sub-domains of instruction, correction or scolding, information, comfort, humor, and religious observance within communication dyads of spouses, adults

with in-laws, adults with other adults who are not related, adults with children, and children with children. After the home, the next most foundational domains are cultural events, followed by social events. Depending on how one slices the societal pie, such events as marriages, funerals, births, naming ceremonies, harvest, competitive feasts, public discussions or arguments, and singsongs can be considered sub-domains of cultural events. Social events could include such things as political campaigns, work parties, sport, and adjudication. Within the domain of the church, there are sub-domains of scripture, liturgy, sermon or homily, music, prayer, and announcements.

There are additional domains in many other contexts where language choices are made. These include formal education, business, travel, and written communication. Within the domain of formal education, sub-domains include the language of instruction, the language(s) of study, the language(s) allowed in recreation, and the language(s) that the faculty use/s to communicate to local parents about school matters. Within the domain of business, there are sub-domains of employment, private business, and marketing.

#### **2.2.2.2 Language Attitude**

Much pioneering language attitudes work has been conducted at an interface between social psychology, where attitudes hold a place of central prominence for understanding social behavior and thought, and sociolinguistics, with its focus on social aspects of language (Garrett, 2003). Studies conducted on language attitudes generally share a common view about their fluid and complex nature, and that they are far more complex than merely agreeing or disagreeing with particular statements. Because language attitudes are neither endowed by virtue of one's belongingness to a certain ethnic group nor in-born, they can be changed. Attitudes towards languages, especially in multilingual and multicultural contexts, are created and molded through a variety of factors including socio-historical forces, the irresistible pressures for social mobility, as well as the functions people perceive particular languages as performing. (Ibid) Garrett (2003) further elaborates that like

the social phenomena that they are, attitudes change their color like chameleons, according to the social context and contributing mental, cognitive, and affective variables as well as the individual characteristics of language users, the social context, and the functions and social history of a particular language.

Language attitudes tend to be affected by the functions that a language may fulfill within a given speech community as well as by its potential use in a range of linguistic domains, i.e. perceived, practical, and social worth of the language. (Guerini, 2008). According to Adegbia (1994), when a language is assigned significant functions, it grows and gains more respect. On the other hand, a language not officially assigned functions may gain in geographical spread, but not necessarily in esteem or evaluation. The official recognition, support, or functions accorded a language tend to affect the prestige of that language and the value judgments made concerning it.

### **2.2.2.3 Language and Ethnic Identity**

Language is one of the most significant markers of ethnic identification (Fishman 1977; Giles and Johnson 1981; Giles, Bouhris and Taylor 1977). Language is often cited as a major component in the maintenance of a separate ethnic identity, and it is undoubtedly true that language constitutes the single most characteristic feature of a separate ethnic identity. (De Vos, 1975:15) The interrelationship between language and ethnic identity is studied from sociolinguistic perspectives (e.g. Gumperz, 1982a, 1982b). Theoretically, the degree to which individuals self-categorize themselves as members of ethnic groups, for example, is critical in understanding their language attitudes (Abrams/Hogg, 1984 cited in Gudykunst/Schmidt, 1987:157).

There are mainly three theoretical approaches to the phenomenon of ethnic identity: primordialism, constructivism, and instrumentalism. Primordialism generally assumes social groups to be characterized by features such as territory, religion, culture, social organization, or language, which are considered to be objectively "given" (Weber 1968: 389). The constructivist approach was most

prominently formulated by Fredrik Barth who views ethnic identity as the result of a complex social process in which symbolic boundaries are continuously constructed and reconstructed by the use of mythologies, and historical account of a common past or language (Barth 1969). The instrumentalist approach to ethnicity pays more attention to the processes of political mobilization and manipulation by which social groups are constituted on the basis of ethnic attributes such as nationality, religion, race, or language. In this study, the analysis of language use and its relationship with ethnic identity formation is seen from the view of Fishman (1977) which depicts the relationship and relevance of both the constructivist and instrumentalist approaches to sociolinguistics.

Giles & Coupland (1991) maintain that as individuals identify themselves as group members, intergroup social comparisons occur and language is perceived as an important dimension in the comparison. Similarly, when in-group identity is salient, and language holds a central place in that identity, in-group members are likely to switch to their in-group language, and use it to a greater extent.

One of the major approaches in studies related to language and ethnic identity is the theory of "*Ethnolinguistic Vitality*" proposed by Giles and his colleagues (Giles & Johnson, 1981, 1987). Empirical testing of this theory suggests that language use and identity are related reciprocally. Language use may influence the formation of group identity, and group identity influences patterns of language attitudes and usage (Giles & Coupland, 1991; Sachev & Bouhris, 1990).

In order to analyze ethnolinguistic vitality, Landweer's (2011) identified eight indicators of ethnolinguistic vitality. One of the indicators, i.e. *domains of language use*, is discussed under sub-section 1.7.2.1 above. For the purpose of this study, specifically in a discussion related to language and ethnic identity, the following selected indicators relevant to the analysis are considered.

*The relative position on the urban-rural continuum:* Proximity to urban centers is a well-documented undermining factor to vernacular or minority language vitality (cf. Buchheit 1988). Position on the urban-rural continuum covers not only the physical

location of a speech community relative to an urban area (or area where speakers of different and more prestigious languages congregate), but also what access speakers of the vernacular have to urban communities, and how many people take advantage of that access. Thus, a language remote from an urban community or congregation of other language speakers would be the least affected; therefore, the strongest, and a language located within urban confines would be the most affected and thus the weakest in terms of ethnolinguistic vitality.

*The frequency and type of code switching:* Code switching within multilingual contexts occurs when speakers use forms from one language (called the embedded language) in an utterance that is primarily composed of another language (called the matrix language) within the same conversation. Code switching can be differentiated by type. This helps to identify whether the code switching phenomenon can be consistent across the community, as in diglossia; a stable form of bilingualism/multilingualism, as in situational code switching where domains determine the language of choice (though not everyone in the community controls the preferred language forms), or unbounded code switching where language choice changes without notable pattern or consistency.

Myers-Scotton (1995) has argued that code switching is used as a momentary marker of group identification for the purpose of renegotiating role relations within the communication context. She argues that code switching is then a type of skilled performance, an ability used with communicative intent. This being so, code switching may also be a marker of ethnolinguistic ambivalence. For as language choice is an indicator of momentary group identification for an individual communicator, and as language contact and use are mitigating factors toward language change for that person, so the frequency and type of code switching within the communication patterns of a community of speakers have an impact on the strength of the vernacular code in that community.

*Population and group dynamics:* Fishman (1991) and Dorian (1986) maintain that one of the ways that core of fluent speakers is either supported or undermined is

through the language use characteristics of those who immigrate to a speech community (whether through employment, trade alliances, or marriage patterns). Moreover, the pattern of cross-cultural marriage also determines whether the vernacular language is supported or further undermined. The least undermining situation would be where the immigrants to the community become actively bilingual in the community's language. By contrast, the most detrimental to the local vernacular would be the situation where immigrants chose to maintain their own mother tongue and insisted on others in the community to learn to speak it.

*Distribution of speakers within their own social networks:* Dense multiplex networks are considered to be an essential indicator for the maintenance of a minority vernacular within a wider societal context. A social network is said to be dense when each person is linked in relationship with one another. The simultaneous nature of relationships across the community in a dense multiplex social network results in internal reinforcements of whatever cultural values are held dear across that society. Thus, the societal norms regarding language use are reinforced along with every other societal norm.

*The social outlook regarding and within the speech community:* As language choice can serve as a marker of ethnic identity, so a strong ethnic identity can influence language choice. In other words, the perception a group has of itself can be supportive or can undermine the value associated with their language and ultimately their own use of their language. Bourhis, Giles, and Rosenthal (1981) have indicated various status factors that serve to reinforce ethnolinguistic vitality. How well a group is perceived by outsiders and whether or not it is supported by outsiders (e.g. by government funding of development projects) also has an impact on the value associated with the group's language. Thus, the sixth indicator of ethnolinguistic vitality is a measure of the language community's social outlook both internally and externally.

*Access to a stable and acceptable economic base:* One of the most common factors that leads a community to shift from one language to another is that the acquired

language is thought economically beneficial by its adoptive community of speakers (Holmes, 1997). Palmer (1997) suggests that this shift in language allegiance is a consequence which hinges on the parents' perception that adequate work environments using their mother tongue do not exist for their children. Although Palmer (1997) and Landweer (2011) discuss this phenomenon in the North American and Papua Guinea contexts respectively, the principle of perceptual adequacy is applicable in the Mesqan setting as well. The most supportive of the vernacular are situations where the vernacular is the code of choice in a stable and acceptable economy. The least supportive of the vernacular are situations where the people or groups are entirely dependent on an economic system that requires the use of a language other than the vernacular.

#### **2.2.2.4 In-Group Contact**

The concept of *In-group Contact* has also been considered as an important factor in analyzing language use, language attitude, and language and ethnic identity. Frequency of contact between members belonging to an ethnolinguistic group contributes to strengthening the bond of the group. It could serve as an instrument to ensure mutual assistance and security of the in-group members. Above all, in-group contact provides an opportunity to transfer in-group culture and history, and to build ethnolinguistic vitality perceptions. Landry and Allard (1994) note that the development of ethnolinguistic identities and other cognitive – affective dispositions (e.g. beliefs about vitality, attitudes) like the development of linguistic competencies is rooted firmly in contact. Sachdev (1998, cf. Sachdev and Hanlon, 2000) argues that the relationship between in-group contact and identity is likely to be one of mutual causality, and that ethnolinguistic identity and vitality perceptions may directly (and reciprocally) affect the quantity, quality, and composition of contact networks.

## **2.3 Methodology**

### **2.3.1 Introduction**

The study mainly focuses on socio-cultural situations, and language use among Mesqan speakers in different settings. In the process of data collection, belonging to the same ethnic group had its advantages as it helped to be accepted in a closely-knit community such as Mesqan. As a member of the community under study, and being brought up in the same area, the researcher was in a privileged position to know more about Mesqan and did not need too much initial observation. It had significant implications in facilitating easier access to rural areas, identify knowledgeable elders and conduct in-depth interviews, participate in and observe language use situations in the home environment, at work, public places, markets, places of worship, and the like without being too much observed. The in-group identification had considerable effects in building genuine trust and affiliation by the community, which in turn resulted in elicitation of natural and spontaneous data.

In fulfilling the study objectives, both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques were employed. Quantitative measures were obtained using structured questionnaire while qualitative information was collected through in-depth interviews and direct observations. In order to have comprehensive investigations, data from all available secondary sources were also carefully examined.

### **2.3.2 Quantitative Method**

The quantitative technique has been used to collect quantitative information from a sample of Mesqan ethno-linguistic group. It has helped obtain detailed formative information that can help to fulfill the study objectives. Representative sample households with adequate number of cases were drawn from urban and rural settings. The overall picture of the sample strategy is presented as follows.

**Coverage:** The study has covered one rural Woreda and two urban settings where Mesqan ethnolinguistic group predominantly reside which include rural Mesqan Woreda, and Butajira and Yirgalem towns. These three settings were selected owing to the fact that they could display various sociolinguistic situations allowing for different use patterns of Mesqan with their own features and history. The rural setting stands for almost monolingual context, i.e. only Mesqan is predominantly used in the community; the urban setting (Butajira) taken as a multilingual context with different languages spoken, and where use of Mesqan may be less important than in the rural setting, different attitudes towards languages; and, Yirgalem, where the largest number of (estimated to be 5000) people of Mesqan descent, compared to other places in the country, reside, representing Mesqan and language use patterns outside of the local environment. This, particularly, situated the study in an ideal position to compare and interpret data on the influence of the socio-cultural settings on language use, choice, attitude, ethnic identity, and in-group contact issues.

**Target population:** The quantitative study has targeted individuals belonging to Mesqan ethnolinguistic group residing in the aforementioned rural and urban settings, i.e., Mesqan Woreda, Butajira, and Yirgalem.

**Sample Design:** A five-stage stratified cluster sample design has been implemented in order to identify sample Mesqan individuals. Place of residence (Urban/rural) is the strata of the study. Urban/rural settings, Kebeles, “Got’s” (in rural Kebeles and blocks (in urban Kebeles), and households were chosen in the first, second and third stages of sampling, respectively. Representative sample individuals were, therefore, chosen at the final stage of sampling from each sampled household.

The location of rural Kebeles (center, bordering with some other rural Kebeles of speaking different languages, position on the urban-rural continuum) was a factor for the selection as it has its own implication in this particular study. Thus, rural Kebeles were further categorized into six: Center, bordering with Kistane, bordering

with Dobi, bordering with Muher, bordering with Silt'e, and bordering with Libido (Maräk'o).

**Sample size determination and allocation:** The factors and parameters that must be considered in determining the sample size are many but they revolve primarily around the measurement objectives of the study. They are key estimates desired, target populations, precision and confidence level wanted, estimation domains, whether measuring level or change, clustering effect, allowance for non-response and available budget.

It is a cross-sectional study thus a sample size computation strategy for measuring only levels has been implemented. Required key indicators of the study are mostly proportions. In determining sample size, with no prior information about the variability of the population proportion, which is going to be measured, the variance of the population proportion is often guessed by taking the population proportion to be equal to 0.5.

Therefore, setting the population proportion ( $p$ ) equal to 0.5 and assuming a design effect of 2 to make an adjustment for the clustering effect, a minimum sample of 775 individuals per domain is found to be sufficient to attain a 95% confidence with a margin of error of 5%.

Considering some minor adjustments for maintaining uniformity in field operation, a final sample of 775 individuals were decided to be optimum and were covered in the study.

Moreover, in consideration of the cost and time for the study, two towns and one rural Woreda were determined to be surveyed. Allocation of sample individuals between the two different locations (Urban/rural) as well as the different strata of Kebeles (Center/bordering with other ethnic groups) and category of eligible individuals (different age and sex category) were made in proportion to the number of households each of them has.

To keep the design effect as low as possible, it is recommended to use as many clusters as feasible. Therefore, 14 and 28 sample households per *Got'* and block, respectively, were decided. Consequently, all in all, 558 and 217 households were covered from rural and urban areas, respectively. The overall sample distribution is as given below.

Table 3: Distribution of samples across rural and urban locations

Location		Number of Samples			
		Kebele	<i>Got'/Block</i>	Household	Respondent
Urban	Butajira	2	4	132	132
	Yirgalem	2	4	85	85
Rural	Mesqan Woreda	10	40	558	558
<b>Total</b>		14	48	775	775

**Sampling Frame:** It is the entire group of all the units of analysis whose characteristics are to be estimated. It is from this material that the samples were selected. Towns and the rural Woreda were chosen from the list of towns and Woredas with their corresponding number of Mesqan speaking population. The list was obtained from the 2009 Ethiopian Population and Housing Census Results. Kebeles, on the other hand, were selected from the lists of Kebeles along with their corresponding household size. The lists were obtained from Mesqan Woreda, Butajira town and Yirgalem town administrations. *Got'* or blocks were also chosen from the list along with their number of households. The lists were prepared before the beginning of the fieldwork. As stated below, the selection scheme for households doesn't require a frame, thus, no frame was used to identify sample households. Individual respondents from sample households, on the other hand, were chosen from the list of eligible individuals prepared before the start of the data collection.

**Selection Scheme:** Towns/Woreda, Kebele, and *Got'/block* were selected using probability proportional to size selection scheme. Households within sample *Got'/blocks*, on the other hand, were chosen using a combination of random route

and quota sampling. This type of selection scheme, if implemented properly, would definitely provide the study probability samples. The technique is unbiased as long as the starting point along the path of travel is determined randomly. Finally, the selection of individual respondent within a household was performed using simple random sampling technique.

### **2.3.3 Qualitative Approach**

The in-depth interviews and participant observation are primarily aimed at eliciting data on socio-cultural situations in the selected settings vis-à-vis language use, attitude, and identity among Mesqan. Moreover, as is well known, discrepancies exist between self-reports of language use and actual language behavior. Therefore as is usual with socio-linguistic surveys the questionnaire is followed by follow-up in-depth interviews and participant observation that were designed to complement data obtained through the questionnaire.

Hence, relevant data was gathered using the ethnographic method of inquiry. The qualitative approach, specifically, in-depth interview and participant observation, proved to be an appropriate method owing to their explanatory nature, which allowed for identification of pertinent historical and social-cultural narratives. The in-depth interviews were important because the key informants could review issues and bring to the researcher's attention some of the important ideas that might have been overlooked, and it gave freedom to respondents and allowed the interviewer to probe responses. Eight elders (four in rural Mesqan Woreda, two in Butajira and two in Yirgalem towns) were selected, who are reputed for their knowledge of the culture, history, oral traditions, and language were interviewed using checklists.

The in-depth interviews were supplemented by close participant observation of language use as a primary data collection tool to gather qualitative data. According to Fetterman, (1989:48) information that could be obtained through observation and informal interview techniques are of great value as the inevitable self-consciousness that people often have to experience during formal interviews could be avoided. The observation involved attendance in everyday activities, in the home environment, in community gatherings, in places of worship (churches and

mosques), market places, schools (elementary and high schools in rural, urban, and peri-urban areas), hotels, and the like. The *Səmutt Sänga Lik'a*<sup>10</sup> religious gathering, where thousands of Muslim Mesqan congregate on Monday of the first week of every month, was found to be an ideal occasion to observe and gather data on different aspects of language use. Mesqan and Amharic were used as meta-language for the questionnaire, and in-depth interviews.

#### **2.3.4 Overall Structure and Contents of the Questionnaire**

The questionnaire has four sections. The first section is designed to elicit information about the respondents' background, which includes such questions about their gender, age, education, occupation, language ability, and length of time in their current place of residence. The information elicited from this section was intended to be used to allow the comparison between the responses of the respondents in the other sections and the categorical variables of gender, age, educational status, and place of residence. The second section is intended to generate data on language use in different situations. It investigates the respondents own use of the language on certain occasions such as at gatherings where there are both Mesqan and non-Mesqan speakers, when they discuss with family members, with friends, and the like. The third section is designed to find out respondents' attitude towards Mesqan language and other languages, their choice of language for educational and administrative purposes, and the like. Finally, as language is widely recognized as an important defining characteristic of ethnic group membership and group identity, a number of statements in the fourth section are concerned with ethnic identity. The perception about language and identity is explored by asking respondents to judge whether it is necessary to be able to speak Mesqan to have a Mesqan identity, self-identification, knowledge of the culture, history, etc. Generally, this section of the questionnaire is intended to elicit the attitudes of the

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<sup>10</sup> *Səmutt Sänga Liqa* is a religious gathering in which Muslim Mesqan from all corners of the Woreda and those residing in neighbouring towns congregate monthly in designated sites (refer to chapter 2 for more details).

respondents towards their identity and language use, and establish the link between language and identity.

### **2.3.5 Field Organization**

Structured questionnaire, training manual, checklists, and other relevant tools were prepared before the beginning of the actual fieldwork. Data from the sample households was collected by 15 local research assistants recruited from the study area. One supervisor was assigned for five data collectors. Assigned supervisors were all well experienced in carrying out both quantitative and qualitative studies. All in-depth interviews were conducted by the researcher.

### **2.3.6 Data Management and Processing**

The data collected from the field were edited just after completion of fieldwork. Data that were obtained from the structured questionnaire were in addition carefully coded by experienced editors and coders. The properly edited and coded data was finally entered to computers using the CSPRO data entry software packages by qualified data entry clerks. After cleaning the data, the final output was analyzed using the most frequently used statistical software package of analyses called SPSS.

## **2.4 Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents**

### **2.4.1 Gender**

Respondents from both sexes were randomly sampled for the study. No significant difference exists in the number of male and female respondents in all the study areas as shown in the Table 1 below. In the rural area, the number of female respondents is a little higher while in the two towns, the number of male respondents is higher. In Yirgalem town, particularly, the number of male respondents is higher than that of females by about 10%.

Table 4: Gender of respondents by place of residence

Place of residence	Male		Female		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Mesqan Woreda	267	47.8	291	52.2	558	100
Butajira Town	67	50.75	65	49.25	132	100
Yirgalem Town	46	54.0	39	46.0	85	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>775</b>	<b>100</b>

Overall, the gender composition of the sampled population is consistent with the proportion of male and female populations in the study areas. In Mesqan Woreda, the number of female population<sup>11</sup> is slightly higher than that of male, while in the towns, the number of Mesqan males, especially adult males, is slightly higher.

#### 2.4.2 Age

The minimum age of the respondents is 15, while the maximum is above 50. The age of the majority of the respondents falls within 25-50 years range constituting 59.3 %, followed by 15 – 24 years constituting 27.0%, and above 50 constituting 13.5%, respectively.

Table 5: Age cohort by place of residence

Place of residence	Age						Total	
	15-24		25-50		Above 50			
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Mesqan Woreda	142	25.4	344	61.6	72	12.9	558	100
Butajira Town	40	30.3	80	60.6	12	9.0	132	100
Yirgalem	28	32.9	36	42.3	21	24.7	85	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>27.0</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>59.3</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>775</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>11</sup> According to Census Abstract of Central Statistics Authority (2010), the total population of Mesqan Woreda is 170,016, (83,361 Male 86,655 female).

Children below 15 years of age are excluded from the category of respondents, as they may not be able to understand all the questions and provide reliable responses. Information regarding children's use of language is directed to parents and it is complemented by data gathered through observations at home, in playgrounds, and in schools.

### 2.4.3 Place of Birth, Growth and Residence

The majority of the respondents currently residing in the three settings were born in Mesqan Woreda. Of those who reside in Butajira and Yirgalem towns, 64.4% and 29.4%, respectively, were born in the rural areas of Mesqan Woreda. In Yirgalem, more than half of the respondents (52.9%) were born in their current place of residence and 4.7% in other places.

Table 6: Place of birth by place of residence

Place of Residence	Place of birth									
	<i>Mesqan Woreda</i>		<i>Butajira</i>		<i>Yirgalem</i>		<i>Other places</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Mesqan Woreda</b>	527	94.4	15	2.6	4	0.7	12	2.1	558	100
<b>Butajira Town</b>	85	64.4	42	31.8	3	2.2	2	1.5	132	100
<b>Yirgalem Town</b>	25	29.4	11	12.9	45	52.9	4	4.7	85	100
<b>Total</b>	637	82.2	68	8.7	52	6.7	18	2.3	775	100

While almost equal number of respondents in Mesqan Woreda resided in their place of birth and growth, only half of the respondents in Butajira grew up in their current place of residence. The number of respondents who grew up in Mesqan Woreda and then moved to the nearby town (Butajira) almost equals those who grew up and resided in Butajira.

Table 7: Place of growth by place of residence

Place of	Place of growth
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residence	<i>Mesqan Woreda</i>		<i>Butajira Town</i>		<i>Yirgalem Town</i>		<i>Other places</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Mesqan Woreda</b>	521	93.3	19	3.4	5	0.9	13	2.3	558	100
<b>Butajira Town</b>	62	47	63	47.7	7	5.3	-	-	132	100
<b>Yirgalem Town</b>	26	30.5	5	5.8	54	63.5	-	-	85	100
<b>Total</b>	609	78.5	87	11.2	67	8.6	13	1.7	775	100

Almost half of the respondents in Butajira were brought up in the rural Mesqan Woreda and the other half were brought up in Butajira town. About 25.8% of Butajira respondents born in Mesqan Woreda were brought up in Butajira town. In the case of Yirgalem, almost the same number of respondents (about 30%) were born and brought up in the rural Mesqan Woreda. Moreover, the number of respondents who grew up in Yirgalem was more than those who were born there.

#### 2.4.4 Marital status and parenthood

In all the study areas, the majority of respondents are married. The highest number of married respondents is in Mesqan Woreda, followed by Butajira and then Yirgalem. It is worth noting that marital status was not considered in the selection of respondents

Table 8: Marital status by place of residence

Marital status	<b>Mesqan Woreda</b>		<b>Butajira</b>		<b>Yirgalem</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Married</b>	385	68.9	87	65.9	48	56.4	520	67%
<b>Unmarried</b>	173	31.1	45	34.1	37	43.6	255	33%
<b>Total</b>	558	100	132	100	81	100	775	100

As shown in Table 6 below, most of the married respondents do have children. Considering the possibility of those who could have children out of wedlock, which is obviously very minor, out of married respondents, more than 85% do have children.

Table 9: Respondents having a child/children by place of residence

Do you have a child/children?	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira		Yirgalem		Total	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Yes</b>	350	63.9	72	56.7	42	49.4	464	61.0
<b>No</b>	198	36.1	55	45.3	43	50.6	296	39.0
<b>Total</b>	548	100	127	100	85	100	760	100

#### 2.4.5 Religion

The majority of the respondents in both rural and urban settings are Muslims (86.5%), and the remaining 13.5% are Christians. Mesqan Woreda has the highest percentage of Muslims (90%) compared to the same in Butajira and Yirgalem towns.

Table 10: Religion of respondents by place of residence

Place of Residence	Religion				Total	
	Muslim		Christian			
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Mesqan Woreda (Rural)</b>	494	88.8	62	11.2	556	100
<b>Butajira Town</b>	109	81.9	24	18.1	133	100
<b>Yirgalem Town</b>	68	79.0	18	21.0	86	100
<b>Total</b>	671	86.5	104	13.5	775	100

As regards the denominations of the Christians, more than 89% of the respondents are Orthodox Christians, whereas 7.8% and 2.9% are Protestants and Catholics, respectively.

## 2.4.6 Education

The majority of the respondents, almost two third, are literate<sup>12</sup>. However, there are variations within the three settings. While the urban settings constitute the highest number of literate respondents, 82.3%, and 80.3%, in Yirgalem and Butajira, respectively, only 59.1% of the respondents in Mesqan Woreda are literates.

Table 11: Literacy level of respondents by place of residence

	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira		Yirgalem		Total	%
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	
<b>Literate</b>	330	59.1	106	80.3	70	82.3	506	<b>65.2</b>
<b>Illiterate</b>	228	40.9	26	19.7	15	17.7	269	<b>34.8</b>
<b>Sub total</b>	558	100	132	100	85	100	775	<b>100</b>

Comparison of the educational level of the literate respondents shows that the majority of the respondents, i.e., 32.6% are at the junior level, followed by elementary level 22.5%, and the least, 15.6%, are at the high school level. Within each setting, the highest number of respondents, 36.6%, is at the basic literacy level in Mesqan Woreda; while the highest in Butajira and Yirgalem, 35.8% and 47.1%, respectively, are at the junior level. Of those who are at the high school level, respondents in Butajira constitute the highest number.

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<sup>12</sup> 'Literate' refers to a person who is able to read and write.

Table 12: Educational levels by place of residence

Place of residence	Basic literacy		Elementary 1-6		Junior 7-8		High School 9-12		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Mesqan Woreda	121	36.6	77	23.3	94	28.4	38	11.5	330	100
Butajira	16	15.0	21	19.8	38	35.8	31	29.2	106	100
Yirgalem	11	15.7	16	22.8	33	47.1	10	14.2	70	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>32.6</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>15.6</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>100</b>

### 2.4.7 Occupation

The majority of the Mesqan people are engaged predominantly in mixed agriculture. Men and women alike are also engaged in petty trade, mainly of agricultural products, and have frequent contacts with the nearby urban areas (See chapter 1). The occupation of respondents shows clear difference among the rural and urban residents as shown in the Table 13 below.

Table 13: Occupation of respondents by place of residence

Place of residence	Student		Trader		Civil servant		Private business employee		Farmer		Other		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Mesqan Woreda	128	22.9	68	12.2	30	5.4	5		318		9		558	
Butajira	38		60		16		7		10		3		132	
Yirgalem	26		35		10		11		1		2		85	
<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>		<b>163</b>		<b>56</b>		<b>23</b>		<b>329</b>		<b>13</b>		<b>775</b>	
Percentage	25		21.0		7.0		3.0		42		2		100	

The majority of the respondents, on average 42% of the respondents are engaged in farming, followed by 25% are students and 21% are traders. While the highest

number of respondents, 57%, in the rural Mesqan Woreda is engaged in farming, 41.3% of them are students, traders, civil and private business employees, allowing for more interactions and social networks. Most of the respondents in Butajira and Yirgalem are traders and students.

## **2.5 Summary**

In a discussion related to the conceptual framework used in the study, this chapter defines key concepts such as language and culture, ethnic identity, ethnolinguistic group, etc. The most relevant analytical frameworks in the present study are domains of language use, both language attitude, ethnolinguistic vitality, language and ethnic identity, and in-group contact to investigating the relationship between the socio cultural context and language use among the Mesqan ethnolinguistic group. As regards the methodology, both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques employed in the study were described. Both techniques were used in a complementary manner to gather sufficient data for the study. The target population of the study were ethnic Mesqan residing in rural Mesqan Woreda, Butajira, and Yirgalem towns. A representative sample of 775 people was selected for the study and eight knowledgeable elders were used as key informants.



## CHAPTER THREE: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DOMAINS OF LANGUAGE USE

### 3.1 Introduction

A combination of internal and external, positive, and negative, factors influence language use, attitude, proficiency, etc. In a speech community, in addition to education systems, economic activities, etc., forms of social relations, cultural events, inter-group contacts, etc. influence language choice to varying degrees. In dealing with language use and attitude, it is thus essential to assess salient social structures, institutions, and cultural features in order to understand factors that influence or are associated with language choice in different settings.

This chapter attempts to provide a brief ethnographic account of the Mesqan social organization and cultural traits with focus on social structures and institutions that are germane to the study of language use and aspects related to it. As a comprehensive ethnographic description of the Mesqan is lacking, the present account is mainly based on data collected through key informants, focused interviews, and participatory observation.

Within the Mesqan context where bilingualism is the norm rather than the exception especially among schoolchildren and adults, it is particularly crucial to identify and examine the principal domains of life where speakers' choice for a vernacular or a second language is made in interacting within a given sub-domain.

In Mesqan, as in any language community, a number of social domains can be found suggesting the need to break down culturally relevant domains into variable sub-domains and deal with those that cast light on understanding language use within the broader social context. In this regard, the foundational social domain is that of the home. Within this domain, there are multiple sub-domains 'within communication dyads of spouses, adults with in-laws, adults with other adults who are not related, and adults/parents with children. In dealing with language use, this entails the need to examine family members interaction especially in the context of

cross-cultural marriages where spouses are from different ethnic background. Outside the home, cultural events, including marriages, funerals, public discussions, and singsongs, and social events like work parties and adjudication can be considered foundational sub-domains of language use. Within the domain of religious practices, scripture, liturgy/public worship, sermon or homily, music, prayer and announcements constitute important sub-domains.

At societal level, the above domains are identified as salient situations determining language use — although not the only ones. These domains of language use cannot, however, be fully understood in isolation of the wider social structure as domains are “... socio-cultural construct[s] abstracted from topics of communication, relationships between communicators, and locales of communication, in accord with the institutions of a society and the spheres of a speech community” (Fishman, 1972:442).

In this chapter, a sketch of the Mesqan social structure and institutions is thus given followed by brief descriptions of the various social sub-domains and their implications on language use while detailed analysis of these and other sub-domains that are relevant at both societal and individual levels is given in the next chapter based on results of the quantitative survey.

### **3.2 Genealogy**

Some writers (e.g., Bustorf, 2007: 847; Dinberu et al, 1987: 34-42) indicated that Mesqan genealogical narratives trace ancestral origin to four groups who have migrated and settled in Mesqan land at different times around the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. This claim, however, raises many questions making it difficult to be accepted at face value. While the narrative may furnish some clues in reconstructing social history, it is difficult to take it literally as a historical fact as genealogies and lineages (i.e. systems by which a group of persons trace descent from a known common ancestor) are known for being constantly manipulated to reflect characteristics of present day social and kinship structures but not the reality on the ground (i.e. actual group relations and composition). This means stories of origin

are to be understood in the present day social context not as evidences of the past as rationalization of the custom and behavior of the group and as repository of information about cultural traits and regional historic-geographical relationships between different population units having underlying symbolic significance that serve as justification for the present state of affairs (Seymour-Smith, 1986: 130).

Nevertheless, given the absence of written sources and the complex social dynamics in the region, it is equally difficult to offer an alternative story with a higher degree of certainty. Interviews with elders in Mesqan conducted as part of the present research revealed tales that are different from the narrative mentioned in Dinberu et al. (1987:34-42) in some basic ways and also more complex.

The Mesqan trace their descent to multiple apical ancestors of different ethnic, religious, and linguistic background who have come from other places and settled in the area through different routes at different times – apparently making Mesqan a conglomeration of communities in effect.

According to genealogical narratives, pedigree of the principal patriarchs who constitute the forbearers of the majority of the existing lineages (about 33 lineages collectively called *Yafär säb* ‘people of the land’) goes back to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. These ancestors, who are said to be biologically connected to Azmach Sebhat and Ats’e Zara Yacob, came through Bozheba and Chunqwe from Cheha to Mesqan.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, three learned Islamic leaders came with Ahmed Gagn (Ahmad bin Ibrahim al-Gazi) during his jihad. These are referred to as ancestors of three of the prestigious clans/lineages in Mesqan, viz. Sheikh Ousman, Sheikh Omer or Shamer, and Sheikh Merdin, and their line of descent goes further to the Prophet Mohammed in Saudi Arabia.

Since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, a number of families have emigrated from different adjacent places such as Silt’e and distant areas as far as North East Amhara (Wollo) to Mesqan, whose roots are traced to sections of the Gurage sub-groups, specific Oromo clans and make up some of the existing lineages of the Mesqan which are

currently named after the leader of the emigrant families. These lineages and their sources are, for instance:

- Geta Wossen ('Chief/Lord Wossen') and Raya from Wollo;
- Azma Gereno, Dabaj, Denfa, Gonde, Bosenot, and Watira from Kistane (Kistane) sub-group;
- Jigena from Wachiko (a clan of Oromo) which also exists in Kistane (Kistane) sub-group;
- Jajo, Lenchi, Aderie and Kulum from the Woliye clan of Oromo;
- Worji from Worji and Jarso from Jarso clans of the Oromo;
- Teskaro from Dobbi/Goggot community;
- Shado of Semeredin from Gedebano families of the present Silti Zone; and
- Lakicha from Zay of the East Gurage sub-group.

The above list is not exhaustive as there are many other clans/lineages, which do not have currently known sources of origin.

In spite of claims of the various ancestral origins of the clans/lineages constituting the present Mesqan community the different groups or patriarchs who used to speak probably different languages corresponding to their place of origin, there exist no easily traceable physical, cultural, or linguistic sign attributable to the claimed differences. The process of social assimilation may plausibly explain for this while the need for a thorough multidisciplinary investigation of the topic cannot be questioned.

Though the language which was used by the ancestors of Mesqan is not clearly known, at present, all members of the various clans/lineages irrespective of their reported historic linguistic affiliations speak Mesqan. Even members of the Teskaro lineage who reckon descent to Dobbi/Gogot community, which is a separate linguistic group in the same Mesqan woreda, speak Mesqan. Minor dialectal differences are attributable only to geographic location but not social traits.

### 3.3 Social Stratification

The Mesqan are basically patriarchal, where the social system is dominated by 'father right', and reckon descent only through the father line. The principle of lineage segmentation can be said to be on the basis of the social structure although the various descent groups generated from the segmentary dynamics are integrated by other forms of relationships. As highlighted above, the community is segmented into a number of patrilineal lineages or descent groups. Most of these groups are less stable and in reality, multiple forms of social relations dilute the conceived social systems. Nevertheless, the lineage principle seems to have been conserved in defining specific hereditary social roles and statuses.

In the past, social administrative, military, territorial administration, etc. functions, which are no more exercised but still venerated, were ascribed to specific clans/lineages. However, certain units have still retained effective judicial, religious, occupational, and specific social roles. Under the circumstances, the lineage system appears operative in determining ones status and corollary privileges in terms access to power, social and cultural services, etc. Overarching judicial-sacred institutions are, for instances, led by decedents of Sheik Ousman whereas only descendents of prestigious families (such as *Shado and Bade*) are entitled to run local affairs. These groups are collectively called *Wäläba* 'pure blood'

The Mesqan are stratified by undeveloped form of caste system in which social units are ranked and defined mainly by descent and occupation into *Fuga and Wäläba*. Cast rank is hereditary and linked to occupational pursuits. Castes also tend to be endogamous and the boundaries and differences in rank between castes are expressed and maintained by restrictions on intermarriage as well as on access to wealth and prestige. In other words, once birth is the primary, or even the sole, determinant of one's cast, which determines one's place in the social hierarchy, occupation, sphere of association, access to social involvement, marriage choices, and access to religious activities. The lowest strata of the caste system are excluded from the performance of religious and other key social functions such as mediation.

At the bottom of the stratification are the most excluded *Fuga*, *Äjamma* and *k'et'k'atf'* who are potters, tanners and blacksmiths, respectively. These sub-groups, except the blacksmiths, are endogamous, i.e. they do not intermarry with the other groups (the *Wäläba*), and conduct marriage ceremonies. In the past, such marginalization was strictly manifested through multiple forms of social, cultural, economic and political restrictions. Exclusions in these spheres of life were expressed through multiple domains of language use. Specific sub domains may include certain cultural events and naming which used to be associated with the conventional religion of the *Wäläba*. According to informants, until recent times the above stated cast families were adherents of traditional religions and their personal names used to reflect their socially ascribed roles. Nowadays, social differentiations operate subtly since the professed religions of all the groups are Christianity and Islam. In effect, Mesqan is the vernacular language of all with no difference in language use across the various strata. The only exception to this is a small religious group called *Moyät*.

The *Moyät* are a small secret group of individuals recruited from any Christian family of the different lineages by senior *Moyät* at any time of the year. *Moyät* groups are also found in Kistane, Dobbi, and Cheha with the same functions. In Mesqan the number of *Moyät* is about 60-100, who together with all the others are tied to the religious leader called *Wak'* ('God' in *Oromo*) in Cheha who is regarded as a repository of mythical knowledge and brings them into contact with higher-order spiritual forces. Presently, *Moyät* seem to have marginal roles as the majority of the Mesqan adhere to Islam; yet, it seems that they have had traditional functions in bringing community into contact with powerful and dangerous spiritual forces (such as thunders), which they were assumed to control and channel in a positive manner, and in maintaining generational continuity through mediation with divinity of fertility.

New recruits, boys and girls of 12-15 years old, are separated or secluded from social life and relations and enter a sacred liminal stage under the sole custody of senior *Moyät*. During this stage, which may take up to one month, the initiates undergo the *Moyät* ritual process which appear to include mystical/sacramental and

linguistic instructions. Subsequently, in a stage of reincorporation they are returned to their families with their new status capable of speaking a sacred language. This stage lasts for about three months under the close supervision of the *abäk* 'leader' and concluded with a feast ceremony attended by other Moyät. Once they have been fully reintegrated with the community, they become able to communicate with *Däm<sup>w</sup>am<sup>w</sup>it*, which is a goddess of fertility and perform annual rituals dedicated to her during the time of *Mäsk'äl*.

The secret language, which is called *Moyätəñña*, is used for communication between the Moyät of the different sub-groups and when they are in trance. While its grammar appears to be similar with Gurage languages, *Moyätəñña* has its own stock of vocabulary which makes it incomprehensible by speakers of the vernaculars (Mesqan, Dobbi, Kistane, etc.) Inventory of the lexemes shows that *Moyätəñña* has few morphemes shared with Gurage languages spoken in the area.

### 3.4 Gender and Age

In rural and urban Mesqan, social roles and expectations are prescribed along the lines of gender and age. In general, girls and women belong to the domestic domain while men belong to the public. In spite of the larger size of this section of society and the multiple roles women play in production, reproduction, and household maintenance, they have lower social rank. Women's social and economic roles are shrouded under the façade of the patriarchal system, which restricts women's participation in social and religious affairs and in economic decision-making. Regardless of encouraging positive changes in the status of women and increasing recognition of their roles, their inordinate manifold responsibilities are still considered menial, and consequently, outcomes of their works are unduly undervalued.

At the household level, fathers, and husbands, and in their absence, senior sons, and elder male siblings, wield the authority for important decision-making, including involvement in social affairs outside the family, and enjoy greater access to resources and services. Women's participation in domestic as well as public

decision-making remains to be indirect and informal, through their male counterparts. In public matters beyond the family, this is even restricted to women who have commanded a degree of respect – which is constantly appraised and approved by men based on expectations (such as fidelity, procreation, capability to generate income) that principally serve the interests of men. As a corollary extension to this, women are grossly under-represented in traditional associations (that involve both genders) and formal public institutions.

Culturally ascribed gender roles clearly manifest, *inter alia*, in the gender division of labour and in the rules defining access to and control over resources and responsibilities for public functions. Principally, institutions of marriage, inheritance, and religion intrinsically serve as mechanisms for perpetuating the subordinate place women have in the community despite expanding opportunities created by the government's affirmative actions, the inclusive education system, the urban-rural continuum, and the growing trade activities in recent times. The customs of arranged marriage, wife inheritance, restricted transfer of patrimony (to sons), and exclusive control of religious offices by men all militate against the interest of women.

Generally, the burden of domestic chores offers little space for women to engage in extra-domestic activities. In their girlhood, they are not allowed to go beyond their immediate locality – i.e. beyond neighborhoods and primary village schools, until they get married and give birth to 2-3 children. Girls have equal opportunity in access to education as evidenced by their equivalent enrolment rate with boys at Alternative Basic Education and primary schools which are available in their vicinity. In the rural context, dropout rates and attrition increase, however, among girls in higher grades particularly where there are no higher-level schools in the rural Kebeles due to a multitude of factors including marriage, negative societal attitudes towards investing in girls' education, and potential social risks associated with distance. Unlike men, Mesqan women also have restricted opportunities in external interactions outside their immediate environment. This is mainly because women's mobility and engagement in business activities comes at a later stage in

adulthood. It is only after at least three years in marriage and after having given birth to 2 or 3 children that women, when they could win the full trust of their husbands, are allowed to market outside the villages as far as adjacent Kebeles and towns that may involve spending nights outside the home. On the other hand, males have the liberty of travelling and establishing wider social and business networks at earlier age.

On the whole, rural women's restricted mobility, their limited access to higher level education, their relatively early marriage, etc., which consequently result in delayed contacts with or exposure to the external environment and guarded interaction with other speech communities, translate into late acquisition of second languages and limit their second language proficiency to the vitals. The corollary of the extended attachment of women to their family and the natal group is their perceived greater proficiency in Mesqan; while, in the contrary, the early onset of external contacts by men engenders their earlier acquisition and better proficiency in second languages.

### **3.5 Marriage**

Among the Mesqan, as in any other community, there are different forms of marriage and elaborate systems with slight differences between rural and urban areas and across the different religions in terms of common marriage types, rules and ceremonies. Marriages may follow formal, religious, or purely customary procedures or a combination of all and any of the two. The Shariya rules are observed among the Muslim in urban areas sometimes in combination with the formal system, while in rural areas customary rules (*yäšäbe sera*) along with the Shariya is the more dominant form. Among the Christians in both rural and urban areas, on the other hand, customary rules govern union formation more than the formal or church systems.

Marriage systems in Mesqan include both prescriptive and preferential principles, though not always in strict sense, limiting choices only among certain marriageable categories and leaving wider spouse options from several categories within the prescribed category (such as interdicting inter-marriages between the Fuga and

Wäläba families). Most prevalent types of marriages in both rural and urban contexts among Muslims and Christians are *Č'uk'uššä* 'arranged marriages' by which marriage proposals are initiated by the parents of the would-be groom. In rural areas, levirate marriage – i.e. inheritance of a widow by the brother of the deceased or a rule in which upon the death of a married man his widow is required to marry one of his brothers (*Wərs*), and surrogate marriage – a custom by which on the death of a woman her husband is required or has the right to marry her sister (*Shigguye*) as well as polygyny – a form of plural marriage in which the husband is permitted more than one wife, are still common. Kinship terms reflect these marriage norms. Other types of marriage including preferential marriage – by a male lover (*Ululta*), a girl admirer/lover (*Agga*) or between lovers (*Hor achegn min yichegn*), and marriage between divorced men and women (*Wogiyet*) are less common; while abduction (*Nəččä*), daughter giving (*Jebata*) and marriage between spouses of unequal status (*Yebezhezhe*) are the least common arrangements. In towns, preferential marriages have become more common while some other types such as *Nəččä* and *Jebata* have disappeared fast.

Key criteria of restrictive as well as preferential marriage system define spouse categories based on kinship and alliance category as well as non-kin considerations. Whereas marital practices in Mesqan render conventional definitions of exogamy and endogamy invalid, exogamy is generally the norm. A basic rule is interdiction of marriages between the Wäläba and two of the 'cast' groups (the potters and the tanners). Within each category, consanguinity (blood relation) is also a chief consideration in establishing marriage relations; a basic consideration being that spouses must be from different kindred groups of beyond the fifth degree bilaterally, in both the father's and the mother's lines, and preferably from different clans/lineages. In this form of exogamy, i.e. consanguinity kindred exogamy, the stringent rule is that selection of the spouse must be outside the kindred group within which marriage would constitute incest. Custom appears to be stricter than religion among the Mesqan, as it does not allow marriage between parallel or cross cousins, unlike many Muslim communities.

The Mesqan primarily aim to preserve and transmit their constitutive elements, such as wealth, religion and language to the following generations through what could be called 'local group endogamy' in order to perpetuate their existence. Similarly, exogamy between lineages/clans aims at forming alliances between the groups connected through marriage. Lineage and clan exogamy is thus a very frequent and strongly encouraged phenomenon on a clan (a social group the members of which acknowledge a common ancestry and whose relationships are ruled by solidarity) or lineage (the group of individuals who are interconnected through consanguineal kinship patrilineally (but also matrilineally) and who acknowledge a common ancestor) level.

Non-kin considerations in establishing affinal unions include age, religion, economic status, etc. First marriage often comes at the time of puberty, usually the groom being older than the bride by few years, given that the former (or his family) is confirmed to pay bride-wealth and is ready to lead independent household. In polyandrous marriages, economic consideration is more important than age - i.e. a virgin girl may be given to a well off man who is much older than her. Marriage between unmarried man and widowed, divorcee, or separated women is generally prohibited; and similarly, marriage between a Christian and a Muslim is less common though this rarely happens in a pattern by which a Muslim man takes a Christian wife.

'Inter-ethnic' marriage with neighboring Gurage sub-groups or other ethnic groups is a less frequent type of marriage alliance which is generally allowed but not encouraged. Such marriages occur to establish economic, political, social, and religious alliances commonly by 'taking wives' from neighboring ethnic groups. Such alliance reinforces economic and military strengthening and the resolution of enmities between the groups.

Among the Mesqan, children are recognized as legitimate offspring of both partners, but are members of the father's patrilineage. As patrilocal residence, which is a pattern in which a couple establish their residence with or near the husband's family, is the common residence pattern in Mesqan, 'inter-ethnic' marriages have

social and linguistic concomitants. Bride wealth (the flow of goods and or payments from the husband to the wife's parents or kin group), which compensates the wife's group for the loss or transfer of certain rights in the women and her children who have now become part of the patrilineage is a common practice in Mesqan.

None of the types of marriages described above has any significant implications to language use excepting the 'inter-ethnic' forms which are followed by patrilocal residence. In these forms, the wife who has come from an external group is expected to learn Mesqan and communicate with the kin groups of the husband and with her children at home solely in Mesqan in the rural areas.

### 3.6 Religion

The first conventional religion in Mesqan was Orthodox Christianity which was introduced with the first settlers (*Yafär Säb*) around mid 15<sup>th</sup> Century (550 years ago). Churches like Mäsk'äle Eyesus<sup>13</sup> and Mikael were built just after the settlement of *Yafär säb* in Mesqan land. Later on, Islam was introduced in Mesqan about 450 years ago, through Ahmed Gagn's followers; namely, Semeredin (Semo) and Sheh Usman. But it had not spread much and the people had not practiced Islamic rules for many years. Subsequently, Sheh Wolle, Kebir Yahiya, and Sheh Dawd, and later on a known Muslim leader from Mesqan known as Abegaz Mahmud converted thousands of Mesqan to Islam. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, religious leaders including Shonke (from Bidara in Mesqan), followed by Sheh Issa (who came from Sebat Bet Gurage) and later on his son Haji Sult'an Issa, contributed much in the spread of Islam in Mesqan. Despite these efforts, the majority of Mesqan were believed to be adherents of traditional beliefs and Christianity before Islam got prominence beginning from early 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Mesqan Woreda Finance and Economy Office (2011), there are a total of 162 Mosques and 32 churches in

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<sup>13</sup> As noted in the first Chapter, the name Mesqan was believed to be derived from the Church Mäsqäle Eyesus which was built around Bidara in the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century. The church was demolished by Ahmed Gagn's army in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Mesqan Woreda. First, Mesqan men used to go to Wollo to attend Islamic teachings; but in the last century, they resorted to Silt'e to learn Quran. This was believed to have contributed to knowledge of Silt'e for those in attendance.

Muslim Mesqans participate in *Səmmutt Sänga Lik'a*, a religious gathering of Muslim Mesqan held once on the first Monday of a month. About 5-10 thousand people drawn from all parts of Mesqan Woreda attend the monthly *Səmmutt Sänga Lik'a*. Neighborhoods also meet in small groups on *Əsnäyn*, a religious gathering held every Monday. Elderly Mesqan do not engage in agricultural or commercial activities on Mondays. The adherents of this institution wear a special cap which serves as an identification of the group even from other Muslims. Though it is still in practice, the number of Muslim Mesqan, particularly the youth, participating in *Lik'a* are decreasing continuously. *Səmmutt Sänga Lik'a* has been in practice for a long time among Muslim Mesqan and it has had a special significance in creating a socio-cultural bond among the Mesqan community apart from its religious significance. Most Muslim Mesqan used to attend the annual religious feast, *K'at'bare Mawlid*,<sup>14</sup> celebrated in January near Wolk'ite town, where their religious leader Haji Sult'an (*Yek'at'bare Sheh*) was buried, and is still venerated. This pilgrimage is one main opportunity for contact between Mesqans and the *Sebat Bet Gurage* groups which are by all measures dissociated from each other.

The second largest Muslim group in Mesqan are the *Jilane Murid* 'followers of Seid Abdulqadr Jilane' who meet every week on Wednesday, and monthly eight days after *Lik'a*. It is estimated that there are 7000 followers of *Jilane Murid* in Mesqan. The *Imam* 'leader of the group' and the participants in most cases use Mesqan during

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<sup>14</sup> Currently, the annual pilgrimage to *K'at'bare Mawlid* is attended mostly by elders. There appears to be a gradual shift among the new generation of Muslim Mesqan from belief in local religious leaders, namely, Haji Sult'an and his descendants, to strict adherence to Quranic laws. Such sentiments, which could not be dreamt of decades ago, are gaining momentum and getting growing support among the younger generation of Muslim Mesqan to the extent of resisting the practice claiming that 'it is against Islamic rules and meant to amass wealth collected from the poor in the name of religion.'

*Muzakära* 'religious teaching at the gathering' and discussions. Though they predominantly use Mesqan, they also mix it with Silt'i in the performance of *Mänzuma* 'religious song'.

Similarly, Muslim Mesqan women meet at regular intervals to practice *Dado* 'gathering of married Muslim women' comprising 15-20 members in a group. It is an equivalent of *Əsnäyn* which is largely dominated by Mesqan men. The *Dado* women meet every two weeks usually on Sunday or Thursday. Muslim Mesqan women who are members of *Dado* use only Mesqan during prayers and discussions throughout the day. This is a special gathering solely dedicated to the use of Mesqan, which does not have any room for other languages such as Arabic or Amharic. Though the gathering is made on religious grounds, it serves more of social purposes. Apart from the *Däräma* 'contribution' for their expenses on the day, they contribute money for their *Daddo Eddər*, for mourning-related expenses. They also support one another when members of the group face problems; and, settle conflicts that may arise among group members in their localities. *Dado* is considered a special occasion for women to get together and entertain, liberating them from the burden of work they usually have at home, and provides them with a forum to share their family concerns and grievances during their regular meetings. In sum, *Dado* as a social network contributes to strengthening the bond of the in-group members, and provides an opportunity to transfer in-group culture and history and maintain their ethnic identity.

Another group of Muslims in Mesqan, are known as *Ware* or sometimes referred to as *Nurhussien Gerib*, who practice a traditional religion. The *Ware*, who number approximately 2000, are followers of *Seidinel Arifin*. The followers meet on every Tuesday, and the first Thursday every month. They go to *Anajina* in Bale Goba (in Oromia about 200 km from Butajira) to attend the annual celebration. The *Ware* followers often use Oromo and Silt'i for preaching, prayer, and *Mänzuma* 'religious song'.

Apart from using their native language for religious purposes, Muslim Mesqan are characterized by devotion to Arabic, which they perceive as a sacred language, for

prayers as they recite verses from the Quran and for *Solaat* 'prayer' at least five times a day. Reciting verses in Arabic is more important than the message, and understanding the meaning of what is being recited does not seem to be important for the followers. Similarly, Geez is used in the Orthodox Church. This is usually made after midnight involving deacons and priests. Unlike the Muslims, the majority of followers of Orthodox Christianity do not use Geez for prayers; it is restricted to the clergy. In this connection, Campbell (2009) states that, "Many religions have a sacred language (Hebrew for Judaism, classical Arabic for Islam, Sanskrit for Hinduism, Pali for Theravada Buddhism). Because religions are generally ancient the languages they use are often partially or wholly unintelligible to the laity and sometimes even the clergy, but contrary to what religious modernizers suppose, this linguistic remoteness is a strength, not a weakness. Misguided attempts to bring the language up to date often coincide with a loss of religious faith, and it is difficult to say what is cause and what is effect." Amharic is used as a medium to give sermons in all the churches.

### **3.7 Customary Institutions**

#### **3.7.1 Gudda**

*Gudda* is a binding agreement reached between individuals or groups to avoid conflicts, hostility, and ensure mutual support and solidarity among the members involved. Individuals, families, or clans bound through *Gudda* are expected to abide by the sacred rules and serious mutual obligations. *Gudda* agreement set between two individuals/groups in such a manner can be active up to seven lineages. In his study on *Ethnography of the Gurage*, Palmisano (2002:206) describes *Gudda* as: "... a ritual pact which binds two or more persons, consisting in an indissoluble tie implying a serious of mutual obligations." In Mesqan, as in the other Gurage groups, anyone of the two parties who violate the *Gudda* will be a social outcast, cursed, cannot attend local markets, will not be buried in the locality, etc.

In cases where one of the parties breaches the *Gudda*, both parties assign a temporary judge *YeGudda Dañña* 'judge of *Gudda*' as a mediator to settle the

disputes. The major types of *Gudda* in Mesqan include: *Yenchem Gudda* (related through marital union); *Yejal Gudda* (a relationship established between families through a cultural practice in which a person holds the eyes of a child during circumcision); *Yetenn Gudda* (if the two parties are neighbors); *Yedem Gudda* (parties related following settlement of a murder case according to the tradition); and *Yet'ub Gudda* (a non-local resident establishes a relationship with an influential person in which the protector dips his thumb in honey and the protégé sucks it, symbolic of taking the breast so as to ensure the security of the family and be judged as per the customary practices when conflicts arise). The ceremonial procedures of *Gudda* that are carried out to secure sustained peace between the two parties are strictly held in Mesqan which is believed to have a symbolic significance to the norm and adherence to mutual obligations.

### 3.7.2 Sera: A Set of Traditional Rules

*Sera*<sup>15</sup> represents traditional set of rules governing various aspects of societal norms in Mesqan community, which include: *Yalfata Sera* 'rules of mourning', *Yäšäbe sera* 'rules of marriage', *yeGudda sera* 'dispute resolution on based on prior agreement reached', *yä-Färagäzäññä sera* 'rules of juridical institution', etc. The following subsection briefly discusses one of the *Sera*, namely, *yä-Färagäzäññä Sera*, as an example.

#### **Yä-Färagäzäññä Sera: Traditional Juridical Institution**

*Yä-Färagäzäññä Sera* is a traditional justice system to arbitrate disputes between individuals whereby the parties consent to be adjudicated by the court. It was introduced some 450 years ago by Sheh Ousman and continued until today. There is a belief that Sheh Ousman brought Islamic laws from Saudi Arabia to guide *Yä-Färagäzäññä Sera*.<sup>16</sup> The lead judge and the jury are descendants of Sheh Ousman.

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<sup>15</sup> *Sera* may be a borrowed word from Oromo.

<sup>16</sup> Dellago - 'committing murder/causing physical or material damage considering that the victim is powerless and weak'; *Telmama* - 'Premeditated murder or attack causing

While children can observe the deliberations, women are not allowed to participate in the traditional court, and they cannot serve as judges as *Maga*, *Raga*, or *Färagäzäññä*.

Before any case is brought to the attention of the *Färagäzäññä Jury*, it passes through two stages of reconciliation process depending on the gravity of the dispute and the damage caused. First, local elders, known as *Maga*, drawn from both parties will start the mediation. If the case cannot be settled at that level, it proceeds to a higher level of judges called *Raga*. The third level is *Färagäzäññä*, the supreme traditional court of justice, which passes the ultimate decision in the arbitration process. Once both parties agree to be arbitrated through *Maga*, *Raga*, or *Färagäzäññä*, they are not allowed to file a case in any formal court.

The *Färagäzäññä court* requires both parties to appear before the judge before the trial starts, and no witnesses are allowed in the hearing of the cases. As a sacred juridical institution, no one would lie in front of a *Färagäzäññä jury*; both parties will speak only the truth. Otherwise, they fear that a supernatural power aligned with the institution would punish them and their families for their wrong deeds.

Currently, the *Färagäzäññä Sera* is done by a traditional lead judge called Kedir Ousman. At least five people should be there at the traditional court which takes place weekly on Sunday at a designated place called *Färagäzäññä Amba* in the rural Mesqan Woreda, about five km to the north west of Butajira town. While *Maga* and *Raga* can deliberate on the cases anytime, anywhere as they wish, *Färagäzäññä* can mediate, and pass judgement only in *Färagäzäññä Amba* within in a circumference up to *Goffeto*. The *Raga* and *Färagäzäññä* remain to be judges for life.

The *Färagäzäññä* judge commands traditional legitimacy and authority to arbitrate and set the amount to be payable to the victim's family by way of compensation.

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injury'; *Sekkeba* – 'A murder or physical damage which occurs by accident to an unintended victim'; *Sebeba* – 'Committing murder without the intention to kill; *Medala* – 'A case in which a person is killed or gets injured by an oxen, etc.'; and, *Yemedala medala* – 'killing a person who intends to kill oneself'.

The payment is made mainly to maintain peace and avoid any occurrence of a blood feud. The *Färagäzäññä Sera* has remained intact for centuries and kept on functioning and applying its customary law independent of the formal court structure.

The *Färagäzäññä* traditional court provides service to anybody irrespective of ethnic background and religious affiliation. Every Sunday morning, apart from the local community, people come all the way from Jimma, Silt'i, Addis Ababa, Sidama, Hadiya, Mareqo, etc., to be served fair and unbiased justice. Ideally, the service is meant to be given free of charge. They provide the service as imposed by the legacy entrusted up on them from their forefathers and consider it a mandatory provision by virtue of being a *Färagäzäññä* decent. In recent years, however, local elders decided that the parties, upon their goodwill, might give some amount of money to the judges after the negotiation is over.

Generally, in cases where the parties are ethnic Mesqan, the medium of communication will only be Mesqan. For the local community, use of Mesqan in such special undertaking represents a symbolic worth, and there is a belief the values and norms associated with the rituals could only be imparted through Mesqan. However, if the guests speak Oromo or Libido, they are required to come with an Amharic speaker as a translator. In a situation where Kistane or Silt'e speakers come, no translator is required as the judges fluently speak these languages.

### **3.7.3 Āddər - A Mutual Support Association**

*Āddər*, which is known to have its origin in urban areas and now widespread in Ethiopia, is ubiquitous throughout Mesqan. In rural areas, *Āddər* is a village/neighborhood based mutual support association, which is mainly concerned with funeral but also involves in house construction and in providing financial support to members during loss of cattle or other asset.

There is hardly any village that has no *Eddar* of its own; and, it appears practically inconceivable for a family to live without *Eddar*. Such an importance is attached to *Eddar* due to the fundamental nature of its key function, namely, its ability to provide decent burial for members. *Eddars* extend their services to constructing houses of members and providing financial and labour supports as needed. They are generally well-organized associations with well-defined rules governing the rights and duties of members, and a leadership to enforce its rules and manage its resources.

In Butajira and Yirgalem towns, *Eddars* appear to have heterogeneous members with different background although it may be established by members who are from the same ethnic group or lineage and still constitute the majority.

For instance, the Meqicho *Eddar* in Butajira, which was formed in 1995 is known as *Yemesqan Eddar* but consists of members from other ethnic groups who still constitute the minority. Other *Eddars* in the town are also named after their ethnic groups (e.g. *Yäsoddo Eddar*, *Yädobbi Eddar*, *Yäsebat Bet Eddar*) although membership is open to anybody who fulfils the criteria.

The Mesqan community in Yirgalem has also established the first Mesqan *Eddar* in 1960 to support each other in times of mourning. It was the first *Eddar* in Yirgalem known as *Yämesqan Hulägäbb Eddar* comprising members from different ethnic background and from both rural and urban areas.

As noted above, the *Eddar* in towns are more heterogeneous and formal with written bylaws. Consistent with its functions in other spheres, Amharic is instrumental as a medium of communication in urban *Eddar*.

#### **3.7.4 Ekk'ub – An Informal Financial Institution**

Alike *Eddar*, *Ekk'ub* is a common voluntary form of mutual support association established by members mainly based on business interests. It is an informal financial institution providing basic saving and credit services to members through rotational lottery based system involving regular compulsory saving and nominal service charge but with no interest except under certain circumstances.

Persons of common interest who closely know and trust each other may establish *ገገጃ* for various reasons; but as it is the case in most parts of Ethiopia, it serves the main purposes of mutual aid in matters related to creating access to saving and credit services by members. It may be established to meet specific financial needs of a person; for instance, to provide start up capital for one who desires to start a business or to repay loans or to recover from any kind of loss/bankruptcy or fill shortfalls in running businesses. Persons who do not have any immediate financial need but desire to strengthen their financial capital through regular 'compulsory' saving may also form it. Since it is a purely voluntary group it can be established any time, and dissolved, extended or re-established after all members have been served on rotational basis.

Number of *ገገጃ* members can be as small as five or as large as more than 30. Members can be from different gender, background, related to each other or not, etc. Neighborhood, group affiliation, common business interests, however, are crucial considerations in-group formation. The bottom line for membership is mutual trust, together with a confirmed ability and reliability for meeting saving and repayment requirements.

*ገገጃ* group has its own structure with appointed chairperson, clerk and cashier, and commonly agreed up on rules. Contribution to the kitty is often made on a weekly basis by all members; and based on the lottery drawn every week; the sum goes to the winner of the day. Members contribute the same weekly amount for one or more week to remunerate the staff. In certain cases, members may make regular weekly or monthly contributions and the money spent on something (e.g. feast) they all agree on at the end. In rural areas, contributions may be made in kind (for instance, in milk by members of women milk *ገገጃ*). *ገገጃ*s are generally strong groups with credible leadership, clearly defined and shared rules, and enforcement mechanisms. Where matters go beyond the mandate of the executive body and the members, such as in cases of desperate defaulters and death of debtor, *ገገጃ* lean on traditional institutions of arbitration and mutual aid.

In towns, *ጸkk'ub* rules are written down and kept under the custody of the chairperson with the registers. In towns, Amharic is used for writing. In rural areas, *ጸkk'ubs* of illiterate members do not have written bylaws and registers; but if they do, it is all done in Amharic. Where members are homogeneous, which is often the case in rural areas, Mesqan is used as a medium of communication at the scheduled meetings. Where members are from different linguistic background, which is often the case in towns, Amharic serves the purpose.

### **3.7.5 Work Parties: A Reciprocal Labor Cooperation**

There are different forms of short-term and longer-term labor cooperation in rural Mesqan. *Wänno* is the most common collective labor arrangement for coping with agricultural seasonal labor requirements. It is a reciprocal labor cooperation between households of similar status, which may be a more stable or *ad hoc* arrangement, but having no permanent organizational form or leadership.

*Wänno* is organized for specific agricultural activities or house construction by needy households through networks of friends and relatives. A work group may consist of small or large groups of people at a time depending on the amount of work at hand. Workers often come to the work site with their own implements, while the host provides them with food and drinks.

During performance of works, labor groups communicate and collectively sing work songs in Mesqan. The basic themes of the song genre focus on work ethos and is used to motivate, encourage and applaud strong work habits, benefits or rewards of hard work, etc and to pass remarks on non-participating passersby and poorly performing farmers.

### **3.7.6 Formal Community-Based Organizations**

There are also various groups established for self-help and development purposes. These include various types of cooperative societies established with the support of and registered by the Woreda Cooperative Office, and many other forms of

development groups established for promotion and management of basic health, educational, social, and extension services.

Cooperatives are most favored rural community organizations with adequate legal and policy support. The formation and strengthening of autonomous and efficient cooperatives, and their linkages with markets, is recognized by the government as one of the key strategies to improve agricultural marketing and rural services. Accordingly, there are many multipurpose service cooperatives in both rural and urban areas.

An important community-based development organization in Mesqan is the Mesqan Development Association, which is based in Addis Ababa, and registered as a society by the concerned government authority. Similarly, the development association in Yirgalem town, which was established in 2006, comprises about 700 members (family heads) to handle issues of Mesqan' concerns, safeguard the interests of members and protect the rights of Mesqan.

Alike the formal administrative structures and Woreda service providers (briefly described below), the different types of formal associations use Amharic in their written and verbal communications. Local Shengo 'committee', which constitute representatives from different Kebeles, discuss social matters in Mesqan. Recent developments show that there are conscious efforts on the part of local community representatives, to encourage and at times persuade in-group members to speak in Mesqan in such meetings.

### **3.7.7 Formal Judicial, Administrative, and Public Structures**

Since 1994, the government of Ethiopia has embarked on a decentralization process in a four-tier system of government. Below the federal government, the country is divided into nine Regional States and two city administrations. The Regional administrations are sub-divided into several zones, which are again sub-divided into Woredas. The Woredas are considered the key focal units of government. Recently, the Ethiopian government has taken further measures in the decentralization process, which devolves decision-making power to Woreda level. The Woreda

government consists of an elected council, a cabinet elected from among its members and sector offices which serve as executing agencies and contact points with the communities. Below the Woreda, communities are further sub-divided into smaller electoral units, known as Kebeles, to further enhance community participation in the formulation and administration of policy decisions at the grassroots level.

Elected members of the Woreda council are de jure the highest decision making body at the Woreda level. The Council appoints the chief Administrator who is mandated to nominate cabinet members subject to the approval by the Council. In turn, Woreda Administrative Council leads and manages service delivery organizations or sector executive offices. The Woreda governing bodies are established to ensure and enforce accountability of public service providers to the electorate.

Within the Woreda, communities are organized into Kebele administrations, formerly called Peasant Associations (PA). Kebeles have an elected leader and a large elected council of up to 100 members. The kebele executive committee represents the lowest level of the territorial administration. It consists of a chairperson, a vice-chair person, a secretary and other cabinet members. The committees are expected to serve as an extension of the higher-level administrative body. The position of the committee in general is characterized by conflicting loyalty, as they are accountable to the respective community, and at the same time, to the upper administrative bodies. These formal leaders belong to the local community and show downward accountability to a certain extent. Besides, they provide a formal linkage between local communities and the administration.

The Kebele social judges constitute the social court which is a sub-committee of the Kebele executive committee comprising three members. It is the lowest formal judicial body elected by the respective community. They usually cooperate closely with indigenous institutions of elders and community leaders who settle most cases at community level. There are also Kebele development committees, which consist of members from village-based development workers, and other groups that operate

at the Kebele level. Other government-sponsored structures include Kebele Youth and Women's Associations.

Women's Associations are formed for the collective organization of women for representing women's interests at Kebele and Woreda levels. All women of a Kebele are supposed to be members of a Kebele women's association. Similarly, youth associations represent the interests of the youth in the Kebele and serve for mobilizing the youth in matters of common concern and development activities.

At Kebele and Woreda levels, the working language is Amharic. All formal communications in writing as well as at meetings are conducted using Amharic. Unlike the customary institutions, the education system and the bureaucracy, therefore, facilitate bilingualism and language shift.

### **3.8 Music as an Expression of Culture and Ethnic Identity**

As a cultural practice, music plays an important role in Mesqan society. Music has intimately been related to the daily lives of Mesqan people and serves as an expression of religious affiliation, cultural manifestation, and entertainment. As Bohlman (2011) notes that ethnic music connects a community to a selected component of its past, but it does so to give meaning to the present. Thus, ethnic music should be understood as changing, not static. Music is a common practice during celebrations such as in weddings and religious occasions and has a special contribution in creating an opportunity for people to meet and socialize. Music also contributes its share to creating a sense of intimacy, as an energizer and entertainment when groups of people get together at *wänno* 'group work' such as in building huts, plowing, harvesting, and in other similar activities. The content of the songs comprise, among others, encouraging rhymes, appreciation for hard work and cooperation and criticizing others who fail to collaborate, particularly during harvesting.

Along with the cultural music of Mesqan, 'religious' music, i.e., *Mänzuma*, has also played a significant role in creating a bond among the followers. The religious music assumes different forms depending on religious (i.e. Christianity, Islam, etc.)

and denominational (different sects within the same religion) distinctiveness. Most of Muslim religious music in Mesqan is expressed through a combination of two or more languages (Mesqan, Arabic, Amharic, and Silt'e) within the same religious song. *Mänzumas* were composed and used to praise their religious leaders. Neither the lyrics nor the beat of these songs is in harmony with Mesqan traditional songs, and thus, they have not been viewed as a manifestation of Mesqan ethnic identity, rather they could serve as an expression of religious identity among the followers of local religious leaders. Unlike the Muslims, Orthodox Christian Mesqans solely use Amharic religious music during celebrations.

Until recently, Mesqan songs had not been broadcasted on the national mass media. This led the community to develop misconceptions about the language and dance that "Mesqan is not played on the radio or television because Mesqan song and dance is so aggressive and powerful that it breaks the electronic device." However, such kind of attitude has begun to fade away since 2007 when Mesqan music started to be recorded in cassettes, CDs and when the songs are broadcasted in regional and national radio. It is felt that these would contribute to publicity and recognition of Mesqan which is least known by other ethnic groups.

### **3.9 Summary**

In Mesqan, there are various types of voluntary community based customary institutions that are organized for self-help and mutual support, like *Eddar*, *Ekk'ub*, work groups, and development associations. These institutions are established by interested persons principally based on secondary relationship, such as neighborhood, friendship, business partnership, etc., but only rarely on primary ties (such as consanguinal or affinal relations).

*Eddar* is basically a burial association in which member families contribute to ensure proper burial for themselves and their relatives. Burial and mourning costs are met from a common fund and through in-kind contributions in the form of food and drink. In addition to providing decent burial, members' obligation also includes providing emotional, religious, etc. supports for the bereaved family. Most *Eddar* are

multipurpose serving purposes such as raising funds for emergencies and house construction beyond funeral services.

*Ēkk'ub* is a rotating savings and credit group providing access to sums of money for various purposes by their members. In these groups, members contribute an agreed sum on regular basis; and, either in rotation or at the end of the *Ēkk'ub*'s term, members can withdraw the sum which amounts the total saving a member would or has accumulated over the period of the *Ēkk'ub*. The duration of *Ēkk'ub* as well as the proceeds a member is entitled to receive at a time depends respectively on the size of the group (i.e. the number of members) and the amount he agrees to put into the kitty regularly.

Work parties are concerned with provision of organized work force for labor intensive, seasonal, and often-monotonous agricultural tasks and for house construction, which demand labor beyond the capacity of individual families. Work parties help address prevailing problem of labor shortage particularly for seasonal agricultural activities. Commonly, labor cooperation arrangements are loose arrangement with no permanent membership, leadership and structure, thus hardly offer an organizational framework for community developmental initiatives beyond addressing immediate labor needs.

Assessment of community level institutions shows that mutual support is the most important and significant feature of organizational association at community level, built upon relationships based on neighborhood, personal bonds, and kinship. Meeting economic needs and providing services is also a common feature of many mutual assistance groups. Another significant factor in how and why people organize in community-based organizations is the value of cooperation and collaboration as organized group of people is assumed to achieve more than individual. This is particular evident in the cases of *Ēddar*, *Ēkk'ub*, work parties and cooperative societies. Most of these institutions are well organized with elaborate rules, shared purposes, and credible leadership. Prominent features of customary institutions also include their success in improving access by community members to capital and labor, predominantly male leadership, except in women-only groups,

and exclusion of members of specialized occupational groups (such as the *Fuga*), who are at lower socio-economic hierarchy, from participation.

Alike the non-voluntary forms of judicial, sacred, and conflict resolution institutions, the different types of voluntary community-based organizations promote maintenance of the vernacular language especially in rural areas. This is so primarily because Mesqan is used as the principal medium of communication. The situation, however, is different in urban settings where groups are more heterogeneous and where Amharic is used for documentation and communication. Likewise, administrative and judicial functions in both urban and rural areas, the use of Mesqan is limited.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DESCRIPTION OF LANGUAGE USE**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines language use in Mesqan including the determinants age, gender, place of growth and residence, religion, education, and occupation and the extent to which these variables influence language use, proficiency, and bilingualism among Mesqan. It also examines generational comparison of mother tongue speakers of Mesqan to determine the status and trends in the use of Mesqan as a mother tongue in rural and urban settings. Furthermore, it identifies major domains of language use, which are categorized into sub-domains in order to determine the patterns of language use among Mesqan ethnolinguistic group. These constitute formal domains such as education, local government administration, court, mass media, etc., and informal domains including interpersonal interactions in the home, neighborhood, playgrounds, markets, shop; functional domains; cultural and social events; religion, and traditional belief systems. Finally, the socio-cultural context is discussed in view of the language use patterns identified through domain analysis; the chapter winds up with a summary of key findings and concluding remarks. Each section and sub-section presents the findings along with discussions.

### **4.2 Determinants of Language Use**

#### **4.2.1 Age**

Various studies conducted (Gal, 1979; Cheshire and Milroy, 1993; Carmen 2007) show that age is an important factor in determining language use. Comparison across age categories shows that Mesqan is the mother tongue of, on average, 83% of 15-24 years old; 90.8% of 25-49 years old; and, 92% of 50 and above years old respondents (see Table 14 below).

Table 14: Mother tongue of respondents by age categories

Mother tongue	Age Categories							
	15-24 Yrs		25-49 Yrs		50 & above Yrs		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Mesqan	171	83.0	407	90.8	92	92.0	670	88.8
Amharic	35	17.0	41	9.2	8	8.0	84	11.2
<b>Total</b>	206	100	448	100	100	100	754	100

Table 14 indicates a general tendency in which mother tongue speakers of Mesqan increases with an increase in age. Conversely, mother tongue speakers of Amharic are found to be the highest among the youngest age groups. Moreover, code mixing is a more common practice among youngsters than among elders. Youngsters tend to mix Amharic as they speak Mesqan, when they discuss with friends, and switch to Amharic much more frequently than elders do.

### 4.3 Place of Growth and Residence

The place where speakers grow up and reside is a determinant factor to language use, mother tongue acquisition, proficiency, bilingualism, and others. Data gathered from respondents show that acquisition of Mesqan as a mother tongue is largely determined by the place of growth and residence. Speakers who use Mesqan as a mother tongue are brought up in Butajira, the administrative capital of Mesqan Woreda, and, especially, in the rural Mesqan Woreda where Mesqan is the dominant language. The best example could be the case of Mesqan who reside in Yirgalem, i.e. mother tongue speakers of Mesqan in Yirgalem are those who were brought up in Mesqan Woreda and Butajira.

The place of residence also affects the language use of the speakers. As compared to Mesqan who reside in Mesqan Woreda and Butajira, those who reside in Yirgalem tend to switch to Amharic. This is attributed to the fact that they are detached from their Mesqan cultural setting where Mesqan is dominantly spoken. This

consequently exposes them to various social networks in which the use of Amharic or other languages becomes inevitable.

#### 4.3.1 Religion

The languages people prefer to use during prayers at individual level on the one hand, and in religious gatherings in a mosque, a church or other places at a group level on the other hand, correlates with the religion of the speakers.

In a study on sociology of language and religion, Omoniya and Fishman (2006:208) presented the link between language and religion in a continuum as 'weak' and 'strong': at the 'weak link' of the continuum, the emphasis is on personal salvation meaning that individuals have a responsibility to understand for themselves the Gospel message. The Gospel must, therefore, be communicated in a language the individual can understand. At the 'strong link', faith is seen as a community experience, which is led by the clergy. The clergy, as the mediator between people and God, has the responsibility for learning the 'language of God' – the sacred, ecclesiastical variety which the individual does not need to know in order to participate.

#### 4.3.2 Literacy

Comparison of literate and non-literate speakers in language use shows that there is correlation between educational status and linguistic behavior of respondents. There is a marked difference among literate and non-literate speakers in their use of Mesqan and Amharic languages in different domains of use such as at home, in shops, markets, etc.

Table 15: Language use in markets and shops among literate and non-literate respondents

Places	Language	Mesqan Woreda				Butajira			
		Literate		Non-literate		Literate		Non-literate	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%

Markets	Mesqan	238	72.1	185	81.1	63	59.4	23	88.4
	Amharic	92	27.9	43	18.9	43	40.6	3	11.6
Shops	Mesqan	183	55.4	148	65.4	48	45.2	17	65.4
	Amharic	147	44.6	80	34.6	58	54.8	9	34.6

As shown in Table 15 above, though Mesqan is used by the majority of the respondents, literate speakers tend to use Amharic more frequently than non-literate respondents do. In Butajira town and Mesqan Woreda, while 69% of the literate speakers use Mesqan and 31% use Amharic, 81.8% of the non-literate respondents use Mesqan, and 18.2% use Amharic in shops and markets.

Moreover, there is a significant variation in language use between literate and non-literate speakers in terms of code mixing. It is found out that literate respondents tend to mix Amharic while they speak in Mesqan more frequently than non-literate respondents do, on average 24.7% and 10.4%, respectively. The highest rate of code mixing, 75.4%, is reported by literate respondents in Yirgalem, which could mainly be attributed to their minimal knowledge of Mesqan.

#### 4.4 Mother Tongue Acquisition

Despite differences regarding acquisition of Mesqan as a mother tongue across places of residence and age groups, an overwhelming majority of the respondents, i.e. 87%, acquired Mesqan as a mother tongue, and Amharic among 10.8% of the total respondents. As Table 16 shows, comparison across places of residence depicts a clear disparity in that 94.3% in Mesqan Woreda, 82.9% in Butajira and only 43.2% in Yirgalem acquired Mesqan as a mother tongue.

Table 16: Mother tongue of respondents by place of residence

Mother tongue	Place of residence						Total	
	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira Town		Yirgalem Town			
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Mesqan	518	94.3	107	82.9	35	43.2	660	87.0

<b>Amharic</b>	21	3.8	19	14.7	42	51.9	82	10.8
<b>Silt'i</b>	7	1.3	2	1.6	1	1.2	10	1.3
<b>Dobi</b>	2	0.4	1	0.8	-		3	0.4
<b>Kistane</b>	1	0.2	-	-	3	3.7	4	0.5
<b>Total</b>	549	100	129	100	81	100	759	100

The majority of ethnic Mesqan, particularly youngsters, in Yirgalem acquired Amharic as a mother tongue. The findings in age groups show that 14.3% within 15-24 years of age and 81.0% of the respondents above 50 years of age acquired Mesqan as a mother tongue. Contrarily, 98.6% of the youngest age group in Mesqan Woreda, the highest figure compared to the other age groups, acquired Mesqan as a mother tongue. This could reinforce the generalization that place of residence correlates with mother tongue acquisition.

Mesqan is the mother tongue of the majority (89.3%) of grandmothers<sup>17</sup> of the respondents as presented in Table 17 below. Comparison of responses shows that the acquisition of Mesqan as a mother tongue is higher in Mesqan Woreda accounting for 91.8%, followed by 84.7% in Butajira town, and 80.0% in Yirgalem.

Table 17: Mother tongue of grandmothers by place of residence

Language	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira Town		Yirgalem Town		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
<b>Mesqan</b>	492	91.8	111	84.7	64	80.0	667	89.3
<b>Amharic</b>	7	1.3	5	3.8	3	3.7	15	2.0
<b>Silt'i</b>	22	4.1	7	5.3	6	7.5	35	4.7

<sup>17</sup> For the sake of convenience 'grandfather' was used to refer to the father of respondent's father, and 'grandmother' to the mother of the respondent's mother. Likewise, 'sibling/s' refers to the brother/s and sister/s of the respondents, as it does not bring about any differences in mother tongue acquisition.

<b>Dobi</b>	11	2.1	3	2.3	3	3.7	17	2.8
<b>Kistane</b>	4	0.7	5	3.8	4	5.0	13	1.7
<b>Total</b>	536	100	131	100	80	100	747	100

As illustrated above, few numbers of the grandmothers of the respondents acquired Silt'e, Dobbi, Amharic and Kistane as mother tongues, of which mother tongue speakers of Silt'e are relatively greater because of intermarriage with Silt'e women mainly due to religious affiliation of the great majority of Mesqan and Silt'e groups to Islam.

Table 18: Mother tongue of grandfathers by place of residence

Language	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira Town		Yirgalem Town		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
<b>Mesqan</b>	520	96.5	118	92.9	68	86.1	706	94.8
<b>Amharic</b>	9	1.7	1	0.8	2	2.5	12	1.6
<b>Silt'i</b>	5	0.9	8	6.3	3	3.8	16	2.1
<b>Dobi</b>	3	0.6	-	-	4	5.1	7	0.9
<b>Kistane</b>	2	0.4	-	-	2	2.5	4	0.5
<b>Total</b>	539	100	127	100	79	100	745	100

As compared to grandmothers, relatively more number of grandfathers (i.e. 94.8%) acquired Mesqan as a mother tongue. Though there are variations in all the settings, it becomes a bit more significant from Mesqan Woreda to Butajira and Yirgalem towns which could similarly be attributed to interethnic marriage.

Similarly, on average 95.2% of respondents indicate Mesqan and 1.7% Silt'e and 1.2% Amharic as the mother tongue of their fathers, as Table 19 shows below:

Table 19: Mother tongue of respondents' fathers by place of residence

Language	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira Town		Yirgalem Town		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Mesqan	538	97.5	122	93.8	68	81.9	728	95.2
Amharic	5	0.9	1	0.8	3	3.6	9	1.2
Silt'i	5	0.9	5		3	3.6	13	1.7
Dobi	1	0.2	1	0.8	2	2.4	4	0.5
Kistane	1	0.2	-	-	5	6.0	6	0.8
Other	2	0.3	1	0.8	2	2.4	5	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>552</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>765</b>	<b>100</b>

Asked about their mothers, 94.3% of the respondents mention Mesqan 2.1%, Silt'i and 1.6% Amharic as their mother tongues. The number of Mesqan mother tongue speakers among respondents' mothers and fathers does not show considerable gap, particularly in Mesqan Woreda.

Table 20: Mother tongue of respondents' mothers by place of residence

Language	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira Town		Yirgalem Town		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Mesqan	537	97.1	114	87.0	72	86.7	723	94.3
Amharic	2	0.4	5	3.8	5	6.0	12	1.6
Silt'i	7	1.2	8	6.1	1	1.2	16	2.1
Kistane	-		4	3.1	3	3.6	7	0.9
Dobi	2	0.4	-	-	2	2.4	4	0.5
Other	5	0.9	-	-	-	-	5	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>553</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>767</b>	<b>100</b>

On average 89.1% of respondents' siblings speak Mesqan as a mother tongue. Comparison within place of residence shows that while 94.8% of respondents in

Mesqan Woreda and Butajira town mention that their siblings are Mesqan mother tongue speakers, only 42.8% of the same is reported in Yirgalem, as shown in Table 21 below.

Table 21: Mother tongue of respondents' siblings by place of residence

	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira town		Yirgalem		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
<b>Mesqan</b>	537	96.2	115	88.5	36	42.8	688	89.1
<b>Amharic</b>	10	1.8	9	6.9	45	53.6	64	8.3
<b>Other</b>	11	2.0	6	4.6	3	3.6	20	2.6
<b>Total</b>	558	100	130	100	84	100	772	100

Consistent with the data on mother tongue of the respondents in Yirgalem (Table 16), Amharic is the mother tongue of 53.6% of the respondents' siblings who are ethnic Mesqan. The number of speakers of Amharic shows a dramatic increase among respondents' children in Butajira and Yirgalem towns as presented in Table 22 below.

Table 22: Mother tongue of respondents' children by place of residence

	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira town		Yirgalem		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
<b>Mesqan</b>	342	98.3	55	77.5	2	4.8	399	86.0
<b>Amharic</b>	6	1.7	16	22.5	40	95.2	62	13.0
<b>Total</b>	346	100	71	100	42	100	461	100-

There is a huge gap between mother tongue speakers of Mesqan and Amharic among respondents' children in the rural and urban settings, particularly between Mesqan Woreda and Yirgalem. Despite the fact that 71% of the parents speak Mesqan as their first language in Yirgalem, 95% of respondents' children have acquired Amharic as a mother tongue.

Generational comparison of mother tongue speakers, in general, shows that Mesqan has been used by an average of 90.1% of all the generations. However, as shown below, there is a marked difference in mother tongue speakers of Amharic among Mesqan Woreda, Butajira, and Yirgalem towns and across the older and the new generation.

Table 23: Mother tongue in different generations by place of residence

	Mesqan Woreda				Butajira Town				Yirgalem Town				Total			
	Mesqan		Amharic		Mesqan		Amharic		Mesqan		Amharic		Mesqan		Amharic	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
<b>Grand father</b>	520	96.5	9	1.7	118	92.9	1	0.8	68	86.1	2	2.5	706	94.8	12	1.6
<b>Grand mom</b>	492	91.8	7	1.3	111	84.7	5	3.8	64	80.0	3	3.7	667	89.3	15	2.0
<b>Father</b>	538	97.5	5	0.9	122	93.8	1	0.8	68	81.9	3	3.6	728	95.2	9	1.2
<b>Mother</b>	537	97.1	2	0.4	114	87.0	5	3.8	72	86.7	5	6.0	723	94.3	12	1.6
<b>Siblings</b>	537	96.2	10	1.8	115	88.5	9	6.9	36	42.8	45	53.6	688	89.1	64	8.3
<b>Respondent</b>	518	94.3	21	3.8	107	82.9	19	14.7	35	43.2	42	51.8	660	87.0	82	10.8
<b>Children</b>	342	97.7	6	1.7	55	77.5	16	22.5	2	4.8	40	95.2	399	86.0	62	13

There is a gradual increase in Amharic mother tongue speakers among the younger generation. Except in Mesqan Woreda where the generational transfer of Mesqan as a mother tongue is still intact (97.7 % among children), the number of children who speak Mesqan as a mother tongue appears to be decreasing and mother tongue speakers of Amharic to be increasing over time in Butajira i.e. 22.5% of respondents' children. Information gathered from key informants show that the number of Amharic mother tongue speakers could even be greater.

The situation in Yirgalem depicts a completely different picture. Almost all Mesqan children in Yirgalem are mother tongue speakers of Amharic. There is a sharp turn from Mesqan to Amharic, i.e. from on average 4.8% among mothers and fathers to 95% of children who are reported to be mother tongue speakers of Amharic. Of

course, it is observed that most children and the young born and brought up in Yirgalem have a passive knowledge of Mesqan, in most cases restricted to comprehension. Hence, it appears to be difficult to consider Mesqan as their second language. It could be possible to generalize that generational transfer of Mesqan is very loose among Mesqan residing in Yirgalem. Apart from the restricted domains of usage of Mesqan language, minimal or lack of conscious efforts of parents to teach Mesqan to their children within the home domain has contributed to the current subordinate status of Mesqan among the younger generation in Yirgalem.

The findings in general show that place of growth appears to be the dominant factor in mother tongue acquisition. This is attested by the fact that respondents who speak Mesqan as a mother tongue are those who were brought up in Mesqan Woreda.

#### **4.5 Bilingualism**

Data from respondents indicate that, on average, 34.2% of their grandfathers and grandmothers; 62.2% of their fathers and mothers; and, 68.4% of siblings are bilinguals in Mesqan and Amharic. Other languages such as Silt'e, Kistane, Dobbi, Sidama, etc. are mentioned but are found to be insignificant. The highest number, constituting on average 52.7% of bilingual grandfathers and grandmothers, is mentioned in Yirgalem. This could be attributed to their involvement in trade, military service, and permanent residence far from their homeland.

Table 24: Inter-generational comparison of bilinguals by place of residence

	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira		Yirgalem		Total	%
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
<b>Grandfather</b>	179	33.1	33	26.2	36	45.6	248	33.2
<b>Grandmother</b>	190	35.3	25	19.1	49	59.8	264	35.1
<b>Father</b>	338	60.7	93	71.0	69	82.1	500	64.7
<b>Mother</b>	313	56.1	82	62.6	69	80.2	464	59.8
<b>Siblings</b>	374	67.4	95	73.0	59	68.8	528	68.4

As compared to the grandfathers and grandmothers, the number of Mesqan-Amharic bilinguals almost doubles, i.e., on average 62.2%, among the mothers and fathers of respondents. The highest number of bilingual fathers and mothers of respondents are reported in Yirgalem, constituting 81.1% on average.

On average, 68.4% of the respondents mention that their siblings are bilinguals in Mesqan and Amharic. As shown in Table 24 above, in Yirgalem, the number of bilingual siblings (68.8%) is less than that of the number of bilingual fathers and mothers (on average 81.1%). This is attributed to the fact that Amharic is the mother tongue of 53.6% (see Table 21) of the respondents' siblings in Yirgalem. Hence, while it is very likely for the Mesqan mother tongue speakers to be bilingual in Amharic, it appears very unlikely for Amharic mother tongue speakers to be bilingual in Mesqan.

In an introductory note Cohen (2008) mentions that, "In rural areas levels of bilingualism and multilingualism amongst boys and men are much higher than amongst girls and women, as males travel more widely and need to use languages of wider communication. This reflects the economic uses of languages that lead to opportunities, including trade, transport sector employment, and migrant labour that are inherently linked to gender."

As noted in the Chapter 1, Amharic is the official language of the Gurage Zone, including the Mesqan Woreda, and it is used as a language of communication in

formal and informal domains particularly in towns. As Mesqan is not a written language, literate Mesqan use the Ethiopic script and Amharic for writing and reading purposes. The association is intrinsically bound with Amharic that there is no effort to write anything in Mesqan using the Ethiopic script. Hence, any act of writing and reading in the community presuppose use of Amharic. Among other factors, this could contribute its share to the proficiency of Amharic bilinguals in the community.

The degree of bilingualism in Mesqan and Amharic exhibits differences between rural and urban settings, and between Butajira and Yirgalem towns. As shown in Table 25 below, the number of respondents' children who are bilingual in Amharic is less in Mesqan Woreda compared to an average of 92.2% in Butajira and Yirgalem towns.

Table 25: Number of children who speak Amharic by place of residence

Do your children speak Amharic?	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira town		Yirgalem town		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Yes	242	76.5	65	91.7	40	95.2	346	85.2
No	104	23.5	6	8.3	2	4.8	60	14.8
<b>Total</b>	346	100	71	100	42	100	406	100

The fact that there are a significant majority of children (76.5%) who speak Amharic in Mesqan Woreda is indicative of the widespread use of Amharic in the rural areas. Only 23.5% of the respondents' children are monolinguals in Mesqan. Bilingual children in the rural Mesqan Woreda acquire Mesqan as a mother tongue and then learn Amharic when they reach school age in school in a process known as sequential bilingualism. This is consistent with the data gathered from interviews with school directors and teachers in Mesqan Woreda elementary schools that the children generally are monolinguals in Mesqan when they begin school. They learn Amharic during the first years in school.

Table 26: Children's knowledge of Amharic before school age by place of residence

<i>Did the children speak Amharic before they reached school age?</i>	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira town		Yirgalem town		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Yes	66	27.3	33	50.8	40	100.0	139	40.1
No	176	72.7	32	49.2	-	-	208	59.9
<b>Total</b>	242	100	65	100	40	100	347	100

Almost all children born and brought up in Yirgalem town are monolingual in Amharic. On the other hand, children in Butajira town can speak Mesqan as a mother tongue; and, almost half of the children are reported to speak Amharic even before they reached school age.

The bilinguals in Mesqan Woreda and Butajira speak highly Mesqan-accented Amharic influenced by their mother tongue. Mesqan is neither the mother tongue nor the second language of almost all Mesqan children in Yirgalem.

To sum up, the findings in general show the declining rate of monolinguals in Mesqan and the growing influence of Amharic in the community. Among other factors, the fact that the rural speech community are located in or near Butajira town where the members would have contact with speakers of other languages, and engagement in trade and frequent mobility, on the one hand, and the wider use of Amharic in informal and formal domains such as in education and administration on the other, has contributed to the progressive increase in Mesqan-Amharic bilinguals. The Literacy Campaign,<sup>18</sup> which was conducted in Amharic in Mesqan

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<sup>18</sup> The National Literacy Campaign was launched in early 1975 throughout Ethiopia during the Derg regime. The Socialist government organized the campaign in rounds, which began in urban centers and spread outward to the remote parts of the country up to round 12. Officials originally conducted the literacy training in five languages: Amharic, Oromo, Tigrinya, Wolaita, and Somali. The number of languages was later extended to fifteen, which represented about 93 percent of the population.

Woreda, could also have an impact in the increasing number of Amharic speakers. In line with the use of Amharic and potential pattern of language shift among the Gurage, Cohen (2008:7) mentions, “There is a pronounced pattern of language shift to Amharic in urban areas. Speakers of other Semitic languages may benefit from similarities to Amharic, including the use of the same script and a high percentage of cognates. However, some Semitic speakers, particularly Gurages, demonstrate a profound pattern of shifting to Amharic, especially since Amharic is used as the official language of the Gurage Zone and as the lingua franca between members of the Gurage ethnolinguistic groups.”

#### 4.6 Perceived Proficiency

The findings show that on average 89.9% speak Mesqan as a first language, and 10.1% use Amharic. Comparison of responses within place of residence indicates that 98.7% in Mesqan Woreda, 87.2% in Butajira, and 34.1% in Yirgalem believe that Mesqan is spoken most as a first language.

Table 27: First language which most Mesqan speak

Language	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira town		Yirgalem town		Total	
	<i>Freq.</i>	%	<i>Freq.</i>	%	<i>Freq.</i>	%	<i>Freq.</i>	%
<b>Mesqan</b>	536	98.7	109	87.2	28	34.1	673	89.9
<b>Amharic</b>	6	1.3	16	12.8	54	65.9	76	10.1
<b>Total</b>	542	100	125	100	82	100	749	100

However, the data in Table 27 above regarding the current use in Butajira and Yirgalem towns does not seem to be consistent with the findings from observation and discussion with informants. It is observed that except in Mesqan Woreda, most Mesqan in the towns, particularly in Yirgalem, prefer to use Amharic in their day-to-day interactions. This could simply be a reflection of what they wish to happen than is the reality on the ground.

The perceived proficiency<sup>19</sup> of the young in speaking Mesqan is believed to be high among 96.6% of the respondents in Mesqan Woreda, and only 20.2% regard the young as proficient in Yirgalem town, as shown in Table 28 below.

Table 28: Perceived proficiency of the young in Mesqan

Are the young proficient in Mesqan?	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira town		Yirgalem town		Total	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	534	96.6	98	76.6	17	20.2	649	84.8
No	19	3.4	30	23.4	67	79.8	116	15.2
<b>Total</b>	553	100	118	100	84	100	765	100

As Mesqan is the mother tongue of the great majority in the rural setting and in Butajira town, one could expect the young to have a high level of proficiency. Conversely, corresponding to lack of access to Mesqan language, the young in Yirgalem are the least proficient in Mesqan. The perceived proficiency in Mesqan of the young in Yirgalem seems to be exaggerated and not consistent with other sets of data from interviews and observation.

Comparison of the degree of proficiency of Mesqan among elders and youngsters shows that elders do have a better command of Mesqan than youngsters do. However, the level of proficiency significantly widens as one moves from the rural to the urban settings.

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<sup>19</sup> The findings and the discussion on proficiency are based on attitudes of the respondents; i.e., they are not based on a proficiency test.

Table 29: Proficiency in Mesqan among elders and youngsters

<i>Who is most proficient in Mesqan?</i>	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira town		Yirgalem town		Total	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Elders</b>	250	45.5	85	65.9	78	96.3	413	54.4
<b>Youngsters</b>	150	27.3	18	14	1	1.2	169	22.3
<b>Difficult to compare</b>	149	27.2	26	20.1	2	2.5	177	23.3
<b>Total</b>	549	100	129	100	81	100	759	100

In Mesqan Woreda, the gap in proficiency is so close that it reached a level where comparison appeared to be difficult. There exists a huge variation in proficiency in Butajira town owing to a number of factors such as high intensity of contact with other ethnolinguistic groups and influence of Amharic. In Yirgalem, the comparison is not only in their level of proficiency but also in their knowledge of the language, i.e. between those who can speak Mesqan (elders) and those who cannot (youngsters).

Table 30: Proficiency in Mesqan between the sexes by place of residence

<i>Who are most proficient in Mesqan?</i>	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira town		Yirgalem town		Total	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Women</b>	60	11.1	42	33.3	43	53.1	145	19.2
<b>Men</b>	30	5.5	19	15.1	13	16.0	62	8.3
<b>Difficult to compare</b>	451	83.4	65	51.6	25	30.9	541	72.3
<b>Total</b>	541	100	126	100	81	100	748	100

Similarly, 72.3% of the respondents found it is difficult to compare the proficiency level of the sexes in all settings, particularly in Mesqan Woreda where Mesqan is dominantly spoken. Comparison within place of residence indicates that women are considered more proficient in Mesqan than men, i.e., on average 19.2% and 8.3%,

respectively. This could be due to the fact that while men, in most cases bread winners of the family, travel to various places for work and interact with non-Mesqan people through Amharic, women largely remain at home engaged with household chores. This could give them an opportunity to communicate in their own language with other family members and relatives at home and retain their language better.

As shown in Table 31 below, proficiency among literate and non-literate speakers of Mesqan is regarded to be difficult by the majority of respondents in general. As in the cases of age and sex, exposure to education is not a determining factor for 63.7% of the respondents in Mesqan Woreda in comparing proficiency levels of literates and non-literates.

Table 31: Proficiency in Mesqan among literate and non-literate people

<i>Who speaks Mesqan proficiently, literate or non-literate?</i>	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira town		Yirgalem town		Total	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Literate</b>	10	1.8	10	7.9	5	6.3	25	3.3
<b>Non-literate</b>	188	34.4	70	55.6	53	67.1	311	41.4
<b>Difficult to compare</b>	348	63.7	46	36.5	21	26.6	415	55.2
<b>Total</b>	546	100	126	100	79	100	751	100

In Butajira and Yirgalem towns, on the other hand, on average 60% of the respondents consider the non-literate as proficient speakers of Mesqan as compared to the literate ones. One possible reason could be association of ‘the non-literate’ with ‘rural origin’. This appears to be consistent with the findings discussed under Place of Growth and Residence (Chapter 4, Section 4.2.2) in which the majority of non-literate respondents in Yirgalem and Butajira towns are brought up in the rural Mesqan Woreda and speak Mesqan as a mother tongue. Owing to exposure to Amharic as a medium of instruction, school attendance in urban areas, long stay out of their locality, the tendency to be identified as ‘modern’, and frequent interaction

with people from different ethnic backgrounds, among others, the literate incline to use Amharic in most situations, and hence these factors contribute to their low level of proficiency in Mesqan as compared to the non-literate.

Location is another important factor in determining proficiency of speakers. As shown in Table 32, people who live in rural areas of Mesqan Woreda are regarded by 63.7% of the respondents as proficient as compared to those in the urban areas.

Table 32: Proficiency in Mesqan among urban and rural dwellers

<i>Who speaks Mesqan proficiently, urban or rural dwellers?</i>	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira town		Yirgalem town		Total	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Urban</b>	11	2.0	4	3.2	3	4.2	18	2.4
<b>Rural</b>	314	58.1	95	75.4	61	85.9	470	63.7
<b>Difficult to compare</b>	215	39.8	27	21.4	7	9.9	249	33.7
<b>Total</b>	540	100	126	100	71	100	737	

Though with varying degrees of responses, the majority of the respondents in the three settings believe rural residents as more proficient. On average 80.6% in Butajira and Yirgalem towns indicate that rural people have high level of proficiency in Mesqan. This being obvious, one needs to refrain from considering all urban areas alike. Mesqan who were brought up and still reside in Yirgalem town could not be regarded as being equally proficient in Mesqan as those based in Butajira town.

To sum up, based on responses to general inquiries regarding levels of proficiency in Mesqan, the findings show varying levels depending on age, sex, educational status, and location. Generally speaking, elders are said to have higher levels of proficiency than youngsters and the gap increases as one moves from Mesqan Woreda to Butajira and to Yirgalem where it is significantly wider. Despite the fact that respondents in Mesqan Woreda found it difficult to compare proficiency between the sexes and education status, generally women are considered to be more

proficient than men, and non-literate people are said to have higher levels of proficiency than the literate. Rural people are also reported to be more proficient than people who live in towns.

#### **4.7 Domains of Language Use**

This section focuses on finding out domains of language use in Mesqan ethnolinguistic group. Domain analysis proposed by Fishman (1972) is used as a tool to identify the domains in which Mesqan is used. Each relevant domain is broken down into variable sub-domains, and the cumulative choices speakers use in each sub-domain are used to identify the general language use situation and factors which contribute to the choice for each domain. These include: home; neighbourhood; cultural events such as marriage, funeral, births, naming ceremonies, harvest, etc., social events such as work parties, cultural games, traditional adjudication, etc.; religion; business; and, formal education; court; governmental offices; etc.

##### **4.7.1 Language Use in the Home Domain**

Mesqan is reported to be predominantly used at home to communicate with the nuclear family in Mesqan Woreda and Butajira town. As shown in Table 33 below, however, there are variations in the degree of use in the rural and the urban areas. Almost all respondents (99.3%) in the rural areas of Mesqan Woreda and 81.4% in Butajira town mention that Mesqan is used most often in the day-to-day interactions of family members at home. The fact that only 18.6% use Amharic in Butajira town could indicate the subordinate function it plays in the home domain. Contrarily, 85.9% of the respondents in Yirgalem town report that family members most often use Amharic at home. As a result, most children and youngsters who have been brought up in Yirgalem town have the least opportunity to learn Mesqan as a second language.

Table 33: Language family members most often use at home by place of residence

	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira town		Yirgalem		Total	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Mesqan</b>	552	99.3%	105	81.4%	12	14.1%	669	86.9%
<b>Amharic</b>	4	0.7%	24	18.6%	73	85.9%	101	13.1%
<b>Total</b>	556	100	129	100	85	100	770	100

Irrespective of rural and urban settings, 86.9% of the respondents mention that their parents prefer to communicate in Mesqan when they are alone at home. In Yirgalem, parents do not seem to use Mesqan in casual conversations in the home domain.

Table 34: Language respondents' parents and siblings use most often when they are alone at home

	<i>Language</i>	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira town		Yirgalem town		Total	
		<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Parents</b>	Mesqan	549	99.3	128	99.2	56	68.3	733	95.9
	Amharic	4	0.7	1	0.8	26	31.7	31	4.1
<b>Siblings</b>	Mesqan	535	97.4	106	85.5	28	34.6	669	88.7
	Amharic	14	2.6	18	14.5	53	65.4	85	11.3

On average 99.2% of the respondents in Mesqan Woreda and Butajira town indicate that their siblings use Mesqan when they are alone at home. However, in Yirgalem, the majority (65.4%) of the respondents mention that their siblings use Amharic, depicting a reversed picture as compared to what the parents use when they are alone, i.e. 68.3% Mesqan. Both the parents and siblings of respondents, who speak Mesqan, whether they live in Yirgalem or in other places, are those who were brought up in Mesqan Woreda or in Butajira town.

Table 35: Language children often use at home by place of residence

	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira town		Yirgalem town		Total	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Mesqan</b>	492	88.3	69	53.9	4	4.9	565	73.7
<b>Amharic</b>	65	11.7	59	46.1	78	95.1	202	26.3
<b>Total</b>	557	100	128	100	82	100	767	100

On the other hand, 46.1% of respondents in Butajira town and 95.1% in Yirgalem mention that children most often prefer to use Amharic at home. In Mesqan Woreda, 88.3% of the respondents indicate that children use Mesqan at home.

Table 36: Language children in the village/town use on the playground

	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira		Yirgalem		Total	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Mesqan</b>	533	95.7	49	38.3	3	3.6	585	76.1
<b>Amharic</b>	24	4.3	79	61.7	81	96.4	184	23.9
<b>Total</b>	557	100	128	100	84	100	769	100

As shown in Table 36 above, 95.7% of the respondents mention that children in the rural areas (Mesqan Woreda) often use Mesqan on the playground. Considering the reported cases of the dominant degree of use of Mesqan at home among family members in the rural areas, a larger number of children's use of Mesqan on the playground (95.7%) than they do at home (88.3%). This could be attributed to exogamous marriage, presence of educated adults in the family, and/or high frequency of contact with urban areas.

Moreover, 96.4% of respondents in Yirgalem town and 61.7% in Butajira town indicate children's use of Amharic on the playgrounds. Compared to their use of Mesqan in the home domain, most children in Butajira town resort to Amharic despite the fact that 77.4% of them (Refer to Table 22) acquired Mesqan as a

mother tongue. In Yirgalem, as children cannot speak Mesqan, using Amharic is not a matter of choice, be it at home or when they play.

Table 37: Language respondents use with family members

Used with	Language	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira		Yirgalem		Total	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Your mother	Mesqan	550	99.8	109	90.8	41	51.9	700	93.3
	Amharic	1	0.2	11	9.2	38	48.1	50	6.7
Your father	Mesqan	548	99.3	118	92.9	40	49.4	706	92.9
	Amharic	4	0.7	9	7.1	41	50.6	54	7.1
Your wife/husband	Mesqan	379	98.4	73	84.0	19	39.4	471	90.6
	Amharic	6	1.6	14	16.0	29	57.6	49	9.4
Your siblings	Mesqan	535	97.6	103	83.0	29	35.4	667	88.5
	Amharic	13	2.4	21	17.0	53	64.6	87	11.5
Children	Mesqan	415	97.4	64	74.4	6	9.4	485	84.2
	Amharic	11	2.6	22	25.6	58	90.6	91	15.8

Regarding which language respondents mostly use with family members and relatives, on average 90% of the respondents mention that they use Mesqan. As shown in Table 34 above, while there is a general tendency to use Mesqan when they speak with their parents, there is a gradual decrease in the degree of use of Mesqan as we move down to the next generation. This appears to have a pronounced gap in Yirgalem, i.e., on average 50.6% use Mesqan with parents and only 9.4% use it with children at home.

In a situation where husband and wife speak different languages, on average 80.1% of respondents indicate that the ethnic language of the husband is used in the family. This happens to be a common practice in the rural Mesqan Woreda (90.6%), followed by Butajira town as pointed out by 58.2% of the respondents. Conversely, the majority (67.1%) in Yirgalem point out that families comprising non-Mesqan wife or husband prefer to use Amharic.

Table 38: Language use at home with non-Mesqan wife/husband

Language in use	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira		Yirgalem		Total	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
Language of husband	490	90.6	57	58.2	23	27.1	570	80.1
Language of wife	5	0.9	15	15.3	5	5.9	25	3.5
Amharic	34	6.3	25	25.5	57	67.1	116	16.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>100</b>

In a situation where the language of the husband is not used in the home domain, most families resort to Amharic instead of using the language of the wives. Language of the wife is least mentioned in all the settings. This could be attributed to the cultural practice, particularly in the rural Mesqan Woreda, which allows for a patrilocal marriage in which the husband and wife live where the husband was brought up. Hudson (1980:8) notes: “In patrilocal marriage, there is a rule that the wife should not only live where the husband was brought up, but should also use his language in speaking to their children (a custom that might be called ‘patrilocal marriage’). The linguistic consequence of this rule is that a child’s mother does not teach her own language.” Owing to the influence of the norm, which imposes use of the husband’s mother tongue at home, on the one hand, and her exposure to the ethnic language dominantly spoken in the area, on the other, the wife and her children would speak the ethnic language. Moreover, as a patrilineal society, the fact that children from such marriage are identified through their fathers’ line of descent could also push them to incline to their fathers’ language as a marker of their identity.

#### 4.7.2 Language Use with Non-Mesqan Speakers

Assessment of language use in interactions with non-Mesqan speakers of Silt’i, Kistane, Dobbi, Muher, and Libido which were selected based on their frequency of interaction and geographic proximity, showed that on average 83.9% of the respondents use Amharic when they meet with non-Mesqan speakers in general. As

one could expect, on average 90% use Amharic in Butajira and Yirgalem towns, 71.8% of the respondents in the rural Mesqan Woreda use Amharic. While this variation could be justified in terms of the widespread use of Amharic in the towns compared to the rural areas, the fact that Amharic is used by such high percentage of respondents in the Mesqan Woreda could also show the extent of its spread deep into the rural areas. Comparison in language use of respondents with different non-Mesqan language speakers shows that on average 11.5% in Butajira town and Mesqan Woreda use Silt'e with Silt'e<sup>20</sup> speakers who cannot speak Mesqan, and in Yirgalem, 17.5% use Kistane and 18.3% use Sidama with Kistane and Sidama speakers, respectively.

On the other hand, 58.6% of respondents in Mesqan Woreda indicate that they use Mesqan with ethnic Mesqan who cannot speak the language on account of their perception that '*any Mesqan has to speak his/her language*'. However, this could not be considered any more than a desire as it does not seem to be supported by practical use on the ground.

It is also gathered from interviews in Butajira and Mesqan Woreda that in a situation where respondents communicate with non-Mesqan language speakers, particularly from neighboring ethnic groups such as Libido, Kistane (Kistane), Dobbi, and Silt'e in most cases they prefer to use Amharic even if they can speak the respective languages. They reason out that '*If they cannot speak my ethnic language, why should I use their language?*' as an expression of pride with their ethnic language. In such a multilingual context where in-group ethnolinguistic sentiments are evolving, Amharic is not only considered an ideal choice to facilitate inter-group communication but also believed to play a unifying role between linguistically

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<sup>20</sup> So far, there is no comprehensive study on the degree of mutual intelligibility between Mesqan and Silt'e (East Gurage language) speakers. It is difficult to make any generalizations based on the findings from Gutt (1980:77). He admits in the same article that '*some of the results obtained for Ennemor, Mesqan and Amharic are not reliable*' and mentions that the intelligibility scores of the Kistane (Soddo) speakers on Mesqan (64%) appears to be high as compared to the Silt'e speakers (34%) on Mesqan.

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heterogeneous Gurage ethnolinguistic groups in contact particularly in Butajira and Mesqan Woreda.

In general, Mesqan is predominantly used as a first language in the home domain in Butajira and Mesqan Woreda, but not in Yirgalem town. Moreover, Amharic has been used as the second most preferred language among Mesqan residing particularly in Butajira. Despite differences identified in the degree of use of Amharic in rural and urban settings, it is worth noting that Amharic has become a lingua franca among speakers of languages within the Gurage cluster. This could be due to the fact that Amharic is the official language of education and administration in the Gurage Zone in which Mesqan Woreda is a part.

#### **4.7.3 Language Use in Interpersonal Domains**

Regarding language/s most often in use with strangers, the majority of respondents (on average 57.8%) mention Amharic. In the towns, on average 81.2% state that they speak in Amharic, while 18.8% use Mesqan. In the rural setting, 51% the respondents speak in Mesqan if they meet him/her in their localities and when they are not familiar with the person but they when they assume that the stranger is a non-Mesqan speaker or government or NGO worker, most of them switch to Amharic. Contrarily, as it is customary to find strangers in the urban areas, the first choice is Amharic. This implies that their choice of language with strangers depends on the location and assumed status of the stranger.

Table 39: Language use in interpersonal domains by place of residence

Used with		Mesqan Woreda		Butajira		Yirgalem		Total	
		<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Strangers</b>	Mesqan	278	51.0	35	27.6	4	5.0	317	42.2
	Amharic	267	49.0	92	72.4	76	95.0	435	57.8
<b>Neighbours</b>	Mesqan	537	97.6	86	68.8	15	17.9	638	84.1
	Amharic	13	2.4	39	31.2	69	81.1	121	15.9
<b>Elders</b>	Mesqan	525	95.5	112	87.5	9	11.1	646	85.2
	Amharic	24	4.5	16	12.5	72	88.9	112	14.8

The findings also show that the majority, on average 84.7%, use Mesqan when they communicate with their neighbors and elders. A comparison of the urban and rural settings show that while Mesqan is used by the overwhelming majority, on average 96.5%, in Mesqan Woreda, and 78.6% in Butajira town use Mesqan with neighbors and elders, it is only used by 14.6% in Yirgalem. This could suggest that Amharic appears to be the most preferred language often used for interpersonal interactions with in-group and out-group members in Yirgalem town.

#### 4.7.4 Language Use in Emotional Reactions

The language use of respondents in emotional states such as anger, cursing, insulting and praising shows that the majority, on average 81.9% use Mesqan and 18.1% use Amharic. As shown in Table 40 below, the vast majority in Mesqan Woreda, on average 95.4%, use Mesqan in emotional states; and, the least, 15.7%, in Yirgalem use Mesqan.

Table 40: Language use in emotional reactions by place of residence

		Mesqan Woreda		Butajira town		Yirgalem town		Total	
		<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Angry</b>	Mesqan	447	96.3	84	66.7	10	12.0	541	80.4
	Amharic	17	3.4	42	33.3	73	88.0	132	19.6
<b>Cursing</b>	Mesqan	444	98.2	77	77.8	17	21.8	538	85.9
	Amharic	6	1.3	21	21.2	61	78.2	88	14.1
<b>Insulting</b>	Mesqan	436	95.4	87	72.7	12	15.4	535	81.4
	Amharic	21	4.6	35	27.3	66	84.6	122	18.6
<b>Praising</b>	Mesqan	423	91.4	80	72.1	11	13.9	514	78.8
	Amharic	40	8.6	30	27.9	68	86.1	138	21.1

Comparison of the figures in Table 40 above depicts that in all the settings use of Mesqan in cursing<sup>21</sup> constitutes relatively the highest percentage, except in Yirgalem. Jay (2000: 19-20) notes that cursing is intrinsically associated with and dependent on the socio-cultural context in which the language operates. Bobda & Mbouya (2005:2125) state that unless the curse or exclamation word is a borrowed term which has become part of the speaker's code, people tend to use the languages that are really private and internal to them.

#### 4.7.5 Language Use in Functional Domains

As in the other domains of language use, Mesqan is dominantly used in Mesqan Woreda in counting and secret talk, followed by Butajira town. As shown below, though Mesqan is dominantly used in counting, there is also a relatively higher percentage in Butajira town and Mesqan Woreda compared to the use of Amharic in the other situations.

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<sup>21</sup> Cursing, in this study, refers to "... the utterance of emotionally powerful, offensive words, or emotionally powerful expressions that are understood as insults" (Jay, 2000:26).

Table 41: Language use in functional domains

		Mesqan Woreda		Butajira town		Yirgalem town		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Counting</b>	Mesqan	422	90.7	78	61.9	5	6.0	505	74.9
	Amharic	43	9.3	48	38.1	78	94.0	169	25.1
<b>Secret talk</b>	Mesqan	435	95.2	103	83.1	42	51.9	580	87.7
	Amharic	22	4.8	21	16.9	38	48.1	81	12.3

Comparison of the data in Table 41 shows that there is a considerable increase in the use of Mesqan for secret talk in Butajira and Yirgalem towns. As secret talk in most cases presumes presence of others who do not speak the language, the ethnically – mixed urban areas necessitate switching to Mesqan whenever the situation calls for it. In Yirgalem, the only domain where use of Mesqan assumes relatively a dominant status is in secret talk. In all other domains, Amharic appears to be the primary language in informal domains including the home. This could strengthen the generalization that Mesqan assumes a subordinate status in Yirgalem and it is being reduced to secret talks among adults.

#### 4.7.6 Language Use in Business Domain

In order to identify the language use situation in business domain, respondents were asked the language/s they most often use in markets and shops. In Butajira town and Mesqan Woreda, on average, 57.0% indicate that they use Mesqan and 43% use Amharic in shops. However, the majority, 76.0% in Mesqan Woreda, and 65.4% in Butajira use Mesqan in local markets. The variation in the use of Mesqan in these sub-domains could be attributed to the fact that the shops are located in towns and the weekly open markets take place in towns and rural areas. Data gathered through observation shows that the language Mesqan use in markets largely depends on the ethnic background of the individuals involved, i.e., they switch between Mesqan and Amharic, with in-group and out-group speakers, respectively. This implies that,

as bilinguals, which language to use with whom is an important choice speakers make in market domain.

Table 42: Language use of respondents in business domain

Used in		Mesqan Woreda		Butajira		Total	
		<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Shop</b>	Mesqan	330	59.5	64	50.4	394	57.0
	Amharic	224	40.4	63	49.6	287	43.0
<b>Market</b>	Mesqan	421	76.0	85	65.4	508	67.3
	Amharic	131	23.7	45	34.6	247	32.7

The types of market could also be a factor in language use of the speakers. The *Arb Gebeya* ‘Friday Market’<sup>22</sup>, could be considered a regional market, as it accommodates 12-15 thousands of people from different areas such as Addis Ababa, Oromia Region, Silt’e, Hadiya, and Libido (See Chapter 1: section 1.6.2 for details). Though Mesqan constitute the majority, Amharic appears to be the preferred language of communication. However, in a Woreda Market such as *Hamus Gäbäya* ‘Thursday Market’, which mainly connects people in Mesqan Woreda, the dominant language seems to be Mesqan. Subsequently, in the daily markets, known as *Gullet*, which take place in different villages in the rural areas, Mesqan happens to be the sole language the community use.

As a minority residing in a different zonal administration (Sidama Zone), almost all the respondents in Yirgalem use Amharic for communication in different places. About 12% mentioned that they use Sidama<sup>23</sup> on market days with the rural people.

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<sup>22</sup> A weekly open market at the centre of Butajira town.

<sup>23</sup> Sidama is one of the Highland East Cushitic languages. It is the official language in the Sidama Zone.

#### 4.7.7 Language Use in Cultural Events

Cultural events are one of the major domains used to identify the language use of speakers. In Mesqan, the major sub-domains of cultural events such as mourning, marriage, and songs are identified.

##### 4.7.7.1 Sub-Domain of Mourning

In the sub-domain of mourning, the majority of the respondents, 82.1%, mention that they use Mesqan and 17.8% use Amharic. Mourning is one of cultural events in which Mesqan are expected to use the vernacular. The expressions that the mourners use are dependent on the cultural norms in tune with the age, sex, and closeness of the mourners to the deceased. It is believed that the use of their ethnic language, Mesqan, in mourning serves to release deep sorrow and stirs the emotion of the mourners. If somebody uses Amharic while crying, then he/she would be labeled as an out-group (non-Mesqan). The procedures followed during the funeral ceremony, known as *yalfata sera* 'cultural norms of mourning',<sup>24</sup> is conducted only through Mesqan. This could imply the relationship between the cultural practices of mourning with use of mother tongue in Mesqan.

Table 43: Language use in mourning by place of residence

		Mesqan Woreda		Butajira town		Yirgalem town		Total	
		<i>Freq.</i>	%	<i>Freq.</i>	%	<i>Freq.</i>	%	<i>Freq.</i>	%
Mourning	Mesqan	513	95.9	83	68.6	10	12.0	606	82.1
	Amharic	22	4.1	38	31.4	72	86.7	132	17.8
Total		535	100	121	100	82	100	738	100

<sup>24</sup> Refer to Chapter 3 for details on the *sera* in Mesqan.

#### 4.7.7.2 Sub-Domain of Marriage

Similarly, the findings gathered through interviews and observations regarding language use in the sub-domain of marriage show that Mesqan is used through the process of arranged type of marriage in Mesqan community. The cultural rules of marriage arrangement require series of procedures (Refer to Chapter 3 on marriage) to be followed and they use Mesqan in executing the rules at each stage in the process. It is felt that use of another language would be not only inappropriate but also inefficient to convey the message as required by the *Sera* 'cultural rules'.

#### 4.7.7.3 Sub-Domain of Songs

Depending on the type and intent, the sub-domain of songs could be further classified into marriage, work, war,<sup>25</sup> and religious, and the language/s they use also show slight variations in towns and rural areas. As a manifestation of the culture of the community, the songs are differentiated in accordance with the stages in the process of the marriage ceremony.

Table 44: Language use in singing at a wedding by place of residence

		Mesqan Woreda		Butajira town		Yirgalem town		Total	
		<i>Freq.</i>	%	<i>Freq.</i>	%	<i>Freq.</i>	%	<i>Freq.</i>	%
Singing	Mesqan	528	97.0	89	68.5	33	39.3	650	87.4
	Amharic	16	3.0	40	30.8	48	57.1	94	12.6
Total		544	100	129	100	81	100	744	100

The findings show that on average 87.4% of the respondents use Mesqan songs at a wedding ceremony. In the towns, specifically in Yirgalem, Amharic songs are most often used among the youth mainly due to lack of knowledge of Mesqan songs.

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<sup>25</sup> War songs were popular in the past and used to play a significant role in inspiring Mesqan warriors into the battlefield against rivals. Owing to the absence of inter-ethnic clashes, the war songs are not currently in use in Mesqan community.

However, with the recent production of Mesqan songs in cassettes and CDs, it is reported that the degree of use is increasing over time. Though still lower compared to use of Amharic, 39.3% mention use of Mesqan songs at weddings. This could be attributed to the fact that singing does not necessarily require knowledge of the language, nor does it entail interaction with other people. Rather, it may serve as a reflection of their ethnic belongingness to Mesqan.

In the rural areas, Mesqan songs are used for different kinds of work in groups, referred to as *wänno* 'group work', such as building huts, plowing, harvesting, etc. However, in religious occasions, while Muslim Mesqan use *Mänzumas* 'Muslim religious songs' mostly prepared in Amharic, Mesqan, and sometimes Arabic, Orthodox Christians use Amharic religious songs.

In general, as a cultural manifestation and entertainment, Mesqan songs are dominantly used in marriage and *wänno* 'work parties'. However, Mesqan is least used in religious songs.

#### **4.7.8 Language Use in the Domain of Religion**

The degree of language use associated with the *religious domain* depends largely upon the role assigned to language in religious institutions in the speech community. At a group level, while Muslim religious leaders in most cases use Mesqan in gatherings, Christians particularly Orthodox Christian and protestant religious leaders tend to use Amharic for preaching and prayers.

Table 45: Language use by Mesqan Muslim and Christian religious

		Mesqan Woreda		Butajira		Yirgalem		Total	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Muslim Mesqan religious leaders									
	Mesqan	527	95.3	122	96.8	53	62.4	702	91.8
	Amharic	9	1.6	3	2.4	29	34.1	41	5.3
Christian Mesqan religious leaders	Mesqan	183	33.3	190	15.3	2	2.4	204	26.9
	Amharic	357	65.7	104	83.9	81	95.3	542	71.5

In religious congregations, particularly during *Səmmutt Sänga Lik'a*, in which thousands of Muslim Mesqan get together once in a month, and when they meet for *Əsnäyn* in small groups on Mondays, the vast majority of religious leaders (91.8% on average) and followers use Mesqan (See Table 45 above). In Yirgalem town, where Amharic is the dominant language of Mesqan, significant number of Muslim religious leaders (62.4%) uses Mesqan for preaching. Such gatherings are characterized by ethnic-based membership in which the majority of Mesqan participate. These support factors, presumably, contribute to the maintenance of Mesqan language and strengthens solidarity among Mesqan.

Similarly, Muslim Mesqan women who are members of *Dado*<sup>26</sup> 'religious group of women' use Mesqan only during prayers and discussions throughout the day. This is a special religious gathering, which does not have any room for use of Arabic or Amharic languages.

The second largest Muslim group in Mesqan, *Jilane Murid*<sup>27</sup> 'followers of Seid Abdulqadr Jilane', meet every week on Wednesday, and monthly eight days after *Lik'a*. The *Imam* 'leader of the group' and the participants in most cases use Mesqan

<sup>26</sup> *Dado* is a group of Muslim Mesqan women, comprising 15-20 members. It is an equivalent of *Əsnäyn* which is largely dominated by Mesqan men. The *Dado* women meet every two weeks usually on Sunday or Thursday.

<sup>27</sup> It is estimated that there are 7000 followers of *Jilane Murid* in Mesqan.

during *Muzakära* ‘religious teaching at the gathering’, and discussions. They frequently mix Silt’e with Mesqan during *Mänzuma* ‘religious song’.

Another group of Muslims in Mesqan, who practice a traditional religion, are known as *Ware*<sup>28</sup> or sometimes referred to as *Nurhussien Gerib*. The *Ware* often uses Oromo and Silt’i for preaching, and *Mänzuma*.

On the other hand, as indicated in Table 45 above, Christian religious leaders, on average 90% in Butajira and Yirgalem towns, and 65% in the rural Mesqan Woreda, use Amharic for preaching and prayers. This could indicate the prestige Amharic has gained in the church settings, both in urban and rural areas, has resulted in a great openness to the use of Amharic among Christian Mesqan during prayers and preaching.

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<sup>28</sup> The *Ware* or *Nurhussien Gerib* are followers of *Seidinel Arifin*. There are estimated to be 3000 Mesqan. The followers meet on every Tuesday, and the first Thursday every month. They go to Anajina in Bale Goba (in Oromia about 200 km from Butajira) to attend the annual celebration.

Table 46: Language use in religious domain by place of residence

		Mesqan Woreda		Butajira		Yirgalem		Total	
		<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
Religious leaders	Mesqan	473	85.8	91	71.0	6	7.0	570	75
	Amharic	73	13.2	36	28.0	79	93.0	188	25
Mosque/church	Mesqan	472	85	82	63	5	6	559	72.9
	Amharic	83	15	46	35.4	78	93	207	27.1
Praying	Mesqan	527	95.3	67	52.3	15	17.6	609	82.1
	Amharic	21	3.8	48	37.5	63	74.1	132	17.7

Language use during religious practices in urban areas show differences at a group level (preaching) and at an individual level, performing prayers in private. As indicated above, while Mesqan is the dominant language in use by 96.8% in Butajira and 62.4% in Yirgalem in-group prayers among Muslims, 52.7% in Butajira and only 17.6% in Yirgalem use Mesqan while performing prayers in private. One possible reason could be preaching in religious gatherings is made by elderly people who prefer to use their mother tongue and the fact that the rites in such gatherings are conducted in tune with the tradition that has been in practice for generations. At an individual level, the prayer could be made in one's own words or use a conventional prayer to be recited. The prayer may not necessarily be in the language in which the bilingual speakers are most proficient. It could be Mesqan, Amharic, and/or Arabic (Muslims). Most Christians use Amharic for prayers though they are proficient in Mesqan.

#### 4.7.9 Language Use among the Moyät: A Traditional Belief

The *Moyät* are followers of a traditional belief in Mesqan. According to Sintalem (2007:9), a *Moyät* is “a believer who is possessed with the spirit of *Däm'am'it*, a female divinity in the Gurage traditional belief system, and who serves the *Däm'am'it* for life”. The *Moyät* (the followers and the traditional belief they adhere to) are a special group of Mesqan who have their own secret language called

*Moyätəñña*.<sup>29</sup> The language they speak is not intelligible to the other Mesqan and neighbouring ethnic groups. Their language is known only by the initiated, together with the rituals and mysterious knowledge. It is believed among the *Moyät* that their language allows the initiated to speak with *Däm<sup>w</sup>am<sup>w</sup>it*.

Apart from use of *Moyät* in Orthodox Christian holidays, particularly *Epiphany*, the *Moyät* use their language for a secret talk, and sometimes for casual conversations. They also have their own songs which they sing on special occasions. In their day-to-day interactions, the *Moyät* often use Mesqan just like the other speakers.

#### 4.7.9.1 Sub-domain of informal associations

In informal associations such as *Əddər* ‘mutual help informal association’, and *Əkk’ub* ‘informal saving and credit association’,<sup>30</sup> 81.7% of the respondents mention that they most often use Mesqan when they meet on such occasions.

As shown in Table 47 below, in Yirgalem, though ethnic Mesqan constitute the majority, only 3.7% of respondents use Mesqan. It is also gathered that the monthly meeting of Mesqan Development Association<sup>31</sup> in Yirgalem is conducted through Amharic. This could also indicate that Mesqan does not appear to be the first choice in intra-group interactions in Yirgalem and further limit the contexts in which Mesqan is used.

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<sup>29</sup> A cursory look at the lexical items of the *Moyät* appears to be somehow related to the Gurage languages, probably to Dobbi. Currently, there are about 50 *Moyät* in Mesqan but their numbers are decreasing from time to time. Thus, it could be an interesting area of research for Linguists, anthropologists, and historians, and document it before it disappears.

<sup>30</sup> Membership in *Əddər* and *Əkk’ub* is not based on ethnic background of the members. In Butajira and Yirgalem towns, Mesqan constitute the majority in the associations (refer to Chapter 3 for details on the informal associations).

<sup>31</sup> Mesqan Development Association was established in 2006 in Yirgalem. It is an ethnic-based association and has 700 members.

Table 47: Language use in informal associations by place of residence

	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira town		Yirgalem town		Total	
	<i>Freq.</i>	%	<i>Freq.</i>	%	<i>Freq.</i>	%	<i>Freq.</i>	%
Mesqan	537	96.5	87	67.9	3	3.7	627	81.7
Amharic	19	3.5	41	32.1	80	96.3	140	18.3
<b>Total</b>	556	100	128	100	83	100	767	100

Local *šāngo* ‘committee’, which consist of representatives from different Kebeles, discuss social matters in Mesqan. Recent developments show that there are conscious efforts on the part of local community representatives, to encourage and at times persuade in-group members to speak in Mesqan in such meetings.

#### 4.7.9.2 Sub-domain of traditional adjudication

As discussed in Chapter 3, the traditional justice system in Mesqan is organized into *Maga Sera* ‘village level system of adjudication’, *Raga Sera* ‘higher level of adjudication’, and the *Fāragäzäññä Sera* ‘the highest traditional system of jurisdiction’. The traditional judges at the *Maga* and *Raga* levels deliberate through Mesqan language. Particularly, the *Maga*, as they are restricted to village level in the process of resolving disputes between people or groups, they always use Mesqan if the parties are ethnic Mesqans; but, in a situation where one of the parties is a non-Mesqan speaker, they commonly use Amharic.

The supreme traditional court, *Fāragäzäññä*, is led by a judge and his company deliberate on cases and passes on decisions mainly in Mesqan. However, as the *Fāragäzäññä* attend to cases of people from different ethnic backgrounds, they use a translator if they cannot speak Amharic. It could be observed that in cultural practices, which are highly valued and regarded as peculiar to the community, such as *Fāragäzäññä Sera*, there is a greater tendency to use Mesqan, except when it involves other language speakers. In all the cases of the traditional adjudication systems, the customary ceremonial procedures, i.e. *the Gudda Sera*, are solely conducted through Mesqan. It is believed that the power of the words used in the

proceedings is loaded with the values and beliefs, and strict adherence to the rules is sanctified by the exclusive use of their ethnic language.

#### 4.7.10 Language Use in Formal Domains

In interpersonal interactions with government employees such as teachers, health and agricultural extension workers, on average 80.3% of respondents in rural and urban settings often use Amharic, and only 19.7% use Mesqan. Similarly, in formal domains such as local government offices, schools, court and health facilities, respondents often use Amharic (See Table 48 below). For instance, in health facilities and in court, on average 89.1% use Amharic and only 10.9% use Mesqan. It appears that use of Mesqan is relatively higher, 39.7%, in school domain, which may be due to frequent contact schoolteachers, and directors maintain with the rural community and the recent attention paid to assignment of ethnic-Mesqan teachers in elementary schools (Refer to Chapter 1, Section 1.6.1 for details). Thus, as the need arises, in adult education sessions and in lower grades, teachers could make elaboration in Mesqan.

Table 48: Language use in official domains by place of residence

		Mesqan Woreda		Butajira town		Total	
		<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>School</b>	Mesqan	203	39.7	29	24.4	235	32.9
	Amharic	308	60.3	90	75.6	479	67.1
<b>Health facilities</b>	Mesqan	73	13.2	19	14.6	94	12.2
	Amharic	482	86.8	111	85.4	675	87.8
<b>Court</b>	Mesqan	60	11.0	11	9.9	71	9.6
	Amharic	483	89.0	100	90.1	666	90.4

Though assignment of higher posts in Mesqan Woreda is in most cases dedicated to ethnic Mesqan, it does not require knowledge of the Mesqan language as a requirement. In formal domains, for instance, while addressing a meeting in rural areas, Woreda officials use Amharic.

It is also learnt that apart from their proficiency both in Mesqan and in Amharic, people tend to associate any form of formal communications with Amharic. This could be due to the official role assigned to Amharic ever since formal institutions were established in Butajira and Mesqan Woreda.

As regards language use in the mass media, in Mesqan Woreda and Butajira town, the community does have access to print and electronic mass media in Amharic. Radio transmissions include *Fana and Radio Ethiopia*, intermittent transmission of *Debut FM Radio*, and *Ethiopian Television 1 & 2*, all of which are broadcasted in Amharic. The same holds true of the print media. The only mini-media radio program,<sup>32</sup> prepared by the Culture and Tourism Office of Mesqan Woreda, is also broadcasted in Amharic in *Inseno*<sup>33</sup> and *Hamus Gebeya* to the rural population on market days. There has never been any mass or mini media program broadcasted in Mesqan language so far.

#### **4.7.11 Summary of Domains of Language Use**

The language use patterns in the various domains generally reveal that while Mesqan is dominantly used in informal domains, Amharic is used in official (formal) domains. Comparison among places of residence indicates distinct variation in patterns of language use in informal domains. Mesqan is the principal language of interpersonal and group interactions in Mesqan Woreda and Butajira town, Amharic is used in all informal domains in Yirgalem, except in secret talk, and weekly religious gatherings among elders. A summary of all the domains of language use discussed in the section is presented in Table 49 below.

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<sup>32</sup> The key components of the Mini Media Radio Program prepared in Mesqan Woreda include news extracted from Newspapers, government policy issues sent from Regional and Zonal Offices, health, sport and development issues.

<sup>33</sup> Peri is an urban/rural town in Mesqan Woreda.

Table 49: Summary of domains of language use

Language Used		Non-formal Domains	Formal Domains
Mesqan	Mesqan only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In cultural domains such as traditional rules (<i>Sera</i>) of mourning, marriage, and conflict resolution mechanisms</li> <li>• Group work in rural areas</li> <li>• Local <i>Shengo</i> or social meetings in rural areas</li> </ul>	
	Dominantly Mesqan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the home with family members</li> <li>• With neighbours, and elders</li> <li>• Children in play grounds</li> <li>• Emotional reactions such as anger, cursing, and insulting</li> <li>• In business domain such as markets and shops</li> <li>• Songs in a wedding ceremony</li> <li>• Muslim religious leaders' prayers, preaching, etc</li> <li>• Muslim religious congregations such as <i>Səmmutt Sänga Lik'a</i>, <i>Əsnäyn</i>, <i>Dado</i>, etc.</li> <li>• Non-formal associations</li> <li>• <i>Färagäzäññä sera</i> 'traditional supreme court'</li> </ul>	
Amharic	Amharic only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mesqan Orthodox Christians' religious songs</li> <li>• writing informal letters, reading books, newspapers, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium of instruction, administration, court, and clinic/hospital</li> <li>• Mass media (Radio, TV, Newspapers), and mini media</li> <li>• Official meetings</li> <li>• Health and agricultural extension workers</li> <li>• Reading, writing formal letters, reports, etc.</li> <li>• Public announcements</li> </ul>

Language Used		Non-formal Domains	Formal Domains
	Dominantly Amharic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpersonal interactions with non-Mesqan speakers</li> <li>• With strangers</li> <li>• Religious songs</li> <li>• Christian religious leaders in prayers and preaching</li> </ul>	•
Mixed:- Mesqan and Amharic		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious songs of Muslim Mesqan</li> <li>• Business domains: shops and markets</li> </ul>	•
	<i>Moyät</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Moyät</i> in Orthodox Christian holidays, particularly <i>Epiphany</i></li> <li>• As required, in their day-to-day interactions</li> <li>• In <i>Moyät</i> songs during celebrations</li> </ul>	•

#### 4.8 Summary

In a discussion related to the description of language use in Mesqan, in general, the major issues treated include determinants of language use, bilingualism, proficiency, mother tongue acquisition, and domains of language use.

The findings have shown that age, place of growth and residence, religion, and literacy have a determinant role in the language use of respondents with specific reference to the language they speak as a first language, the degree of bilingualism, and the patterns of language use. Of these, age and place of growth and residence happen to be significant factors in overall language use patterns. In most domains, the older the individuals, the more the likelihood for them to use Mesqan in their daily life. Conversely, in the towns, the young mostly use Amharic in their daily life. In the majority of the cases, gender is not reported to affect language use patterns, i.e., while the choice of languages differed based on the ages of the individuals involved, no significant differences were observed based on gender.

Generational transfer of Mesqan as a mother tongue decreases from rural to urban areas and there is a gradual increase in Amharic mother tongue speakers among the younger generation. In Yirgalem town, it could be generalized that generational transfer of Mesqan is very loose. The findings also reveal place of growth as a dominant factor in mother tongue acquisition, as attested by mother tongue speakers in the towns being brought up in the rural Mesqan Woreda. The fact that, on average 85.2% in general, and 76.5% of respondents' children in the rural area speak Amharic (Refer to Table 25) could in general indicate the declining rate of monolinguals in Mesqan and the growing influence of Amharic in the community. Based on reported proficiency levels of speakers in Mesqan, it is found out that elders are said to have higher levels of proficiency than youngsters do and the gap widens from rural to urban areas.

Finally, reported and observed patterns of language use in various domains reveal that languages are allocated specific roles and they are used in different contexts. It could be generalized that Mesqan is predominantly used in non-official domains, and Amharic is used in official (formal) domains. In addition to its use in formal domains of use, Amharic has a number of communicative functions in non-official domains beside Mesqan, particularly in urban areas. It is worth noting that highly valued and honored cultural practices, such as Mesqan traditional rules (*Sera*) passed from generations to generations, entail exclusive use of in-group language, i.e. Mesqan.

## CHAPTER FIVE: LANGUAGE ATTITUDE

### 4.9 Introduction

This chapter examines language attitudes towards Mesqan in the study areas. It discusses the nature of the interrelationships of individual variables such as level of education, age, gender, language ability, ethnicity, etc., with various factors on the formation of language attitudes in Mesqan. First, it examines perceptions towards knowledge of Mesqan and Amharic and its correlation with place of residence, proficiency, literacy; and language use. Then, attitudes towards use of Mesqan as a medium of instruction, graphisation, and use in the media are dealt with in detail. Finally, key findings discussed in the chapter with highlights on their implications on language use are presented.

### 4.10 Attitude towards Mesqan

There is a shared high-level perception about the importance of knowing Mesqan among the overwhelming majority (on average 95.0%) of the respondents regardless of places of residence.

Table 50: Attitude towards knowledge of Mesqan by place of residence

How important is ones knowledge of Mesqan?	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira		Yirgalem		Total	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
Very useful	532	97.3	117	91.4	71	85.6	720	95.0
Useful	11	2.0	8	6.2	6	7.2	25	3.3
Of little use	4	0.7	2	1.6	5	6.0	11	1.5
Of no use	0	0.0	1	0.8	1	1.2	2	0.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>758</b>	<b>100</b>

Consistent with these findings, key informants indicated that knowledge of Mesqan is important in Mesqan community as a marker of identity, for cultural survival, and

for interpersonal communication. A comparison within place of residence shows that the highest number of respondents in favor of the importance of knowledge of Mesqan reside in rural Mesqan Woreda. Similarly, older respondents generally tend to have higher ratings than younger respondents do.

The positive attitude respondents have towards Mesqan is also reflected on their perception towards their children’s knowledge of Mesqan, as shown in Table 51 below. The majority of parents are interested to see that their children speak Mesqan. Of course, there is a slight variation in the responses between rural and urban areas, i.e., Mesqan Woreda shows the highest frequency counts followed by Butajira and Yirgalem towns.

Table 51: Parents’ attitudes towards their children’s knowledge of Mesqan

<i>Do you want your children to speak Mesqan?</i>	<b>Mesqan Woreda</b>		<b>Butajira</b>		<b>Yirgalem</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Yes</b>	334	99.4	64	94.1	33	82.5	431	97.0
<b>No</b>	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.5	1	0.2
<b>Indifferent</b>	2	0.6	4	5.9	6	15.0	12	2.8
<b>Total</b>	336	100	68	100	40	100	444	100

The level of attitude people have towards their language could influence the use of the language in different domains, the proficiency of the speakers, and intergenerational transfer. In a context where the community has the highest level of positive attitude towards the language, it could be assumed that the intensity of use, the proficiency levels, and transfer of the language as a mother tongue would also increase. This proves true particularly in the context of Mesqan Woreda and Butajira town where Mesqan is dominantly spoken in different domains, and the majority of children acquire it as a mother tongue, i.e., 97.7% of respondents’ children in Mesqan Woreda and 77.4% in Butajira town (Refer to Chapter 4: Section 4.3 for more details).

However, in Yirgalem, there appears to be a mismatch between parents' desire for children to speak the language and actual language use at home to teach them the language and transfer it to the next generation of speakers. As noted in the preceding chapter, only 4.8% of the respondents in Yirgalem reported that their children could speak Mesqan as a mother tongue. While it is sound to maintain that a positive attitude towards a language could contribute to language use, proficiency, and maintenance, this scenario suggests that the relationship between language attitude and language use may not necessarily be interdependent and direct. In a study conducted on 'Language Attitudes and the Future of Bilingualism in Paraguay', Choi (2003) notes that, "Linguistic attitude and linguistic usage mutually influence each other. Linguistic attitude governs the conduct of an individual or a society, and vice versa. A positive attitude towards a language may increase its use and can result in the maintenance of that language. Nevertheless, linguistic behaviour and linguistic reality are not always a reflection of attitude. Many researchers have found inconsistencies between attitude and conduct, especially in situations in which there are two or more languages in contact". The favorable attitude respondents have towards their language may simply be a reflection of their pride, feeling of ethnic identification, and attachment to Mesqan.

In comparing the usefulness of Mesqan and Amharic, while the majority of respondents in the urban settings, Butajira (65%) and Yirgalem (86%), perceive Amharic as vital, the majority of those residing in the rural Mesqan Woreda (84.1%) rate Mesqan as being very useful to know. This could suggest that the perceived importance of Mesqan and Amharic languages appears to directly correlate with place of residence (urban and rural) and literacy status (literate and non-literate). As shown in Table 52 below, comparison within educational level shows that there are distinct variations among literate and non-literate speakers in their perceptions towards the importance of Mesqan and Amharic. Except in the case of Yirgalem, the majority of non-literate respondents in Mesqan Woreda and Butajira perceive Mesqan as vital to know. However, literate respondents in Butajira and Yirgalem consider Amharic more useful to know as compared to Mesqan.

Table 52: Perceptions of literate and non-literate respondents

<i>Which language do you think is very useful to know?</i>		Mesqan		Amharic		Total	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Mesqan Woreda (Rural)	Literate	244	78.6	66	21.4	310	100
	Non-literate	188	90.3	20	9.7	208	100
Butajira Town	Literate	30	30.2	69	69.8	99	100
	Non-literate	12	57.1	9	42.9	21	100
Yirgalem Town	Literate	7	10.4	60	89.6	67	100
	Non-literate	4	33.3	8	66.7	12	100
Total		485	67.6	232	32.4	717	100

Variations in perceptions towards usefulness of Mesqan and Amharic among urban and rural residents, and literate and non-literate respondents could be explained in terms of the degree of its function, among others. Adegbia (1994:56) notes that, “The official recognition, support, or functions accorded to a language tend to affect the prestige of that language and the value judgments made concerning it.” The high domain roles of Amharic such as in education, administration, judiciary system, print and electronic media, and the role it plays as a lingua franca throughout the country have contributed to the perception respondents have towards it. Such roles are said to have the potential and tendency to generate largely positive attitudes towards languages, especially in the domains in which it functions. These roles are more pronounced in the urban areas where Amharic is dominantly spoken and hence resulting in a higher perception of its usefulness. Similarly, literate people, particularly those who have attained higher level of education and those employed in governmental offices tend to value Amharic more owing to its instrumental and integrative functions, among others.

In the case of Mesqan, the integrative motivation is not used in the sense Gardner & Lambert ((1972) cf. Adegbia 1994:52)) refer to, “... the integration points to the speakers’ wishes to identify culturally or otherwise with the target language group”.

The respondents value Amharic more not to identify with the Amhara as a target language group. Instead, the high esteem and value attributed to Amharic as resulting from its integrative function could be conceived in terms of facilitating interaction as a national language and cohesion among people no matter what their ethnic groups could be.

Despite the fact that the language ability and language use of the future generation belonging to one or the other ethnic group could be determined by external factors i.e. changing socio-economic and political situations in the future such as changes in the language policy, the prevailing perceptions of parents could give a clue as to the trends in the future.

Considering the widespread use of Amharic in various domains, its perceived usefulness and the evolving tendency of the younger generation towards speaking Amharic, parents were asked whether their children could speak Mesqan when they get older. As shown in Table 53 below, the overwhelming majority (95.6%) in Mesqan Woreda and about three fourth of the respondents in Butajira town believe that their children would speak Mesqan. However, only 5.1% of parents in Yirgalem town think that their children will be able to speak Mesqan when they become adults. This figure is consistent with the number of respondents in Yirgalem who reported Mesqan as the mother tongue of their children. (Refer to Chapter 4:9 for details). Parents in Mesqan Woreda and Butajira seem to have the perception that their children who speak Mesqan as a mother tongue would also maintain their ability when they become adults.

Table 53: Perception of parents towards their children’s ability of Mesqan in the future as adults

<i>Do you think your children will speak Mesqan when they become adults?</i>	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira		Yirgalem		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Yes	327	95.6	51	73.8	2	5.1	380	84.3
No	15	4.4	19	26.2	37	94.9	71	15.7
<b>Total</b>	342	100	70	100	39	100	451	100

Regarding the perceived ability of their grand children, while parents in Mesqan Woreda maintain their optimism to almost the same degree to their children, there is a significant decline in the number of parents in Butajira town (15.8% difference) who think that their grand children would speak Mesqan. In Yirgalem, there is no difference as to parents’ perception of their children’s or grand children’s ability in speaking Mesqan when they become adults; in both cases it is almost none.

Table 54: Perception of parents about their grand children’s ability in the future as adults

<i>Which language do you think your grand children will speak when they become adults?</i>	Mesqan		Amharic		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Mesqan Woreda	320	93.5	22	6.5	342	100
Butajira	40	58.0	29	42.0	69	100
Yirgalem	2	5.1	37	94.9	39	100
<b>Total</b>	362	80.4	88	19.6	450	100

In general, the attitude of parents towards the ability of their children and grand children in speaking Mesqan in the future shows that there will be a decline in the number of Mesqan speakers, with a faster rate in Butajira town, and with a very slower pace in the rural areas of Mesqan Woreda. This concurs with the findings related to generational comparison of mother tongue speakers of Mesqan (Refer to

Chapter 4:10) which shows a gradual increase in Amharic mother tongue speakers particularly among the youth in urban areas.

#### 4.11 Attitude towards Speaking Mesqan

The attitude a speaker has towards his/her in-group language, on the one hand, may be weighed with a high degree of importance as his/her interest to speak it. Because knowledge of a language does not by itself guarantee speaking it unless it is harnessed with a positive attitude and reflected in actual language use in different domains. On the other hand, it could also be possible that speakers who are not proficient in their in-group language could have a positive attitude towards it, as discussed in the previous section.

Most of the respondents, on average 83.6%, in Mesqan Woreda, Butajira, and Yirgalem mention that there are no Mesqan who do not like to speak Mesqan if they have the ability. However, there is a variation in responses from rural to urban areas. While 30.6% in Yirgalem say that there are ethnic Mesqan who refrain from speaking in Mesqan, only 12.2% of them in Mesqan Woreda indicate presence of such speakers.

Table 55: Attitude towards speaking Mesqan

Are there Mesqan who know Mesqan but do not like to speak it?	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira		Yirgalem		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
<b>Yes</b>	64	12.2	31	24.4	26	30.6	121	16.4
<b>No</b>	461	87.8	96	75.6	59	69.4	616	83.6
<b>Total</b>	525	100	127	100	85	100	737	100

The responses show that most people who do not have the interest to speak Mesqan reside in urban areas such as Butajira, Yirgalem and other towns. It was also found that youngsters constitute the highest percentage compared to the elderly. One of

the main reasons attributed to the lack of interest in speaking their mother tongue in urban areas is found to be the feeling of being labeled as 'backward'.<sup>34</sup>

As shown in Table 58 below, most of the respondents indicate that some people do not like to speak Mesqan in the presence of persons belonging to other ethnic groups and at public places. Most youngsters in town usually do not use Mesqan when they meet with their friends who may also be mother tongue speakers of Mesqan.

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<sup>34</sup> During my first field visit in Yirgalem, I met a nine years old girl in one of the key informant's residence. She came to Yirgalem from the rural Mesqan Woreda only two months ago. She was fluent in Mesqan and could hardly speak Amharic. When I visited her family after two years, she has almost forgotten Mesqan. She told me that the younger family members used to tease her when she spoke in Mesqan and her schoolmates were making fun of her Mesqan-accented Amharic that she avoided speaking in Mesqan in and out of her home.



Table 56: Situations speakers do not want to speak Mesqan

	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira		Yirgalem		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq	%
<i>In the presence of persons belonging to other ethnic groups</i>	33	52.4	12	38.7	10	40.0	55	46.2
<i>At public places in the town</i>	27	42.8	8	25.8	7	28.0	42	35.3
<i>Everywhere</i>	1	1.6	1	3.2	1	4.0	3	2.5
<i>With youngsters</i>	2	3.2	10	32.3	7	28.0	19	16.0
<i>Total</i>	63	100	31	100	25	100	119	100

Generally, there is a widespread perception that ethnic Mesqan like to speak Mesqan provided that they have the ability to comfortably communicate with it. This also corresponds to the high degree of perception of the usefulness of Mesqan particularly in the rural areas.

#### 4.12 Attitude towards Amharic

Parents' reaction to children's use of Amharic at home showed that while the majority of respondents, on average 78.3%, in Mesqan Woreda and Butajira town indicated parents' disapproval, 55.9% in Yirgalem mentioned that parents approve of it. The highest rate of indifference to whichever language they speak is reported in Yirgalem and the lowest in Butajira. In Yirgalem, the indifference of parents to the use of Amharic at home coupled with their minimal effort to teach Mesqan to their children appears to have contributed to the minimal language ability of their children in Mesqan.

Table 57: Parents' feelings about language preference at home

<i>If a young prefers speaking Amharic to Mesqan at home, are the parents happy about it?</i>	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira		Yirgalem		Total	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Yes</b>	67	12.1	14	10.9	47	55.9	128	16.7
<b>No</b>	439	79.2	99	77.3	6	7.1	544	71.0
<b>Indifferent</b>	48	8.7	15	11.7	31	37.0	94	12.3
<b>Total</b>	554	100	128	100	84	100	766	100

Similarly, according to Table 60 below, the degree to which elders react to use of other languages decreases from the rural Mesqan Woreda to the urban areas, i.e. Butajira and Yirgalem towns. Respondents, on average 61.9%, mentioned that most elderly people in Mesqan Woreda and Butajira often do not approve of speaking other languages when Mesqan communicate with each other. However, about three-fourth of respondents in Yirgalem indicate that elders accept use of other languages, in most cases Amharic, during interpersonal communications among Mesqan. The disapproval of the elders does not appear to reflect negative attitudes towards Amharic, rather it emanates from their strong interest to preserve or maintain their own language to ensure its survival and prominence at least in their own locality.

Table 58: Elders' reaction towards use of other languages among Mesqan

<i>Would elders react negatively to use of non-Mesqan language when Mesqan communicate with each other?</i>	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira		Yirgalem		Total	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Yes</b>	350	63.3	70	55.5	21	25.6	441	58.0
<b>No</b>	203	36.7	56	44.5	61	74.4	320	42.0
<b>Total</b>	553	100%	126	100%	82	100%	761	100%

It is evident that speaking the language of other ethnic groups, particularly of minorities, apart from facilitating communication, often creates a positive impression among the members. The manner in which members of a minority group react in such situations may reflect the attitudes towards their own language as well. Asked whether they like people belonging to other ethnic groups who speak Mesqan, on average about three-fourth of the respondents (Table 59 below) reflected a positive feeling towards such individuals. A comparison of responses collected from the three places reveals that there is a significant variation between urban (Butajira and Yirgalem towns) and rural (Mesqan Woreda) areas. While respondents residing in urban areas appear to have high regard for non-Mesqan individuals who speak Mesqan, on average 86.8%, the least rating is reported in Mesqan Woreda.

Table 59: Feelings towards 'others'<sup>35</sup> who speak Mesqan

	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira		Yirgalem		Total	
	<i>Freq.</i>	%	<i>Freq.</i>	%	<i>Freq.</i>	%	<i>Freq.</i>	%
<b>Yes</b>	373	68.3	112	86.8	72	86.7	557	73.5
<b>No</b>	73	13.4	7	5.4	2	2.4	82	10.8
<b>Indifferent</b>	100	18.3	10	7.8	9	10.8	119	15.7
<b>Total</b>	546	100%	129	100%	83	100%	758	100%

In order to find out attitudes towards knowledge of Mesqan in the expression of Mesqan identity, respondents were asked whether one could not be considered Mesqan if one does not speak Mesqan. The attitudes towards knowledge of Mesqan show that competency in Mesqan as an essential trait of Mesqan identity is rejected by the majority, on average 56.5%, and 43.5% of the respondents agree that knowledge of Mesqan is a basic requirement to be considered as Mesqan.

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<sup>35</sup> 'Others' refers to people belonging to other ethnic groups, not Mesqan.

A comparison of the responses in the urban and rural areas reveals a considerable degree of variation. It is shown that 52.3% of the respondents in the rural areas of Mesqan Woreda consider language ability as a requirement in determining one's ethnic identity. This attitude could be attributed to the fact that in a context where almost everybody who identifies himself as Mesqan speaks Mesqan as a mother tongue, people could possibly assume knowledge of the in-group language as being tied up with ethnic identity. Conversely, the majority in Butajira and Yirgalem towns (72.4% and 91.4%, respectively) believe that competency in Mesqan is not a factor in determining Mesqan identity and that it is perceived to be, in most respects, independent of the individual's language ability. This shows a pragmatic tendency, which entails a considerable degree of acceptance of individuals as members irrespective of their ability of the in-group language. Thus, it could be generalized that language may or may not be a major factor in in-group ethnic identification depending on the dominance of the language in the settings where it is used by the speakers. Language is considered a significant attribute of in-group ethnic identification in areas where it is widely used as a mother tongue by the majority of the members.

Interviews held with key informants generally reveal that Mesqan while they desperately want to preserve or maintain their own language to ensure its survival, they do not appear to have negative attitudes fuelled by feelings of domination or imposition due to widespread use of Amharic in Mesqan Woreda and Butajira. Instead, they seem to regard use of Amharic as an opportunity and a resource owing to its functional and integrative roles than as a problem.

#### **4.14 Attitudes towards Language Use in Education**

##### **4.14.1 Introduction: Language Use in Education**

The New Education and Training Policy (1994) in Ethiopia, among many other aspects, put the use of mother tongues into primary education (Grades 1-8). The Policy promotes the use of regional and local languages for two stated reasons. (FDRE, 1994b) The first reason is the claim that learning in the mother tongue has

clear pedagogical advantages for the child, who feels comfortable and reassured by their ability to understand and analyze information in their own language. The second reason is the claim that the use of local languages in education accords with the rights of nationalities to self-expression that are enshrined in the Constitution of Ethiopia (Cohen, 2008:3).

So far, 22 languages have been introduced as a medium of instruction at the primary school level in the education system (Siedel and Moritz, 2007). Of these, only four languages belong to the Ethio Semitic group; namely, Amharic, Harari, Silt'e, and Tigrinya. Consequently, development of media of mass communication including print media and broadcasting in the local languages has been in practice in different parts of Ethiopia in support of mother tongue education. However, the implementation has not been without resistance.

Arguments against the introduction of mother tongue education in Ethiopia state that learning in local languages limits students' social mobility and narrows the range of economic opportunities; children educated in inadequately developed languages would not be in a position to compete on equal terms for opportunities with other Ethiopians who are educated in well-developed languages. Cohen (2008:4) observes that, "In order to access wider opportunities in the Ethiopian state, it is still necessary for people from SNNPRSS to learn Amharic and English. This point is underlined by the fact that the Regional Government in Awassa, capital of SNNPRS, uses Amharic for the regional administration. So even within the Region itself the highest opportunities explicitly depend on literacy in Amharic. This would appear to compromise the quality and value of education for people receiving primary education in local languages and secondary education in English."

However, this view seems to dwell on a monolingual conceptualization of language in education, and does not appear to recognize that different languages do have different functions in a multilingual environment as in SNNP Region where more than 56 languages are spoken. In this case, a nationality language (as a right to mother tongue education), Amharic as a national language of wider communication, and English as an international language. It appears difficult to perceive how the

quality of education in local languages and in receiving secondary education in English be compromised owing to use of Amharic. Even more, as a national language, it is evident that proficiency in Amharic is advantageous in terms of facilitating formal and informal communications throughout the country. In SNNPRS, the choice of Amharic as a regional official language could be taken as an ideal strategy to facilitate official communication between zonal administrations with the regional bureaus, and to unify all linguistic groups in the region.

The following sections discuss the attitudes of respondents regarding language use as a medium of instruction in general, and parents' choice of language in schools for their children, and attitudes towards graphisation of Mesqan and use in the media.

#### **4.14.2 Language Choice for Medium of Instruction**

Attitudes towards languages are crucially influenced by the education functions they perform. This is mainly because education affects the individual's upward mobility, future progress, and ability to participate in many aspects of national life (Adegbija, 1994: 4). It is further noted that mother tongues which are selected for use in education tend to grow in esteem and recognition, and have their utility image boosted as they begin to attract to themselves considerable status because of their perceived pragmatic worth or value. Conversely, minority languages that are not used as a medium of instruction and not assigned other official functions generally tend to have lower esteem and recognition among the speakers and lower attitudes towards them.

Language attitudes tend to be affected by the functions that a language may fulfill within a given speech community as well as by its potential use in a range of linguistic domains, i.e. perceived practical and social worth of the language. (Guerini, 2008:2).

As discussed in Chapter 1, in the context of the Gurage languages, in which Mesqan is one, the medium of education in primary schools has been Amharic ever since formal education started.

In Mesqan Woreda, the community has not been given a chance to choose what language to be used as a medium of instruction and for administration and judiciary purposes. According to officials in the Woreda Education Office, the decision was passed at zonal level, and use of Amharic in education has continued as it were in the past regimes.

Given the right to choose, on average 91.3% of the respondents mention that they prefer Mesqan to be the medium of instruction in the Woreda. However, there are significant variations in their choice of Mesqan corresponding to their place of residence. Rural resident respondents in Mesqan Woreda show the highest level of interest in favor of mother tongue education, followed by Butajira and Yirgalem towns as shown in Table 62 below.

Table 60: Language choice as a medium of instruction

<i>Which language do you want to be the medium of instruction in schools?</i>	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira		Yirgalem		Total	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Mesqan</b>	524	95.1	113	88.3	57	70.3	694	91.3
<b>Amharic</b>	27	4.9	15	11.7	24	29.7	66	8.7
<b>Total</b>	551	100	128	100	81	100	760	100

Among the respondents, the overwhelming majority of parents, on average 94.6%, express their interest in the use of Mesqan as medium of instruction in schools where their children attend. The attitude towards use of Mesqan at the primary school could be reflective of their aspiration for fulfillment of their unmet desire for the use of their ethnic language in official domains.

Table 61: Parents' choice for medium of instruction in primary schools<sup>36</sup>

Do you want your children to be taught in Mesqan in primary schools?	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira		Yirgalem		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Yes	330	97.3	62	92.4	31	75.7	423	94.6
No	9	2.7	5	7.6	10	24.3	24	5.4
<b>Total</b>	339	100	67	100	41	100	447	100

The main reasons parents present for their choice of Mesqan vary depending on their place of residence and their concerns, which the mother tongue education is perceived to address. While most parents, on average 55%, in Mesqan Woreda and Butajira towns mention 'better knowledge of the culture' as the major reason for their choice of Mesqan as a medium of instruction and 30.6% of the parents in these places indicate that 'it helps to facilitate a better understanding of the lessons', 53.3% of parents in Yirgalem believe that 'knowledge of Mesqan' as primary reason for their support of mother tongue education. This is understandable given the fact that less than 4.5% of children in Yirgalem speak Mesqan.

On the other hand, the parents who do not like their children to be taught in Mesqan, on average 5.4%, mention unemployment as their major concern because it limits their chance to work in other parts of the country. Others also do have the perception that their children would lack the required knowledge if they were taught in Mesqan. These attitudes may not necessarily be attributed to their low level of esteem towards Mesqan. Instead, they tend to maintain these attitudes along with a strong interest in the development of the Mesqan language. This could be equated with what Adegbjia (1994:64) refers to as 'a general attitude of ambivalence' whereby the people express loyalty to their own language, on the one

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<sup>36</sup> This question is included to identify if there are people who choose their ethnic language to be used as a medium of instruction, but when it comes to their own children, they prefer to send them to a school where the medium of instruction is an international language or a local language (Amharic, in this case) used for wider communication.

hand, and the utility of another language because it is useful (instrumental motivation), on the other.

Respondents were also asked whether they would join if there were schools that teach in Mesqan. Accordingly, 90.7% in Mesqan Woreda, 86.4% in Butajira, and 76.5% in Yirgalem expressed their interest that they would attend. The majority, 74.6%, of those who refused to attend mentioned lack of time as their main concern.

To sum up, the findings generally elucidate that there is a strong interest for use of Mesqan as medium of instruction, and the majority of the parents show utmost desire for their children to be taught in Mesqan in primary schools. Despite the fact that the majority (73.4%) in Butajira and Yirgalem towns perceive Amharic as more useful to know compared to Mesqan (Refer to section 5.2), on average 81.3% (Table 63) in these towns want Mesqan to be the medium of instruction. This could suggest that the choices parents make about what language to have their children be educated in reflects their perceptions of identity but not of opportunity. As Cohen (2008:25-26) notes: “The choice of a language for primary education is a choice about identity, it says something about who we are, and it is also a choice about who we want our children to be and the opportunities that we hope will be open to them.” However, in this particular case, the parents’ choice of Mesqan for education purposes does not seem to have anything to do with opening prospects for their children, rather it could be viewed as an expression of their desire for Mesqan language to assume official status and to ensure transference of the language and culture to the next generation.

#### **4.15 Attitude towards Graphisation of Mesqan and Use in the Media**

Graphisation, according to Adegbija, (1992e:39), is “a linguistic baptism with a written life, essence, or existence. A graphicised language potentially receives the power to recreate, reproduce, and advertise itself in a new way. A language not graphicised, by contrast, tends to maintain only a local essence and existence. The

act of writing a language glorifies it and confers on it a status, which other non-written languages do not have. When a language is developed from its oral use into a written language and spreads into the public sphere, it creates a strong sense of value among the speakers. Similarly, languages acquire further status and esteem by the very fact of their being used in the media.”

Mesqan is not a written language and it is hardly possible to find any written document in Mesqan prepared for public consumption. It was found out that no efforts appear to be underway at Woreda, Zonal, or Regional levels, so far, towards graphisation of Mesqan.

As shown in Table 64 below, almost all respondents indicated that they want Mesqan to be a written language. Some of the major reasons they attribute to it include developing the status of the language and culture, maintaining the language, and getting official recognition and publicity.

Table 62: Attitude towards graphisation of Mesqan by place of residence

<i>Do you want Mesqan language to be written?</i>	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira		Yirgalem		Total	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Yes</b>	532	98.7	124	98.4	72	94.7	728	98.2
<b>No</b>	7	1.3	2	1.6	4	5.3	13	1.8
<b>Total</b>	539	100	126	100	76	100	741	100

The high level of the speakers’ interest about graphisation of Mesqan (98.2%) could point to their strong desire for development of Mesqan to a higher standard. This figure is higher compared to their attitude towards mother tongue education in Mesqan. The reason for this could be while graphisation endows a written status to their language, the preference of mother tongue education could have an implication on the future of their children. Similarly, respondents do have higher

interest in the use of Mesqan in the media. On average, 98% of the respondents want Mesqan to be broadcasted on the radio.<sup>37</sup>

Table 63: Attitude towards radio broadcast in Mesqan

<i>Do you want Mesqan to be broadcasted on the radio?</i>	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira		Yirgalem		Total	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	529	98.1	125	99.2	70	94.5	724	98.0
No	10	1.9	1	0.8	4	5.5	15	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>100</b>

The recent Language Policy which allows for mother tongue education for every ethno-linguistic group in Ethiopia and its implementation, particularly following the decision which allowed nationality languages the right to be used as a medium of instruction and administration, the attention given to it by the government, development of print and broadcast media in many other local languages appears to have contributed to the strong desire among Mesqan to be accorded the chance for the development of their language and culture.

#### 4.16 Summary

The findings, in general, show that there is a high-level perception towards usefulness of knowledge of Mesqan. This is also equally manifested in the attitude of the majority of the parents towards their children's knowledge of Mesqan. It could be maintained that language attitude and language use mutually influence each other. This generalization appears to be realistic in the case of Mesqan Woreda where there is the highest level of attitude towards Mesqan and the actual language use corresponds to their positive attitude. However, the findings in Yirgalem indicate a different picture. Despite the positive attitude of Mesqan in Yirgalem

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<sup>37</sup> Radio broadcasts in Mesqan Woreda including Butajira town, include regular Amharic, Oromo, and Debub radio broadcast services, and Silt'e and Marek'o (Libido) education broadcasts.

towards their in-group language and the strong desire expressed towards their children's knowledge of Mesqan, they barely use the language in the home domain and make very little effort to teach their children.

The perceived usefulness of Mesqan in comparison with Amharic shows that while the majority in the rural Mesqan Woreda indicates that Mesqan is more useful, most of the respondents in Butajira and Yirgalem towns feel that Amharic is more important to know. While respondents show a stronger desire to preserve or maintain and develop Mesqan, there seems to be an accommodative attitude among the majority towards other languages, particularly Amharic.

The value respondents attribute to Mesqan appears, in general, to relate to its symbolic role, as a reflection of their identity, and as one of the cultural and historical assets passed from generation to generation. At the same time, there is a tendency expressed through high demands for the use of Mesqan language as a medium of instruction and administration, broadcast in the mass media, and to be used in all other official forum in Mesqan Woreda. This points to a strong desire for a transition from the existing use of Mesqan in informal domains to a formal/official status and use.

On the other hand, despite such emerging tendencies, there exists no provision of formal institutional support or any visible efforts or planning geared towards the development of Mesqan language and culture at the Woreda level.

## CHAPTER SIX: LANGUAGE AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

### 4.17 Introduction

Language is considered as one of the major and salient components of ethnic identification. Understanding the link between language and ethnic identity requires exploring how and to what extent language use, proficiency, mother tongue and attitude influence formation of ethnic identity, and how ethnic identity, in turn, impact on language attitude and use.

Apart from the fluidity of issues of ethnic identity and/or ethnic self-identification and the place language holds in ethnic identity construction, examining such issues in the context of the Gurage group makes it a challenging but an interesting exercise. For one thing, the status of the Gurage as an *ethnic group* or as a conglomerate of different ethnolinguistic groups has been a contentious issue. Even more, the fact that various languages spoken by different speech communities exist in the Gurage group calls for careful examination to draw generalizations regarding the place language holds in ethnic self-identification. Markers of ethnic identity such as language, religion, clan membership, culture, common history, etc. can assume prominence in identity formation depending on the situation and the role they play in specific contexts.

In an attempt to examine the relationship between language and ethnic identity in Mesqan, this chapter, first, presents self-identification and its correlation with place of residence, literacy status, and occupation; and, perception towards ethnic membership. It further identifies the reciprocal influence of language use, attitude and proficiency against ethnic self-identification drawing from findings discussed in the preceding chapters. The nature of intensity of in-group contact maintained through membership in ethnic-based informal associations, religious gatherings, and in-group friendship and solidarity and its relationship with language attitude, use, and self-identification is discussed in the next section. Furthermore, the perception towards inter-ethnic marriage is presented in view of its relevance to the formation

of ethnolinguistic identity. The last sections focus on markers of ethnic identity and major factors that determine ethnic self-identification in Mesqan, and examine their prominence bound in contexts, and the place of language in ethnic identity formation. Finally, highlights of each section and generalizations drawn from the discussions are presented as a summary.

#### 4.18 Ethnic Self-identification

Based on information gathered from the study areas at the preliminary stage of the research on how Mesqan identify themselves, there are three main categories which are believed to situate self-identification among Mesqan: *Category 1: Gurage; Category 2: Mesqan; and, Category 3: Mesqan Gurage*. A brief description of what these categories refer to is presented as follows:

*Category 1: Gurage:* as noted in the first chapter, refers to ‘the various groups that inhabit or originate from the “Gurageland” proper. In this context, it is used to refer to an *umbrella ethnic group* embracing the constituent ethnolinguistic groups as a whole.

*Category 2: Mesqan:* in this context refers solely to Mesqan identity as a separate ethnic group.

*Category 3: Mesqan–Gurage:* It refers to an *amalgam identity*<sup>38</sup> comprising Mesqan and Gurage identities embedded in one category as an ethnic group.

The findings show that the majority of the respondents, on average 74.5%, identify themselves as Mesqan. The extent to which they identify themselves as Mesqan depicts a wider variation between rural and urban areas showing a correlation between places of residence with self-identification. While the largest numbers of respondents, i.e. 79.3%, in the rural Mesqan Woreda identify themselves as Mesqan,

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<sup>38</sup> I use ‘*amalgam ethnic Identity*’ as a term to refer to two identities fused into an integrated whole to produce one ethnic identity.

only 45.2% do so in Yirgalem town. Moreover, a significant number of respondents, on average 20.4%, identify themselves as Mesqan-Gurage which embodies an amalgam identity, i.e., a composite of Mesqan and Gurage identities. Self-identification as Mesqan-Gurage is found to be the highest in Yirgalem chosen with 32.1% of the respondents which could indicate their desire to maintain both Mesqan and Gurage identities together as they identify themselves.

Table 64: Self-identification by place of residence

Ethnic identity	Place of residence							
	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira town		Yirgalem town		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Gurage	8	1.4	12	9.2	19	22.7	39	5.1
Mesqan Gurage	106	19.3	23	17.7	27	32.1	157	20.4
Mesqan	436	79.3	95	73.1	38	45.2	572	74.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>768</b>	<b>100%</b>

As Table 64 shows, a negligible number of respondents, on average 5.1%, identify themselves as Gurage; the highest being in Yirgalem town (22.7%) and the lowest in Mesqan Woreda (1.4%).

The high degree of self-identification as Mesqan could show a general tendency of respondents to identify themselves and the desire to be identified by *others* as a separate ethnic group. However, it is also gathered that self-identification as Mesqan does not disregard their Gurage identity, rather it is kept on higher stratum, and they identify with it whenever the context calls for it. Identification as Gurage appears to have more preference as one moves away from the Gurageland to other urban areas.

Non-literate respondents (on average 81.1%) tend to identify more with Mesqan compared to literate ones (on average 70.9%) do. As shown in Table 67 below, in Yirgalem, while none of the non-literate respondents identifies himself/herself as

Gurage, 27.9% of the literate do. This could show that educational background of respondents has correlation with self-identification.

Table 65: Ethnic identity by literacy status and place of residence

	Mesqan Woreda				Butajira town				Yirgalem town				Total	
	Literate		Non-literate		Literate		Non-literate		Literate		Non-literate			
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
<b>Gurage</b>	5	1.5	3	1.3	11	10.6	1	4.0	19	27.9	0	0.0	39	5.1
<b>MesqanGurage</b>	74	22.7	32	14.3	17	16.3	6	24.0	19	27.9	8	50.0	156	20.4
<b>Mesqan</b>	247	75.8	189	84.4	76	73.1	18	72.0	30	44.2	8	50.0	568	74.5
<b>Total</b>	326	100	224	100	104	100	25	100	68	100	16	100	763	100

The variation in self-identification between literate and non-literate respondents is observed both in urban and rural areas. Exposure to formal education which allows for contact with students from diverse ethnic backgrounds may have influenced their view of ethnic identification to be more accommodative and loose, as compared to the non-literate who are confined to rural areas, and thus having contact networks mainly restricted to in-group members.

The majority of agricultural workers, on average 84.1%, identify themselves as Mesqan, 15.4% as Mesqan-Gurage, and 0.5% as Gurage. On the other hand, on average 62.6% of merchants identify as Mesqan, 37.4% as Mesqan-Gurage, and 5.2% as Gurage. The variation corresponding to agricultural workers and merchants may be due to differences in their lifestyles and contact networks arising from the nature of their occupation. While agricultural workers lead a sedentary lifestyle in their own localities and maintain stronger attachment to their group, the nature of the occupation of merchants which necessitate interactions with various groups of people in and/or outside of their localities, the way 'others' identify them, recognition of the benefits they gain from solidarity to guarantee their security, etc., could have contributed to developing a relatively broader and accommodative ethnic sentiments.

The results show that the respondents are proud of their Mesqan identity and on the average, 96% of respondents in the rural and urban areas express their pride in being Mesqan. Of these, those who can speak the language do not feel embarrassed about speaking Mesqan in front of others who do not share the same language with them.

Invariably, non-literate respondents show the highest rating in agreement with pride in Mesqan identity as compared to the literate. There was no significant gender difference in the level of pride exhibited by the respondents in this study except in Yirgalem where 93.3% of male and 86.8% of female respondents mention of their pride in their Mesqan identity.

Table 66: Pride in Mesqan identity by place of residence

<i>Are you proud that you are a member of Mesqan ethnic group?</i>	<b>Mesqan Woreda</b>		<b>Butajira Town</b>		<b>Yirgalem Town</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Yes</b>	523	97.0	122	95.3	75	90.4	720	96.0
<b>No</b>	16	3.0	6	4.7	8	9.6	30	4.0
<b>Total</b>	539	100	128	100	83	100	750	100

The ethnic pride shown by the majority of the respondents reflects the way they feel about their ethnic group. It also manifests the high value and esteem respondents have for their own ethnic language, culture, and history irrespective of the differences in their knowledge of one or more of these attributes about Mesqan. These findings, in general, show the ascribed distinctiveness of Mesqan identity among the respondents.

To sum up, the majority of respondents in all the sample sites identify themselves as Mesqan and it could be generalized that the degree of self-identification as Mesqan increases from urban to rural areas, from literate to non-literate respondents, and from merchants to agricultural workers which in turn depicts the correlation

between self-identification with place of residence, educational background, and occupation, respectively.

#### 4.19 Ethnic Self-Identification and Its Relationship with Language Use, and Attitude

Language is intrinsically intertwined with ethnic identity and more commonly, an ethnic group identifies itself with a specific language. Anzaldúa’s (1987) principle as cited in Gibson (2004:1) captures the language-identity fusion: “Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity-I am my language”. When in-group identity is salient, language holds a central place in identity formation, and in-group members are likely to switch to their in-group language, and use it to a greater extent (Giles & Coupland, 1991).

A comparison of Mesqan and Amharic mother tongue speakers shows that, on average, 77.3% (518) of Mesqan, and 55.1% (54) of Amharic mother tongue speakers identify themselves as Mesqan. Gurage identity is the least mentioned among Mesqan mother tongue speakers constituting only 2.7% (18); however, significant numbers of mother tongue speakers of Amharic, constituting 21.9%, identify themselves as Gurage. The amalgam identity, Mesqan-Gurage, which constitutes Mesqanness on the one hand and the broader identity of Gurageness on the other, is chosen by 19.8% and 25% of Mesqan and Amharic mother tongue speakers, respectively.

Table 67: Mesqan mother tongue speakers and self-identification

Mother Tongue		Gurage		Mesqan Gurage		Mesqan		Total	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Mesqan	Mesqan Woreda	4	0.8	99	19.1	415	80.1	518	100
	Butajira Town	10	9.0	18	16.2	83	74.8	111	100
	Yirgalem	4	10.8	15	40.5	18	48.7	37	100
	<b>Total</b>	18	2.7	132	19.8	516	77.5%	666	100

Table 68: Amharic mother tongue speakers and their self-identification

Mother Tongue		Gurage		Mesqan Gurage		Mesqan		Total	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Amharic	Mesqan Woreda	4	12.5	7	21.9	21	65.6	32	100
	Butajira Town	2	11.8	5	29.4	12	58.8	17	100
	Yirgalem	15	31.9	12	25.5	20	42.6	47	100
	<b>Total</b>	21	21.9	24	25.0	51	53.1	96	100

These findings suggest that there is a relationship between the ability to speak Mesqan and ascription to Mesqan identity: the greater the level of proficiency in Mesqan, the higher the likelihood for him or her to identify with Mesqan. In an article on Language and Ethnic Identity in sub-Saharan Africa, Obeng & Adegbiya (1999: 354) note that, “Each language, in effect, comprised a binding force that linked families (nuclear and extended), lineages, clans, and the entire ethnic group together. Thus, language constituted the storehouse of ethnicity, with each ethnic group expressing and identifying itself by the language it spoke.”

However, language may not always be a dominant feature of ethnic identity. A language which acts as a key marker of identity in one context could just hold a symbolic role in another context where it is given lower importance and is least used in the day-to-day interactions of the speakers. As shown in Table 70 above, 53.1% of respondents who speak Amharic as a mother tongue identify themselves as Mesqan. This could be further substantiated with the findings in Chapter 5 (Section 5.4) that, while 52.3% of rural respondents believe that knowledge of the in-group language is a necessary requirement in determining ones ethnic identity, the majority in Butajira and Yirgalem towns (72.4% and 91.4%, respectively) indicated that competency in Mesqan is not a factor in determining Mesqan identity. Despite the differences in their views, more than 90% of both urban and rural respondents prefer Mesqan to be used in official domains, i.e. medium of instruction, and the media. This could imply that knowledge of language may not be a necessary requirement to identify with an ethnic group but language can still hold a symbolic

function in the identity formation. In line with this, Gibson (2004:3) indicates that an ethnic group or an individual ascribing to that group may have a symbolic attachment to an associated language, but may use another more utilitarian language instead.

Consistent with the findings discussed above, respondents who have significantly increased perceptions of importance of the in-group language identify themselves as Mesqan. Positive attitude towards usefulness of the in-group language correlates with self-identification.

In general, the findings show mother tongue, language proficiency and attitudes towards in-group language correlate with in-group identification.

#### **4.20 In-group Contact and Ethnolinguistic Identity**

There are various contact mechanisms that Mesqan use for different purposes which contribute to maintain in-group cultural and religious traditions and ensure intergenerational transfer. The group interactions depend on the intent of the contact situation. This could involve regular weekly and monthly religious gatherings, *Debo* (collaborative work in rural areas), informal associations (such as *Āddār*, burial and mutual help associations), *Ākk'ub* (informal saving and credit association); marriage ceremonies, mourning, local markets, etc. Of these, religious gatherings such as *Səmmutt Sänga Lik'a* (a monthly gathering in which thousands of people participate), *Āsnäyn* (a weekly small-group gathering in which neighbours get-together every Monday) and *Dado* (a bi-weekly gathering of Muslim women on Sundays) play a pivotal role in facilitating frequent interactions and exchange of information among in-group members, and in cementing in-group solidarity. Though such gatherings are made on religious grounds, the social aspect appears to outweigh the spiritual side of it. The bi-weekly religious gathering of *Dado women*, which also has a mutual support component in times of mourning, could be taken as a best example (cf. Chapter 3).

In interpersonal relationships, the majority of respondents mention that they have many Mesqan friends, as shown in Table 69 below. However, the degree of

friendship with in-group members among Mesqan shows a pronounced variation between rural and urban areas, ranging from almost all the respondents in Mesqan Woreda to 69.9% in Yirgalem.

Table 69: Friendship among Mesqan by place of residence

<i>Do you have Mesqan friends?</i>	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira Town		Yirgalem Town		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
<b>Yes</b>	529	99.1	114	89.1	58	69.9	701	94.1
<b>No</b>	5	0.9	14	10.9	25	30.1	44	5.9
<b>Total</b>	534	100%	128	100%	83	100%	745	100%

Comparison within age categories further depicts that 100% of respondents in Mesqan Woreda and only 50% in Yirgalem under 15-24 age groups report having Mesqan friends. Consistent with findings discussed under ethnic identification, 100% of the non-literate in Yirgalem and Butajira towns, and only 62.7% of the literate in Yirgalem mention that they have Mesqan friends.

Table 70: Friendship among Mesqan by education

<i>Do you have Mesqan friends?</i>			Yes	No	Total
Mesqan Woreda	Literate	Freq.	311	3	314
		%	99.0	1.0	
	Non-literate	Freq.	215	2	217
		%	99.1	0.9	
Butajira town	Literate	Freq.	89	14	103
		%	86.4	13.6	
	Non-literate	Freq.	25	0	25
		%	100	0	
Yirgalem town	Literate	Freq.	42	25	67
		%	62.7	37.3	
	Non-literate	Freq.	16	0	16
		%	100	0	
<b>Total</b>	Freq.	698	44	742	
	%	94.1	5.9		

Participation in in-group informal associations, such as in neighborhood social affairs, *፳፻፩*, *፳፻፪*, mutual help, and religious associations, apart from its significance as a basis of economic and social development, could be linked with the tendency to associate with one's own group members and strengthen solidarity. The majority, on the average 79.1%, are members of informal associations. Comparison across place of residence shows that such membership is widely practiced in Mesqan Woreda as reported by 87.9%, but least practiced in Yirgalem, 47.0%. Of course, these associations appear to be age-restrictive; those who participate in such associations are head of households and elderly people.

Table 71: Participation in in-group informal associations by place of residence

<i>Are you a member of in-group informal associations mostly composed of Mesqan?</i>	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira Town		Yirgalem Town		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
	<b>Yes</b>	470	87.9	79	63.2	39	47.0	588
<b>No</b>	65	12.1	46	36.8	44	53.0	155	20.9
<b>Total</b>	535	100%	125	100%	83	100%	743	100%

Apart from significant variations in urban and rural areas, the literacy level of respondents appears to have correlation with the degree of participation in informal associations. As shown in Table 74 below, non-literate respondents tend to maintain frequent contact with in-group members through involvement in associations comprising Mesqan much more than literate ones do. In Butajira and Yirgalem towns, on average, 75.6% of the non-literate and 52.1% of literate respondents report that they are members of in-group informal associations.

Table 72: Participation in in-group informal associations by education

Are you a <i>member of informal associations mostly composed of Mesqan?</i>	Mesqan Woreda				Butajira town				Yirgalem town				Total	
	Literate		Non-literate		Literate		Non-literate		Literate		Non-literate			
	Freq	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq.	%
<b>Yes</b>	262	83.2	205	94.5	59	59.0	20	80.0	28	41.8	11	68.8	585	79.0
<b>No</b>	53	16.8	12	5.5	41	41.0	5	20.0	39	58.2	5	31.2	155	21.0
<b>Total</b>	315	100	217	100	100	100	25	100	67	100	16	100	740	100

Settlement pattern and population size appears to have a visible effect on establishing and maintaining in-group contact and solidarity among the in-group members in Yirgalem. Comparison of responses within Yirgalem shows that Mesqan residing in Arada area, which is largely dominated by Mesqan, have maintained a complex network of in-group contact facilitated through informal associations (see section 3.7.3). The frequency of in-group contact has provided, relatively, a better platform to establish stronger sense of ethnic-based solidarity, higher perceptions of usefulness of Mesqan, attitude, a better command of the Mesqan language by the youth and high in-group self identification as compared to members who reside in scattered manner and in loose contact situation in Sidetegna area.<sup>39</sup> This network of relationships goes with Palmisano's (2002:166) observation that "as the Gurage migrate to urban areas, the structure of relationships in the village is reproduced in the urban context in the single *Sefer*, and one can often observe in the different areas of town, the pattern of neighbourhood relationships among the residing Gurage clans, which is the exact reproduction of the pattern of relationship they have in the rural context." The same holds true in Yirgalem town, where Mesqan dominantly reside in a specific *sefer*, *Arada*, while the Kistane reside in another place. Though Mesqan constitute the great majority in Butajira, a similar pattern of

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<sup>39</sup> *Sidetegna* and *Arada* are place names in Yirgalem town.

relationships is observed among Mesqan and Kistane residents, defining the intra-group contact situations

Except in the cases of religious gatherings which mostly involve adults and elderly members, meetings of the informal associations in Yirgalem, which involve Mesqan participants, are conducted through Amharic. The minimal attention elders give to Mesqan language in such and other domains of use could be one of the main reasons for the loose intergenerational transfer of in-group language to the youth and children in Yirgalem.

In general, in line with the findings in the previous sub sections, it is found that the frequency of contacts with in-group language speakers is intense more among rural than urban residents, older to younger age groups, and non-literate to literate people. This is in turn related to in-group language proficiency, attitude, and use, and with self-identification. The greater the reported in-group contact, and the greater the perceived usefulness of the language and increased language use, the higher the proficiency in the in-group language, and hence, the higher the degree of ethnic self-identification with Mesqan.

#### 4.21 Inter-ethnic Marriage

The perceptions regarding inter-ethnic marriage in general depicts that while, on average, 62.8% of the respondents favor in-group marriage, 37.2% of them approve inter-ethnic marriage, as shown in Table 73 below. Comparison along place of residence indicates that marriage with an out-group is highly valued positively by 54.2% of the respondents in Yirgalem.

Table 73: Perceptions towards inter-ethnic marriage

<i>Do you mind if a Mesqan is married to an out-group person?</i>	<b>Mesqan Woreda</b>		<b>Butajira Town</b>		<b>Yirgalem Town</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
<b>Yes</b>	354	65.4	80	63.3	38	45.8	472	62.8
<b>No</b>	187	34.6	47	36.7	45	54.2	279	37.2
<b>Total</b>	541	100%	127	100%	83	100%	751	100%

Apart from the variation in perceptions among respondents residing in urban and rural areas, a pronounced gap is observed in responses between literate and non-literate respondents; i.e. 50.8% and 83.8%, respectively, disapprove of inter-ethnic marriage. Likewise, comparison across age groups indicates that younger respondents have positive attitude towards inter-ethnic marriage as compared to older respondents.

As shown in Table 76 below, on average 81.3% of the respondents have Mesqan partners. There is a high degree of disparity between Mesqan Woreda and Butajira as compared to Yirgalem town, i.e. 13% in Mesqan Woreda, 24.2% Butajira Town, and 54.2% Yirgalem town are married to non-Mesqan.

Table 74: Ethnic membership of respondents' partners

<i>Which ethnic group does your partner belong to?</i>	<b>Mesqan Woreda</b>		<b>Butajira Town</b>		<b>Yirgalem</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Mesqan</b>	335	87.0	66	75.8	22	45.8	423	81.3
<b>Silt'i</b>	32	8.2	17	19.7	18	37.5	67	12.9
<b>Kistane</b>	9	2.5	1	1.1	3	6.3	13	2.5
<b>Dobi</b>	3	0.7	1	1.1	2	4.1	6	1.2
<b>Other</b>	6	1.6	2	2.3	3	6.3	11	2.1
<b>Total</b>	385	100%	87	100%	48	100%	520	100

It is also found that 63.1% of the literate and 87.8% of the non-literate respondents do have Mesqan partners. However, the gap in frequency between literate and non-literate respondents married to Mesqan widens from rural to urban areas; for instance, 75% of the non-literate and 37.3% of the literate respondents in Yirgalem have Mesqan partners. Cross-tabulation of findings from Chapter 3 shows that on average, 87.5% of the non-literate compared to 53.3% of the literate respondents in Yirgalem and Butajira towns, use Mesqan with their partners. This could indicate the link between in-group marriage and language use of partners as it gives them

the opportunity to use their ethnic language at home in casual conversations, and let their children acquire the language.

Comparison of the frequency of inter-ethnic marriage with neighboring ethnic groups shows that 37.5% of respondents in Yirgalem and 19.7% in Butajira towns have Silt'e<sup>40</sup> partners which could be attributed to their similar religious affiliation, i.e. Islam.

Findings from key informant interviews also shows that Mesqan in general prefer to get married to Mesqan; however, there is no strict prohibitions of inter-ethnic marriage and that it has been a common practice for long. However, due to differences in religion, Christian Mesqan do not usually get married to Silt'e women as they are Muslims. If not a Mesqan, they prefer to get married to Kistane and Dobbi women. (see section 3.5).

As a patrilineal community, children born from inter-ethnic marriage identify themselves as their fathers' ethnic group. It follows that despite the ethnolinguistic background of the mothers, children acquire their fathers' language as a mother tongue. In such a context, it could be noted that mother tongue and self-identification directly correlate with the ethnic membership of the men.

To sum up, the findings indicate that perception towards inter - ethnic marriage in general point to observable degree of correspondence with the degree of in-group vitality perception, language use and self-identification. In a situation where the majority of the in-group members do have strong attachment to Mesqan as their mother tongue, high proficiency, positive attitude and use, and high intensity of in-group contact there is a greater tendency to favor intra-ethnic marriage. This would in turn entail intergenerational transfer and maintenance of in-group language.

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<sup>40</sup> Silt'e is a neighboring ethnic group to Mesqan. The Silt'e Zone has a long line of geographic boundary with Mesqan Woreda. Among other factors, religion has played a greater role in establishing long years of bond between the two ethnic groups (refer to Chapter 3 for details).

## 4.22 Knowledge of Mesqan History and Culture

There is widespread recognition of the role of the history and culture in ethnic identity formation. Specifically, the vast majority of adults and elders agree that the in-group history and the cultural heritage is an important precursor of Mesqan identity.

Most of the respondents, on average 54.5%, mention that they know much about Mesqan culture and history. However, as shown in Table 77, there is a marked variation among respondents residing in urban and rural areas, i.e., on average 40.6% in Butajira and Yirgalem towns compared to 59.9% in the rural Mesqan Woreda know about Mesqan. The majority of the respondents, about 67%, in Yirgalem has little knowledge or do not completely know about the culture and history of Mesqan.

Table 75: Knowledge of Mesqan history and culture by place of residence

<i>Do you know about Mesqan history and culture?</i>	<b>Mesqan Woreda</b>		<b>Butajira Town</b>		<b>Yirgalem Town</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
<b>I know much</b>	330	59.9	59	45.7	27	32.5	416	54.5
<b>I know little</b>	193	35.0	59	45.7	33	39.8	285	37.4
<b>I do not know</b>	28	5.1	11	8.6	23	27.7	62	8.1
<b>Total</b>	551	100%	129	100%	83	100%	763	100%

Comparison among age groups indicates correlation between age and knowledge of history and culture of Mesqan, i.e., it increases with an increase in age. While 40.1% of the respondents within the age cohort of 15-24 know the least, 70.6% of those within 50 and above years of age know much about Mesqan history and culture. Over 93% of the respondents state that they got the information from their families. Only 7.0% of young respondents in Yirgalem mention that they know about Mesqan. Although the older generation in Yirgalem has still maintained most of the patterns of rural social life and continuity with rural life (through possession of

farmland<sup>41</sup> in the rural area, attendance in *Lik'a*, visiting relatives in Mesqan Woreda, attendance in wedding and burial ceremonies, etc.), the urban-rural connection seems to have become very loose among the younger generation (cf. section 3.6).

Table 76: Knowledge of Mesqan history and culture by age

Do you know about Mesqan history and culture?	Age Group							
	15 – 24 yrs		25 – 49 yrs		50 & above yrs		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
<b>I know much</b>	87	41.8	259	56.7	72	70.6	418	54.5
<b>I know little</b>	98	47.1	166	36.3	23	22.5	287	37.4
<b>I do not know</b>	23	11.1	32	7.0	7	6.9	62	8.1
<b>Total</b>	208	100%	457	100%	102	100%	767	100

The perceptions of respondents regarding the uniqueness of Mesqan culture outweighs their actual knowledge noted above. More than three-fourth of the respondents believe that Mesqan has its own culture different from the neighboring ethnic groups. However, of those who affirm their knowledge of the culture and history, the majority have managed to mention only *Səmmutt Sänga Lik'a*, *Dado*, and Mesqan songs, and very few of them about *the Sera*.

Table 77: Perceptions about uniqueness of Mesqan culture

Is there unique culture of Mesqan different from neighboring ethnic groups?	Mesqan Woreda		Butajira Town		Yirgalem Town		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
<b>Yes</b>	430	79.9	101	84.7	32	40.7	563	76.5
<b>No</b>	108	20.1	18	15.3	47	59.3	173	23.5
<b>Total</b>	538	100%	119	100%	79	100%	736	100%

<sup>41</sup> For the elderly, this is in conformity with what Feqade (170:210) notes as “The Gurage attitude that a person who does not maintain his farm is considered as “rootless” even though he is well-established in the city and has no need for the farm.”

It could be observed that intergenerational transfer of knowledge about the peculiar culture and history of Mesqan is declining, particularly among urban residents. The attachment elders have sustained with their place of origin seems to be losing ground to the urban lifestyle among the youth owing to lack of a deliberate effort to maintain the link among the elderly. Coupled with other factors, their minimal knowledge about the culture, history, and discontinuity with the rural areas could have contributed to the relatively low level of ethnolinguistic vitality perceptions, language proficiency, and self-identification among the youth in the urban areas.

Generally, the more individuals have knowledge about their in-group's history and culture, the greater the tendency for them to self-identify with Mesqan. However, comparison between degree of self identification and knowledge of in-group's history and culture reveals that while knowledge of the culture and history contributes to in-group self-identification, it is not a determinant marker of ethnic self-identification as attested by more than 40%<sup>42</sup> of respondents who hardly know the culture and history self-identify with Mesqan or Mesqan Gurage.

Lack of institutional support to preserve the in-group culture and history and to develop the language is noted as a serious issue requiring attention at all levels. Elders repeatedly mention of their growing concern about the neglect towards Mesqan language, culture and history, on the one hand, and the rising tendency of the younger generation towards the urban culture which is creeping into even the rural areas, on the other.

#### **4.23 Markers of Mesqan Ethnic Identity**

Markers of identity such as religion, clan membership, language, common history, culture, etc. assume prominence depending on the situation and the role they play in specific contexts. Determining one or more of the significant markers of ethnic identity is dependent on the context and the role they play in those specific

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<sup>42</sup> As shown in Table 64, while 94.9% of the respondents identify themselves as Mesqan or Mesqan Gurage, only 54.5% (Table 75) know about the culture and history of Mesqan.

situations. A marker which is prominent in one context may be less important or insignificant in another context.

In Mesqan, religion does not have a special significance in the formation of ethnic identity of the group. Though Islam had been introduced to Mesqan at the time of Ahmed Gagn (around 15<sup>th</sup> century), it was since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that Islam has come to be the dominant religion. (Chapter 3, Section 3.6) Though it could be said that *Səmmutt Sänga Lik'a* has contributed to the spread of Islam, Mesqanness has little to do with the religion or *Səmmutt Sänga Lik'a*. Mesqan have not been considered fanatic Muslims or Christians. Until recently, both Muslims and Christians used to celebrate religious festivities together. Bustorf (2005:2) notes that, "Religion is not the main point in Gurage identity, in general, because they are Protestants, Ethiopian Orthodox Christians or followers of traditional religions. However, Islam is part of the identity concept of the great majority of the Silt'e/Wolane and Mesqan, and Christianity for Kistane and Zay, i.e., even if all the three branches of religion are to be found among Gurage, there are certain groups which are predominantly either Christian or Muslim.

Mesqan give much attention to the cultural norms and values which have been passed on from generations to generations rather than to religious rules. As discussed in Chapter 2, the traditional system of administration, the *Gudda Sera*, 'traditional system of arbitration', *Färagäzännä Sera* 'traditional supreme court', *Yalfata Sera* 'mourning rules', *Yäšäbe sera* 'marriage rules, etc. do have a strong cultural base and acceptance within the community. Unlike other casual interactions in which other languages may be used, such cultural practices are conducted through Mesqan language.

Ancestral lineage is also an important factor in the social organization of Mesqan. The *Səl and Sər Sera*, (see chapter 3 for details), a system of traditional administration in Mesqan, was strictly clan-based. For instance, the leader, known as Azmach, who had all administrative and legislative power could only be assigned from the *Shado* clan, and military leadership run by the Abegaz was selected from

the *Bade* Clan. Moreover, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, particularly at the highest level of the traditional judicial system, followed clan-based assignment. The *Fāragāzāññä* traditional judiciary system, which is still in practice, could only be managed through descendants of *Sheh Usman*. In cases where a person commits murder, and is fined by the *Fāragāzāññä*, the money would be contributed from members of his clan wherever they live. Furthermore, during the early years when the major ancestors of Mesqan inhabited the present Mesqan land, and in subsequent years, the settlement pattern was clan-based which run parallel from the Gurage highlands down to the plateau and lowland areas. These would suggest that clan could be considered one of the features of identity formation in Mesqan. However, clan has more relevance to the internal organization of the ethnic group than to the whole. Reference to clan as a sign of self-identification points to segmentation below the level of the ethnic group. Hence, in Mesqan, clan could be indexical to ethnic identity in specific situations such as traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, marital relationships, and mourning rituals.

The inspirational songs and the lyrics expressed through music have been felt by the people far more than mere entertainment and serve as symbolic expression of Mesqan cultural heritage and history. As noted in Chapter 3, the songs are reported to be one of the cultural expressions peculiar to Mesqan. However, the beat of the music and the dance is similar to the other Gurage groups, the difference lies in the use of Mesqan language in the lyrics and the content imparted through them. Hence, this could further strengthen the assertion that language is a key factor for the formation of Mesqan identity.

Apart from ethnic sentiments which have been fuelled by the ethnic-based politics of EPRDF, Mesqan ethnic identity seems to be constructed primarily through peculiarities in language, culture, and history which are in contradistinction to their neighboring ethnolinguistic groups, i.e., differences, which may be actual or exaggerated, are given maximal consideration so as to fit into their ascribed identity.

In sum, in order to determine markers of ethnic identity and the place language holds in the identity formation, it is important to examine the prominence of the markers in different contexts. In a context where the in-group language is dominantly used as a mother tongue, the language serves as a key index of ethnic identity, as in the case of rural Mesqan Woreda, and there is a greater tendency to identify as Mesqan. Conversely, where language is not an important precursor of ethnic identity, as in the case of Yirgalem town, language plays a secondary role in the identity construction.

#### **4.24 Summary**

In view of the complexity of issues pertinent to the Gurage identity as an ethnic group or its constituent groups as independent ethnolinguistic groups, the discussions centered on the relationship between language and ethnic identity and the reciprocal influence they have on each other.

In Gurage, the subject of language and ethnic identity has been a very sensitive issue and it has made the selection of one common language from the group for official functions a very challenging exercise. A number of reasons could be attributed to this. The Gurage cluster is known for existence of different languages and dialects and each group having a strong attachment to its own mother tongue. In such a context, where each linguistic group identifies itself with the language it speaks, and where language is intrinsically tied up with ethnic membership, choosing one of the languages or dialects as an official language for Zonal administration and education functions could have unprecedented ramifications. On the other hand, it is felt equally difficult to allow all the languages and dialects an official status in their respective Woredas for fear that it would fuel internal disintegration in the Gurage group. Thus, absence of a common ethnic language used as a mother tongue for the Gurage group could be a major factor, albeit not the only one, for segmentation of ethnic identities within the Gurage cluster; i.e. the ethnolinguistic groups within the Gurage Cluster tend to identify with the language

they speak. This provides a stronger case to justify the inherent link between language and ethnic identity.

In general, most of the rural residents, agricultural workers, and non-literate respondents identify themselves as Mesqan compared to urban residents, merchants, and literate respondents. Ascriptions of ethnic self-identification as Mesqan, Mesqan-Gurage, or Gurage can alternatively be used depending on geographic contexts, *others'* ascriptions, and the motives of the individuals. Respondents who identify themselves as Mesqan also recognize their Gurage identity, and they identify themselves with it as the context calls for it.

The findings attest that language is indexical to identity. As a marker of identity, language assumes prominence in a context where it is dominantly used as a first language in the day-to-day interactions of the community. The extent to which the speakers have positive attitude towards their in-group language also determines the place language holds in the construction of ethnic identity.

Knowledge of the culture and history of the ethnic group significantly contributes to self-identification with the ethnic group. Yet, as in-group members with little awareness about the culture and history identify with Mesqan, it may not be a necessary prerequisite for ethnic self-identification.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The thesis explored the socio-cultural context and the language use, attitude, and ethnic identity of the Mesqan ethnolinguistic group. Both quantitative and qualitative data collected from ethnic Mesqan residing in Mesqan Woreda, Butajira town, and Yirgalem town were used for the study. A representative sample of 775 people was selected for the study and eight knowledgeable elders were used as key informants.

The findings reveal that bilingualism in Mesqan and Amharic is a common phenomenon among the Mesqan community and that there is a declining rate of monolinguals in Mesqan. In the rural areas, children remain monolinguals in Mesqan prior to attendance in school. Generational transfer of Mesqan as a mother tongue decreases from rural to urban areas and there is a steady increase of Amharic mother tongue speakers among the youth.

Mesqan is dominantly used as a first language and Amharic as the second most preferred language in Mesqan Woreda and Butajira. Conversely, Amharic is used as a first language, and Mesqan is reduced to secret talk among the elderly in Yirgalem. In general, Mesqan and Amharic do not seem to compete for realization in the same domains and functions, i.e. Amharic is associated with formal and Mesqan with informal domains. This indicates that the Mesqan community is characterized by stable bilingualism. Those who consistently speak Mesqan with family members, friends, and neighbors are Mesqan who were brought up in the rural Mesqan Woreda, rural residents, non-literate, farmers,

Domain analysis of language use has proved to be the right model to designate the major clusters of interaction situations that occur in particular multilingual settings and to understand language use in relation to widespread socio-cultural norms and expectations (Fishman 1972: 19). The findings showed two major clusters, namely, formal and non-formal domains of language use. While it is true that the language use in most non-formal domains are governed by the prevailing socio-cultural norms

and expectations, language/s people use in the formal domains (such as in education and administration) could be prescribed by political actors. Thus, domain analysis needs to take both *internal* (socio-cultural norms) and *external* (political decisions) factors into account to better understand language use situations. The model primarily addresses major clusters of interaction situations that occur in particular multilingual settings at the societal/group level, without paying heed to the *individual* as a centre of analysis, which may include emotional states, dreaming, etc.

The study revealed an intrinsic link between language and culture. The exclusive use of the in-group language in cultural domains, such as in blessing, cursing, and *Yalfata sera* 'rules of mourning', *Yäšäbe sera* 'rules of marriage', and *Färagäzäññä Sera*<sup>43</sup> 'traditional justice system', conveys a symbolic function in expressing the values, beliefs, and behavior patterns of the community (cf. Chapter 3). On the other hand, the fact that these cultural domains necessitate use of the ethnic language, in turn, depicts the influence culture has on language use. This justifies not only the reciprocal influence but also the inextricable bond existing between language and culture.

In line with language use and attitude, it is found that mother-tongue proficiency in Mesqan accompanied with high intensity of use in various domains significantly contribute to positive attitude towards the in-group language. However, the reverse is not always true. Positive attitude towards the in-group language does not necessarily translate into actual language use in the home or other domains. This is evidenced by language use of ethnic Mesqan in Yirgalem who often speak Amharic in their day-to-day interactions but have shown high attitude towards the in-group language which they seldom use. Hence, the relationship between language attitude and language use may not be direct and co-dependent.

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<sup>43</sup> The *Färagäzäññä Sera* which has been in practice in Mesqan for centuries has not been studied so far and presents an interesting area of research.

The findings pertinent to language and ethnic identity in general attest that there is an inherent relationship between the two. Depending on the prominence of the in-group language in the community, the language–ethnic identity bond could be categorized into two: strong and weak. In the former case, the ethnic language is dominantly used as a mother tongue in various domains, and language serves as a key index of ethnic identity – marking the boundary between in-group members and *others*. The latter represents a situation in which the ethnic language is least used in the day-to-day interactions of the speakers, and the ethnic language just holds a symbolic role in the identity construction. Speakers who do not even know their ethnic language identify with the ethnolinguistic group. This shows that language use of in-group members does not necessarily relate to ethnic self-identification.

Lack of institutional support to preserve the in-group culture and history and to develop the language is noted as a serious issue requiring attention at all levels. Elders repeatedly mention their growing concern about the neglect towards the Mesqan language, culture and history, on the one hand, and the rising tendency of the younger generation towards the urban culture which is creeping into the rural areas. It appears important to recognize the linguistic and cultural differences in the Gurage groups while strengthening the commonalities. As a step forward, there is a need to make the necessary preparations to teach each language as a subject in schools while maintaining the established practice as it is.

## 7.1 Implications of the Research

Apart from the general contributions to sociolinguistic studies, and to our knowledge of the Mesqan language and people, the study has various theoretical, methodological, and practical implications:

- In order to study the interrelationships between language use, attitude, and ethnic identity, there is a need to use a comprehensive conceptual framework which encompasses both linguistic and cultural aspects [Beyond describing language use in different domains, or attitudes, etc., it can explain *WHY*.]

- Understanding the social and cultural fabric of an ethnolinguistic group is an essential element for an in-depth interpretation of a sociolinguistic data and analysis.
- Beyond quantitative questionnaire –based survey, which is the most common in various sociolinguistic studies, there is a need to use in-depth ethnographic investigation into social, cultural, and institutional domains. This implies that sociolinguists have to be equipped with ethnographic approaches.
- **Language and Culture Policy:-** Policy decisions need to be based on in-depth investigations taking into account the perspectives and attitudes of the speech community, patterns of language use, and external and internal opportunities and constraints that may avail themselves as a result of choosing one or the other, for instance in education, as well as the perception of the communities towards these opportunities and constraints - the Mesqan situation is instructive
- **Language and Culture Development:-** While the use of the ethnic language in formal domains such as in the media, and education, and development of the language and culture, etc., have to be encouraged and strengthened, care should always be taken in dealing with issues of language change, endangerment, loss, and subsequent measures with regard to retention and revitalization based on superficial parameters by making issues out of non-issues. i.e. it has to be context-specific and responsive to community needs than being driven by politically motivated or elite-led decisions. For instance, in the case of Mesqan, the strong interest people have towards their language to be used in the media, education, etc., does not emanate from feelings of historical oppression/imposition or perceived endangerment of their language/culture
- Although the issue of identity is in a continuous flux, which is defined and redefined depending on different factors, the case of the Gurage calls for

serious consideration. Understanding the Gurage identity defies explanations based on broad primordial factors such as language, history, religion, territory, etc.

- Generally, studies conducted on the Gurage so far focus on a specific group and tend to generalize about the whole Gurage. Such tendencies, apart from being myopic and incomplete and making the validity of the generalizations questionable, appear to generate feelings of discontent

## 7.2 Contributions to Existing Knowledge

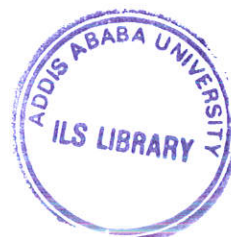
- The study on Mesqan suggests that a better approach to understanding 'social/ethnic identities' should start from understanding the 'groups' and 'sub-groups' i.e. reversing the 'top-down' approach, which is the most common so far, to 'bottom-up' – building from below. Many instances in support of this could be, for ex., continuous split, and merger of groups and administrative divisions, and the constant question of ethnic identities.
- There is seemingly a valid argument on the part of the politicians that studying different groups as separate entities capitalizes on and expands differences, although this has not solved the problems related to the issue of identity in the Gurage, and can be repudiated because ignoring realities does not help address problems as it can only be temporary .
- Conversely, understanding the differences based on local attitudes, perceptions, etc., does not inhibit building on or strengthening the similarities towards cultivating and nurturing the values of tolerance, accommodation and understanding for setting and achieving common goals.
- Instead, having a clear understanding of the differences in the Gurage contributes to laying solid foundation to making informed-choices, sustainably dealing with recurring problems, and developing shared vision by those primarily concerned.

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## APPENDIX 1

### POPULATION SIZE BY SEX AND BY WOREDA

Name of Woreda	Population		
	Male	Female	Total
Kebena-Woreda	27,219	27,454	54,673
Abeshge Woreda	33982	30,268	64,251
Ezha Woreda	42,798	47,464	90,262
Kokir Gedebano Woreda	47,690	52,656	100,346
Soddo Woreda	71,363	71,803	143,166
Mesqan Woreda	83,361	86,655	170,016
Mareqo Woreda	34,235	33,221	67,456
Endegagn Woreda	24,293	27,974	52,267
Gumer Woreda	39,859	45,384	85,243
Cheha Woreda	60,432	62,833	123,265
Enemorna Ener Woreda	84,251	94,124	178,375
Muher and Aklil Woreda	43,104	49,179	92,283
Geta Woreda	35,093	38,741	73,834
Wolqit'e (Town) Woreda	16,023	14,662	30685
Butajira (Town) Woreda	17,984	17,525	35,509
Gurage Zone Total	661,688	699,943	1,361, 631

**Source:** National Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia, 2010

## APPENDIX 2

### STUDENTS BY INSTITUTIONS, LEVELS, AND SEX IN

#### MESQAN WOREDA

Name of School/Institution	No. of Schools/ Institutions	Number of Students by Sex		
		Male	Female	Total
College	2	932	241	1173
Technical School	1	371	347	718
Comprehensive High School (Grade 9-12)	1	3506	2144	5650
Elementary and Junior (Grade 1-8)	4	4003	4458	8461
Kindergarten	12	489	455	944
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>9301</b>	<b>7645</b>	<b>16,946</b>

**SOURCE:** Butajira City Administration Education Office, 2009

## APPENDIX 3

### RURAL KEBELE FARMERS' ASSOCIATIONS IN MESQAN WOREDA

Name of Kebele Farmers' Associations	Male	Female	Total	
Meserete Wegeram			7445	
Dega Gogot			3336	
Sost Amba			2567	
<b>Dirama</b>	<b>1356</b>	<b>1420</b>	<b>2776</b>	<b>Center</b>
Wolensho - 1			2706	

<b>Name of Kebele Farmers' Associations</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	
Wolensho - 2			3956	
Shershera Bido			2334	
Shershera Meshmenna			1833	
<b>Jole -1</b>	<b>1847</b>	<b>1865</b>	<b>3712</b>	<b>Bordering with Kistane</b>
Jole - 2			6934	
Emerwacho - 1			2881	
Emerwacho - 2			3154	
Emerwacho - 3			4499	
Wit'a			3103	
Semien Shershera			2618	
<b>Goiban</b>	<b>2303</b>	<b>2845</b>	<b>5148</b>	<b>Bordering with Dobb</b>
Meqicho			4819	
Yetebon			7229	
<b>Misraq Enbor</b>	<b>2029</b>	<b>2147</b>	<b>3912</b>	<b>Center</b>
Debub Shershera			2462	
Ile			3216	Center
Dobbenna Bate			551	
Bamo			4655	
<b>Ocha Geneme</b>	<b>2170</b>	<b>2114</b>	<b>4284</b>	<b>Center</b>
<b>Weja Bate</b>	<b>1445</b>	<b>1396</b>	<b>2842</b>	<b>Center</b>
Dida			7357	
<b>Bati Lejano</b>	<b>2538</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>5047</b>	<b>Center</b>
Dobbenna			2452	
Beresa			3446	
Debbo T'utt'o			2091	
<b>Misraq Mesqan</b>	<b>1870</b>	<b>1882</b>	<b>3752</b>	<b>Center</b>

Name of Kebele Farmers' Associations	Male	Female	Total	
Merab Mesqan	1691	1760	3450	
<b>Merab Embor</b>	<b>2029</b>	<b>2147</b>	<b>4176</b>	<b>Bordering with Muher</b>
Gide -na Aborrat			6765	
Wurib			5995	
<b>Mikaelo</b>	<b>3266</b>	<b>3114</b>	<b>6380</b>	<b>Bordering with Silt'i</b>
Inseno Usme			2890	
<b>Bate Fut'o</b>	<b>2374</b>	<b>2332</b>	<b>4706</b>	<b>Bordering with Libido</b>
Beche Bulchano			3741	
Dobbi			6750	Not Mesqan

## APPENDIX 4

### AMHARIC QUESTIONNAIRES

#### መጠይቅ

#### I. አጠቃላይ ሁኔታ

##### 1. ዕድሜ:

ሀ) ከ 15 – 25                      ሐ) ከ 35 – 50

ለ) ከ 25 – 35                      መ) ከ 50 በላይ

##### 2. ያታ:

ሀ) ወንድ                              ለ) ሴት

##### 3. ሥራ:

ሀ) ተማሪ

ሠ) ግብርና

ለ) ነጋዴ

ረ) የቤት እመቤት

ሐ) የመንግሥት ሠራተኛ/የግል ድርጅት ሠራተኛ

ሰ) ሌላ \_\_\_\_\_

##### 4. የትዳር ሁኔታ:-

ሀ) ባለትዳር

ለ) ያላገባ/ች

##### 5. ሃይማኖት:

ሀ) ሙስሊም (ወደ ጥያቄ 7 ሂድ/ጅ)

ለ) ክርስቲያን

##### 6. ክርስቲያን ከሆኑ:

ሀ) ኦርቶዶክስ

ለ) ፕሮቴስታንት

ሐ) ካቶሊክ

##### 7. የትምህርት ሁኔታ:

ሀ) የተማሩ

ለ) ያልተማሩ (ወደ ጥያቄ 9 ሂድ/ጅ)

##### 8. የተማሩ ከሆነ የትምህርት ደረጃዎ:

ሀ) ማንበብ እና መጻፍ

መ) ሁለተኛ ደረጃ

ለ) አንደኛ ደረጃ

ሠ) ኮሌጅ እና ከዚያ በላይ

ሐ) መለስተኛ ሁለተኛ ደረጃ

9. የተወለዱበት ቦታ:

ሀ) ቡታጅራ ከተማ

መ) ይርጋለም

ለ) ቡታጅራ ገጠር

ሠ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ\_\_\_\_\_

ሐ) እንሴኖ

10. ያደጉበት አካባቢ:

ሀ) ቡታጅራ ከተማ

መ) ይርጋለም

ለ) ቡታጅራ ገጠር

ሠ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ\_\_\_\_\_

ሐ) እንሴኖ

11. አሁን የሚኖሩበት አካባቢ:

ሀ) ቡታጅራ ከተማ

መ) ይርጋለም

ለ) ቡታጅራ ገጠር

ሠ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ

ሐ) እንሴኖ

12. የአፍ መፍቻ ቋንቋዎ:

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ

13. መናገር የሚችሉት ሌላ ቋንቋ (ከአንድ በላይ መክበብ ይቻላል):

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ

14. በመስማት ብቻ የሚረዱት ቋንቋ:

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ

15. በደንብ መቻል የሚፈልጉት

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለፁ

16. የጎረቤቶችዎ ብሄረሰብ ምንድነው?

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

ለ) ስልጢኛ

ሐ) ክስታኒኛ

መ) ዶቢኛ

ሠ) ማረቂኛ

ረ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለፁ

17. እርስዎ የጎረቤቶችዎን ቋንቋ መናገር ይችላሉ?

ሀ) አዎ

ለ) አልችልም

18. አሁን ከሚኖሩበት አካባቢ ወደ ሌላ ቦታ ሄደው ከአንድ ዓመት በላይ ቆይተው ያውቃሉ?

ሀ) አዎ

ለ) አላውቅም (ወደ ጥያቄ 24 ሂድ/ጅ)

19. የቆዩበት አገር:

ሀ) ቡታጅራ

ለ) ቡኢ

ሐ) ዝዋይ

መ) አዲስ አበባ

ሠ) ይርጋለም

ረ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለፁ

20. ለምን ያህል ጊዜ

ሀ) ከ1-2 ዓመት

ለ) ከ2-3 ዓመት

ሐ) ከ3-4 ዓመት

መ) ከ4 ዓመት በላይ

21. በቆዩበት አካባቢ በአብዛኛው የሚነገረው ቋንቋ:-

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለፁ

22. በቆዩበት አካባቢ የሚኖሩ ሰዎች የመስቃንኛ ቋንቋ ይገባቸዋል?

ሀ) አዎ

ለ) አይገባቸውም

23. በዚያ አካባቢ ሲቆዩ በአብዛኛው እርስዎ የሚጠቀሙበት ቋንቋ ምንድን ነበር?

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለፁ

24. የእናትዎ እናት የአፍ መፍቻ ቋንቋ ምንድን ነው/ ነበር?

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) አላውቅም (ወደ ጥያቄ 27

ሂድ/ጅ) ሸ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለፁ

25. ከአፍ መፍቻ ቋንቋቸው ሌላ ቋንቋ መናገር ይችላሉ/ይችሉ ነበር?

ሀ) አዎ

ለ) አይችሉም (ወደ ጥያቄ 27 ሂድ/ጅ)

ሐ) አላውቅም (ወደ ጥያቄ 27 ሂድ/ጅ)

26. ከሚከተሉት የትኛውን እንደሆነ ይግለፁ:: ከአንድ በላይ ቋንቋ መናገር የሚችሉ ከሆነ/ከነበረ የችሎታቸውን ደረጃ ከምርጫው ጎን በተሰጠው ሳጥን ውስጥ በቁጥር 1፣ 2፣ 3፣ በማለት ያመልክቱ::

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለፁ

27. የአባትዎ እናት የአፍ መፍቻ ቋንቋ ምንድን ነው/ ነበር?

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ሰ) አላውቅም (ወደ ጥያቄ 30 ሂድ/ጅ) ሸ)

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ሸ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለፁ \_\_\_\_\_

28. ከአፍ መፍቻ ቋንቋቸው ሌላ ቋንቋ መናገር ይችላሉ/ይችሉ ነበር?

ሀ) አዎ

ለ) አይችሉም (ወደ ጥያቄ 30 ሂድ/ጅ)

ሐ) አላውቅም (ወደ ጥያቄ 30 ሂድ/ጅ)

29. ከሚከተሉት የትኛውን እንደሆነ ይግለጹ።

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ

30. የአባትዎ አባት የአፍ መፍቻ ቋንቋ ምንድን ነው/ ነበር?

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) አላውቅም (ወደ ጥያቄ 33 ሂድ/ጅ) ሽ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ

31. ከአፍ መፍቻ ቋንቋቸው ሌላ ቋንቋ መናገር ይችላሉ/ይችሉ ነበር?

ሀ) አዎ

ለ) አይችሉም (ወደ ጥያቄ 33 ሂድ/ጅ)

ሐ) አላውቅም (ወደ ጥያቄ 33 ሂድ/ጅ)

32. ከሚከተሉት የትኛውን እንደሆነ ይግለጹ።

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ

33. የእናትዎ አባት የአፍ መፍቻ ቋንቋ ምንድን ነው/ ነበር?

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) አላውቅም (ወደ ጥያቄ 36 ሂድ/ጅ) ሽ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ

34. ከአፍ መፍቻ ቋንቋቸው ሌላ ቋንቋ መናገር ይችላሉ/ይችሉ ነበር?

ሀ) አዎ

ለ) አይችሉም (ወደ ጥያቄ 36 ሂድ/ጅ)

ሐ) አላውቅም (ወደ ጥያቄ 36 ሂድ/ጅ)

35. ከሚከተሉት የትኛውን እንደሆነ ይግለጹ።

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ\_\_\_\_\_

36. የእናትዎ የአፍ መፍቻ ቋንቋ ምንድን ነው/ ነበር?

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ\_\_\_\_\_

37. ከአፍ መፍቻ ቋንቋቸው ሌላ ቋንቋ መናገር ይችላሉ/ይችሉ ነበር?

ሀ) አዎ

ለ) አይችሉም (ወደ ጥያቄ 39 ሂድ/ጅ)

38. ከሚከተሉት የትኛውን እንደሆነ ይግለጹ።

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ\_\_\_\_\_

39. እናትዎ ማንበብና መጻፍ ይችላሉ/ይችሉ ነበር?

ሀ) አዎ

ለ) አይችሉም

40. የአባትዎ የአፍ መፍቻ ቋንቋ ምንድን ነው/ ነበር?

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ\_\_\_\_\_

41. ከአፍ መፍቻ ቋንቋቸው ሌላ ቋንቋ መናገር ይችላሉ/ይችሉ ነበር?

ሀ) አዎ

ለ) አይችሉም (ወደ ጥያቄ 43 ሂድ/ጅ)

42. ከሚከተሉት የትኛውን እንደሆነ ይግለጹ።

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ \_\_\_\_\_

43. አባትዎ ማንበብና መጻፍ ይችላሉ/ይችሉ ነበር?

ሀ) አዎ

ለ) አይችሉም

44. የወንድሞችዎ የአፍ መፍቻ ቋንቋ ምንድን ነው?

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ \_\_\_\_\_

45. ከአፍ መፍቻ ቋንቋቸው ሌላ ቋንቋ መናገር ይችላሉ?

ሀ) አዎ

ለ) አይችሉም (ወደ ጥያቄ 47 ሂድ/ጅ)

46. ከሚከተሉት የትኛውን እንደሆነ ይግለጹ።

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ \_\_\_\_\_

47. ወንድሞችዎ ማንበብና መጻፍ ይችላሉ?

ሀ) አዎ

ለ) አይችሉም

48. የእህቶችዎ የአፍ መፍቻ ቋንቋ ምንድን ነው?

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ \_\_\_\_\_

49. ከአፍ መፍቻ ቋንቋቸው ሌላ ቋንቋ መናገር ይችላሉ?

ሀ) አዎ

ለ) አይችሉም (ወደ ጥያቄ 51 ሂድ/ጅ)

50. ከሚከተሉት የትኛውን እንደሆነ ይግለጹ።

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ\_\_\_\_\_

51. እህቶቻቸው ማንበብና መጻፍ ይችላሉ?

ሀ) አዎ

ለ) አይችሉም

52. ልጆች አልዎት?

ሀ) አዎ

ለ) የሉኝም (ወደ ጥያቄ 56 ሂድ/ጅ)

53. የልጆቻቸው የአፍ መፍቻ ቋንቋ ምንድን ነው?

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ\_\_\_\_\_

54. ከአፍ መፍቻ ቋንቋቸው ሌላ ቋንቋ መናገር ይችላሉ?

ሀ) አዎ

ለ) አይችሉም (ወደ ጥያቄ 56 ሂድ/ጅ)

55. ከሚከተሉት የትኛውን እንደሆነ ይግለጹ።

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ\_\_\_\_\_

II. የቋንቋ አጠቃቀም

56. ቤተሰብዎ በአብዛኛው በቤት ውስጥ የሚጠቀሙት ቋንቋ ምንድን ነው?

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

- ለ) አማርኛ
- ሐ) ስልጢኛ

- ሠ) ዶቢኛ
  - ረ) ማረቂኛ
  - ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለፁ
- 

57. ወላጆችዎ (እናት እና አባትዎ) እርስ በእርስ ሲነጋገሩ በአብዛኛው የሚጠቀሙት ቋንቋ ምንድነው?

- ሀ) መስቃንኛ
- ለ) አማርኛ
- ሐ) ስልጢኛ

- መ) ክስታኒኛ
  - ሠ) ዶቢኛ
  - ረ) ማረቂኛ
  - ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለፁ
- 

58. ወንድሞችዎ አብረው ሲሆኑ በአብዛኛው የሚጠቀሙት ቋንቋ ምንድነው?

- ሀ) መስቃንኛ
- ለ) አማርኛ
- ሐ) ስልጢኛ

- መ) ክስታኒኛ
  - ሠ) ዶቢኛ
  - ረ) ማረቂኛ
  - ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለፁ
- 

59. እህቶችዎ አብረው ሲሆኑ በአብዛኛው የሚጠቀሙት ቋንቋ ምንድነው?

- ሀ) መስቃንኛ
- ለ) አማርኛ
- ሐ) ስልጢኛ

- መ) ክስታኒኛ
  - ሠ) ዶቢኛ
  - ረ) ማረቂኛ
  - ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለፁ
- 

60. (ልጆች ከሌሎት ወደ ጥያቄ 63 ሂድ/ጅ) ልጆችዎ አብረው ሲሆኑ በአብዛኛው የሚጠቀሙት ቋንቋ ምንድነው?

- ሀ) መስቃንኛ
- ለ) አማርኛ
- ሐ) ስልጢኛ

- መ) ክስታኒኛ
- ሠ) ዶቢኛ
- ረ) ማረቂኛ
- ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለፁ

61. ልጆችዎ አማርኛ መናገር ይችላሉ?

ሀ) አዎ

ለ) አይችሉም (ወደ ጥያቄ 63 ሂዱ/ጅ)

62. ትምህርት ቤት ከመግባታቸው በፊት ልጆችዎ አማርኛ ይችላሉ/ይችሉ ነበር?

ሀ) አዎ

ለ) አይችሉም

63. በዚህ መንደር/ከተማ ያሉ ህፃናት አብረው ሲጫወቱ በአብዛኛው የሚጠቀሙት ቋንቋ ምንድነው?

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ

64. መስቃን ያልሆነ/ች ባል/ሚስት አግብታ/ቶ የምትኖር / የሚኖር መስቃን በቤት ውስጥ በአብዛኛው የሚጠቀሙት ቋንቋ ምንድነው?

ሀ) የባልየውን ቋንቋ

ለ) የሚስትየውን ቋንቋ

ሐ) አማርኛ

መ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ -----

65. መስቃን የሆኑ የሃይማኖት መሪዎች ሲመርቁ/ዱዓ ሲያደርጉ በአብዛኛው የሚጠቀሙት ቋንቋ ምንድነው?

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ

66. መስቃን የሆኑ የሃይማኖት መሪዎች በእለት ተእለት እንቅስቃሴያቸው በአብዛኛው የሚጠቀሙት ቋንቋ ምንድነው?

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ

67. መስቃን የሆኑ ሙስሊም የሃይማኖት መሪዎች ሊቃ ላይ የሚጠቀሙት ቋንቋ ምንድነው?

- ሀ) መስቃንኛ
- ለ) አማርኛ
- ሐ) ስልጢኛ
- መ) ክስታኒኛ
- ሠ) ዶቢኛ
- ረ) ማረቂኛ
- ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለፁ

68. መስቃን የሆኑ ክርስቲያን የሃይማኖት መሪዎች በቤተክርስቲያን ሰበካ የሚያደርጉት በምን ቋንቋ ነው?

- ሀ) መስቃንኛ
- ለ) አማርኛ
- ሐ) ስልጢኛ
- መ) ክስታኒኛ
- ሠ) ዶቢኛ
- ረ) ማረቂኛ
- ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለፁ

በሚከተሉት ሰንጠረዦች ውስጥ ባሉት ክፍት ቦታዎች ላይ ቀጥሎ በቀረበው መሰረት ቋንቋውን ለማመልከት የሚከተሉትን ቁጥሮችን ይጠቀሙ

- (1) መስቃንኛ (2) አማርኛ (3) ክስታኒኛ (4) ዶቢኛ (5) ማረቂኛ (6) ሌላ ቋንቋ

69. ከሚከተሉት ጋር ሲሆኑ በአብዛኛው የሚጠቀሙበት ቋንቋ ምንድን ነው?

ከአባትዎ ጋር	ከእናትዎ ጋር	ከወንድሞችዎ ጋር	ከእህቶችዎ ጋር	ከባለቤትዎ ጋር	ከልጆችዎ ጋር

የተለየ አስተያየት ካለ ይግለጹ \_\_\_\_\_

70. ከሚከተሉት ጋር ሲሆኑ በአብዛኛው የሚጠቀሙበት ቋንቋ ምንድን ነው?

ገጠር አካባቢ ከሚኖሩ ዘመዶችዎ ጋር	ከተማ ውስጥ ከሚኖሩ ዘመዶችዎ ጋር

የተለየ አስተያየት ካለ ይግለጹ \_\_\_\_\_

71. በሚከተሉት ቦታዎች ሲሆኑ በአብዛኛው የሚጠቀሙት ቋንቋ ምንድን ነው?

ትምህርት ቤት	ገበያ ውስጥ	መስጊድ/ቤ/ክርስቲያን	ክሊኒክ	በስራ ቦታ	ፍ/ቤት	ሱቅ	ሻይ ቤት

የተለየ አስተያየት ካለ ግለጽ .....

72. በሚከተሉት ሁኔታዎች/ቦታዎች ሲሆኑ በአብዛኛው የሚጠቀሙት ቋንቋ ምንድን ነው?

ሲጸልዩ/ዱአ ሲያደርጉ	ስብሰባ ላይ		ሲያልሙ	ሲዘፍኑ		በለቅሶ ላይ/በቀብር ላይ	ሲያርሱ	ምርት ሲሰበስቡ
	የአካባቢ የመንግስት አካላት	ማህበራዊ እድር/ደቦ ወዘተ		በሰርግ ወይም ሌላ	ሰብቻዎ ሆነው			

73. በሚከተሉት ሁኔታዎች ሲሆኑ በአብዛኛው የሚጠቀሙት ቋንቋ ምንድን ነው?

ሲቆጡ/ሲናደዱ	ሲቆጥሩ	ሲያወሩ	ሚስጢር ሲያወሩ	ሲራገሙ	ሲያሞግሱ/ሲመርቁ	ሲሳደቡ

የተለየ አስተያየት ካለ ግለጽ .....

74. መስቃንኛ መናገር የሚችል ሰው ሆነ በሚችሉት ቋንቋ ተናጋሪ ሲሆን ምን ቋንቋ ይጠቀማሉ?

ስልጠኛ ተናጋሪ	ክስታንኛ ተናጋሪ	ዶብኛ ተናጋሪ	ማረቂኛ ተናጋሪ	ሙሀርኛ ተናጋሪ	መስቃንኛ ተናጋሪ	ሌላ ቋንቋ

የተለየ አስተያየት ካለ ግለጽ .....

75. መስቃንኛ መናገር ለማይችል/የማትችል ነገር ግን የሚከተሉትን ቋንቋ ተናጋሪ/ብሄረሰብ የሆነ ሰው ጋር ቢሆኑ አብዛኛው ምን ቋንቋ ይናገራሉ?

ስልጠኛ ተናጋሪ	ክስታንኛ ተናጋሪ	ዶብኛ ተናጋሪ	ማረቂኛ ተናጋሪ	ሙሀርኛ ተናጋሪ	መስቃንኛ ተናጋሪ	ሌላ ቋንቋ

የተለየ አስተያየት ካለ ግለጽ/ .....

76. የመስቃንኛ ቋንቋ ብቻ እንዲጠቀሙ የሚያስገድዱ/የሚያደርጉ ልዩ የሆኑ ባህላዊ ድርጊቶች/ስርዓቶች አሉ?

ሀ/ አዎ ለ/የለም

77. አዎ ካሉ ባህላዊ ድርጊቶችን ይጥቀሱ -----

III. የቋንቋ አመለካከት

78. ልጆችዎ መስቃንኛን እንዲናገሩ ይፈልጋሉ? (ልጆች ከሌላቸው ወደ ጥያቄ 82 ሂድ/ጂ.)

ሀ/ እፈልጋለሁ (ወደ ጥያቄ 86 ሂድ/ጂ.) ለ/ አልፈልግም

ሐ/ ምንም ቋንቋ ቢናገሩ ግድ የለኝም

79. ለምን?

ሀ/ መስቃንኛ መቻል ጠቀሜታ ስለሌለው

ለ/ በአብዛኛው ተናጋሪ ስለሌለ

ሐ/ መስቃንኛ የሚናገሩ ከሆነ ሌሎች ስለሚያጥሏቸው/ስለሚያሸፋቸው

መ/ ሌላ ምክንያት ካለ ይጥቀሱ

80. ልጆችዎ ጎልማሳ ሲሆኑ መስቃንኛ ቋንቋ መናገር የሚችሉ ይመስሉታል?

ሀ/ አይመስለኝም ለ/ ይመስለኛል

81. የልጆችዎ ልጆች ጎልማሳ ቢሆኑ በቤት ውስጥ የሚጠቀሙበት ቋንቋ ምን ይሆናል ብለው ያስባሉ?

ሀ/ መስቃንኛ

ለ/ አማርኛ

ሐ/ ስልጠኛ

መ/ ክስታንኛ

ሠ/ ዶብኛ

ረ/ ማረቂኛ

ሰ/ ሌላ

ለምን?-----

82. ከሚከተሉት ውስጥ ጠቃሚ ነው ብለው የሚያስቡት ቋንቋ የትኛው ነው?

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታንኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጠኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ

83. መስቃንኛ መቻል ምን ያህል ጠቃሚ ነው ብለው ያስባሉ

ሀ/ ምንም ጥቅም የለውም

ለ/ ይጠቅማል

84. መስቃን ሆነው ከመስቃንኛ ውጪ ሌላ ቋንቋ ሲናገሩ ሽማግሌዎች የሆኑ ሰዎች ይቆጣሉ?

ሀ/ አዎ

ለ/አይቆጠም

85. መልስዎ «ሀ» አዎ ከሆነ ለምን?

86. መስቃንኛ የሚናገሩ የሌላ ብሔረሰብ አባል የሆኑ ሰዎችን ይወዳሉ?

ሀ/ አዎ

ለ/አልወድም

ሐ/ ቢናገሩም ባይናገሩም የተለየ አመለካከት የለኝም

87. መስቃን ሆነው መስቃንኛ መናገር የማይችሉ ሰዎች አጋጥሞዎት ያውቃል?

ሀ/ አዎ

ለ/አላጋጠመኝም (ወደ ጥያቄ 91)

88. እነዚህ ሰዎች የሚኖሩት የት ነው

ሀ/ ቡታጅራ ከተማ

ለ/ ቡታጅራ ገጠር (መስቃን ወረዳ ገጠር ውስጥ)

ሐ/ ከቡታጅራ እና መስቃን ወረዳ ውጭ ሌላ አካባቢ የሚኖሩ

መ/ ሌላ ቦታ

89. መስቃንኛ ቋንቋ መናገር የማይችሉት ለምን ይመስላችኋል?

ሀ/ መስቃንኛ ቋንቋ መናገር ለመቻል ፍላጎት ስለሌላቸው

ለ/ መስቃንኛ መናገር ኋላ ቀርነት ነው ብለው ስለሚያስቡ

ሐ/ ቤተሰቦቻቸው ቤት ውስጥ ስለማይናገሩ

መ/ ወላጆቻቸው ቋንቋውን ከልጅነታቸው ጀምሮ ስላልተማሩት

ረ/ መስቃንኛ መቻል ምንም ጥቅም ስለሌለው

ሰ/ ሌላ ምክንያት ካለዎት ይጥቀሱ

90. መስቃን ሆነው መስቃንኛ መናገር ቢችሉም መናገር የማይፈልጉ ሰዎች አሉ?

ሀ/ አዎ

ለ/ የሉም (ወደ ጥያቄ 95 ሂድ/ጂ)

91. የት አካባቢ የሚኖሩ ናቸው?

ሀ/ ቡታጅራ ከተማ

ለ/ ቡታጅራ ገጠር አካባቢ

ሀ/ ከቡታጅራ ሌላ አካባቢ የሚኖሩ መ/ ሌላ ቦታ

92. መስቃንኛ መናገር የማይፈልጉት ለምን ይመስሎታል?

ሀ/ በመስቃንነታቸው ስለሚያፍሩ (መስቃን መሆናቸው እንዳይታወቅ)

ለ/ መስቃንኛ መናገር ኋላ ቀርነት ስለሚመስላቸው/ ነው ብለው ስለሚያምኑ

ሐ) የተለየ ምክንያት ካለዎት ይጥቀሱ-----

93. የማይነጋገሩበት የተለየ ስፍራ ካለ ይጥቀሱ

ሀ/ የሌላ ብሄረሰብ አባላት በአቅራቢያቸው ካሉ

ለ/ ከተማ ውስጥ ባሉ ሻይ ቤቶች፣ ቡናቤቶች፣ ምግብ ቤት፣ የህዝብ ትራንስፖርትና በመሳሰሉት አካባቢዎች

ሐ/ በገጠርም ሆነ በከተማ በየትኛውም ቦታ

መ/ከወጣቶች ጋር ሲሆኑ

94. በትምህርት ቤቶች ትምህርት የሚሰጥበት ቋንቋ የትኛው እንዲሆን ይፈልጋሉ?

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

መ) ክስታኒኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሠ) ዶቢኛ

ሐ) ስልጢኛ

ረ) ማረቂኛ

ሰ) ሌላ

95. መስቃንኛ በጽሁፍ እንዲሰፍር ይፈልጋሉ?

ሀ/ አዎ

ለ/ አልፈልግም

96. መስቃንኛ በሬድዮ እንዲተላለፍ ይፈልጋሉ?

ሀ/ አዎ

ለ/ አልፈልግም

97. በመስቃንኛ ማንበብና መጻፍ የሚያስተምሩ ትምህርት ቤቶች ቢኖሩ እርስዎ ይማራሉ?

ሀ/ አዎ (ወደ ጥያቄ 99 ሂድ/ጂ) ለ/ አልማርም

98. ለምን?

ሀ/ ምንም ጥቅም ስለሌለው

ለ/ ፍላጎት ቢኖረኝም ጊዜ ስለሌለኝ

ሐ/ የተለየ ምክንያት ካለዎት ይጥቀሱ-----

99. በአንደኛ ደረጃ ትምህርት ቤት ልጆችዎ በመስቃንኛ እንዲማሩ ይፈልጋሉ?

ሀ/ አዎ

ለ/ አልፏልግም (ወደ ጥያቄ 101 ሂድ/ጂ.)

100. መልሱ «ሀ» አዎ ከሆነ ለምን?

ሀ/ ቋንቋውን እንዲማሩ ስለሚረዱ

ለ/ በመስቃንኛ ከሆነ ትምህርት በደንብ ስለሚገባቸው

ሐ/ የብሄረሰባቸውን ታሪክ፣ ባህል እንዲያውቁ ስለሚረዱ

መ/ ሌላ -----

101. መልስዎ አልፏልግም ከሆነ ለምን?

ሀ/ ልጆቼ ወደ ፊት የሰራ እድል ላያገኙ ስለሚችሉ

ለ/ የመስቃንኛ ቋንቋ ትምህርት ለማስተማሪያ መሆን ስለማይችል

ሐ/ ልጆቼ አንደኛ ደረጃ ትምህርት በመስቃንኛ ከተማሩ ኋላቀር ስለሚሆኑ

መ/ የተለየ ምክንያት ካለዎቸው ይግለጹ-----

102. አንድ ወጣት በቤት ውስጥ መስቃንኛ ከመናገር ይልቅ አማርኛ መናገርን ቢመርጥ ወላጆቹ ደስተኛ ይሆናሉ?

ሀ) አይሆኑም

ለ) ይሆናሉ

ሐ) ምንም ግድ አይሰጣቸውም

103. ወጣቶች መስቃንኛ በደንብ መነጋገር ይችላሉ?

ሀ) አይችሉም

ለ) ይችላሉ

104. እርስዎ መስቃንኛ እየተነጋገሩ አማርኛ ቃላት ይቀላቅላሉ?

ሀ) አዎ

ለ) አልቀላቅልም

105. እርስዎ አማርኛ እየተነጋገሩ መስቃንኛ ቃላት ይቀላቅላሉ?

ሀ) አዎ

ለ) አልቀላቅልም

106. በአሁኑ ጊዜ አብዛኛው የመስቃን ተወላጅ ብዙውን ጊዜ የሚናገሩት ቋንቋ የትኛውን ነው?

ሀ) መስቃንኛ

ለ) አማርኛ

ሰ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ -----

107. ከሚከተሉት ውስጥ መስቃንኛን በተሻለ ሁኔታ የሚናገረው የትኛው ነው?

107.1	ሽማግሌዎች		ወጣቶች		ማወዳደር ያስቸግራል	
107.2	ሴቶች		ወንዶች		ማወዳደር ያስቸግራል	
107.3	የከተማ ነዋሪዎች		የገጠር ነዋሪዎች		ማወዳደር ያስቸግራል	
107.4	የተማሩ		ያልተማሩ		ማወዳደር ያስቸግራል	



108. መስቃንኛ ብቻ በተለይ የሚነገርበት ሁኔታ/ስርዓት/ቦታ አለ?

- ሀ) አዎ
- ለ) የለም (ወደ ጥያቄ 110 ሂድ)

109. በየት አካባቢ/በምን ሁኔታ ይነገራል? ቦታዎቹን/ሁኔታዎቹን ይግለጹ -----

**IV. ከማንነት ጋር የተያያዙ ጥያቄዎች**

110. ብሄርዎ ምንድነው?

- ሀ) ጉራጌ
- ለ) መስቃን
- ሐ) መስቃን ጉራጌ
- መ) ሌላ-----

111. የመስቃን ብሄረሰብ ተወላጅ በመሆንዎ ጥሩ ስሜት (ኩራት) ይሰማዎታል?

- ሀ) አዎ
- ለ) ምንም አይሰማኝም
- ለምን? -----

112. ብዙ የመስቃን ተወላጅ ጓደኞች አልዎት?

- ሀ) አዎ
- ለ) የለኝም

113. የመስቃን ተወላጆችን ብቻ የያዙ ማህበሮች (ለምሳሌ የመስቃን እድር፣ የመስቃን ልማት ማህበር፣ ወዘተ አባል ነዎት?

- ሀ) አዎ
- ለ) አይደለሁም

114. መስቃን ከሌላ ብሄረሰብ ተወላጆች ጋር መጋባትን በተመለከተ ያለዎት አመለካከት ምንድነው?

- ሀ) መስቃን ከየትኛውም ብሄረሰብ ተወላጅ ጋር ቢጋባ ምንም ማለት አይደለም
- ለ) መስቃን ከአጎራባች ብሄረሰቦች ጋር (ለምሳሌ ከማረቆ፣ ከሶዶ፣ ከስልጤ፣ ከዶቢ) ቢጋባ ምንም አይመስለኝም
- ሐ) በኔ እምነት መስቃን ከመስቃን ጋር መጋባት አለበት  
የተለየ አስተያየት ካለዎት ይግለጹ፡ -----

115. ባለትዳር ከሆኑ የእርስዎ ባለቤት የምን ብሄረሰብ ተወላጅ ናት/ነው?

- ሀ) መስቃን
- ለ) ስልጤ
- ሐ) ሶዶ
- መ) ዶቢ
- ሠ) ማረቆ
- ረ) ሌላ ከሆነ ይግለጹ

116. ያላገቡ ከሆነ የሌላ ብሄረሰብ ተወላጅ የሆነ/ች ቢያገቡ ቅር ይሰኛሉ?

- ሀ) አዎ
- ለ) ግድ የለኝም

117. ከሌላ ብሄረሰብ ተወላጆች ጋር መጋባት በመስቃኖች ዘንድ የተለመደ ድርጊት ነው?

- ሀ) አዎ
- ለ) አይደለም

118. ስለ መስቃን ታሪክ፣ ባህል፣ ወጎች፣ ወዘተ ያውቃሉ?

- ሀ) በደንብ አውቃለሁ
- ለ) ትንሽ አውቃለሁ
- ሐ) ምንም አላውቅም (ወደ ጥያቄ 120 ሂድ/ጅ)

119. እንዴት ሊያውቁ ቻሉ?

- ሀ) ከወላጆቼ
- ለ) ከጎረቤት
- ሐ) ከጓደኞቼ
- መ) ሌላ ካለ ይገለፅ-----

120. መስቃንኛ ቋንቋ የማንነታችን መገለጫ ነው ብለው ያምናሉ?

- ሀ) አዎ (ወደ ጥያቄ 122 ሂድ/ጅ)
- ለ) አላምንም

121. አላምንም ካሉ ለምን? -----

122. ከአጎራባች ብሄረሰቦች ልዩ የሆነ የመስቃን ባህል አለ?

- ሀ) አዎ
- ለ) የለም (ወደ ጥያቄ 124 ሂድ/ጅ)

123. ልዩ ባህሎቹን ጥቀሱ:- -----

124. የመስቃን ባህል እና ቋንቋን እድገት በተመለከተ በአጠቃላይ ምን ይሰማዎታል?

**ቃለ መጠይቁ ተጠናቋል። ስለተባበሩን አመሰግናለሁ።**

## APPENDIX 5

### ENGLISH QUESTIONNAIRES

#### Background

1. Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age:
  - a) Between 15 – 25
  - b) Between 25 - 35
  - c) Between 35 - 50
  - d) Above 50
3. Sex:
  - a) Male
  - b) Female
4. Profession:
  - a) Student
  - b) Merchant
  - c) Government/private employee
  - d) Farmer
  - e) Housewife
  - f) Other -----
5. Religion:
  - a) Muslim (Go to Q.7)
  - b) Christian
6. If Christian, denomination:
  - a) Orthodox Christian
  - b) Protestant
  - c) Catholic
7. Educational level:
  - a) Literate
  - b) Non-literate (Go to Q.9)
8. If literate, your educational level:
  - a) Basic literacy
  - b) Elementary education
  - c) Junior secondary education
  - e) High school
  - f) College and above
9. Where were you born?
  - a) Butajira town
  - b) Mesqan woreda (rural)
  - c) Inseno
  - d) Yirgalem
  - e) Other, please indicate \_\_\_\_\_
10. Where did you grow up?

- a) Butajira town
- b) Mesqan woreda (rural)
- c) Inseno
- d) Yirgalem
- e) Other, please indicate \_\_\_\_\_

11. Where do you live now?

- a) Butajira town
- b) Mesqan woreda (rural)
- c) Inseno
- d) Yirgalem
- e) Other, please indicate \_\_\_\_\_

12. What is your mother tongue?

- a) Masqan
- b) Amharic
- c) Silt'I
- d) Kistane
- e) Dobbi
- f) Marek'o (Libido)
- g) Other, please indicate \_\_\_\_\_

13. Other language/s you speak (you can circle more than one):

- a) Masqan
- b) Amharic
- c) Silt'I
- d) Kistane
- e) Dobbi
- f) Marek'o (Libido)
- g) Other, please indicate \_\_\_\_\_

14. Language/s you only understand but not speak:

- a) Masqan
- b) Amharic
- c) Silt'I
- d) Kistane
- e) Dobbi
- f) Marek'o (Libido)
- g) Other, please indicate \_\_\_\_\_

15. Language which you want to be proficient with:

- a) Masqan
- b) Amharic
- c) Silt'i
- d) Kistane
- e) Dobbi
- f) Marek'o (Libido)
- g) Other, please indicate \_\_\_\_\_

16. Which ethnic group/s do your neighbors belong to?

- a) Masqan
- b) Amhara
- c) Silt'i
- d) Kistane
- e) Dobbi
- f) Marek'o (Libido)



26. If Yes, please indicate which language/s she spoke. If she speaks/spoke more than one language, please indicate her proficiency using the numbers (1, 2, 3) corresponding to the languages:

- a) Masqan
- b) Amharic
- c) Silt'i
- d) Kistane
- e) Dobbi
- f) Marek'o (Libido)
- g) Other, please indicate \_\_\_\_\_

27. What is your grandmother's (father's mother) mother tongue?

- a) Masqan
- b) Amharic
- c) Silt'i
- d) Kistane
- e) Dobbi
- f) Marek'o (Libido)
- g) I do not know (Go to Q. 30)
- h) Other, please indicate \_\_\_\_\_

28. Does/did she speak a language other than her mother tongue?

- a) Yes
- b) No (Go to Q. 30)

29. If Yes, please indicate which language/s she speaks/spoke.

- a) Masqan
- b) Amharic
- c) Silt'i
- d) Kistane
- e) Dobbi
- f) Marek'o (Libido)
- g) Other, please indicate \_\_\_\_\_

30. What is your grandfather's (father's father) mother tongue?

- a) Masqan
- b) Amharic
- c) Silt'i
- d) Kistane
- e) Dobbi
- f) Marek'o (Libido)
- g) I do not know (Go to Q. 33)
- h) Other, please indicate \_\_\_\_\_

31. Does/did he speak a language other than his mother tongue?

- a) Yes
- b) No (Go to Q. 33)

32. If Yes, please indicate which language/s he speaks/spoke.

- a) Masqan
- b) Amharic
- c) Silt'i
- d) Kistane
- e) Dobbi
- f) Marek'o (Libido)
- g) Other, please indicate \_\_\_\_\_

33. What is your grandfather's (mother's father) mother tongue?
- a) Masqan
  - b) Amharic
  - c) Silt'i
  - d) Kistane
  - e) Dobb
  - f) Marek'o (Libido)
  - g) I do not know (Go to Q. 36)
  - h) Other, please indicate\_\_\_\_\_
34. Does/did he speak a language other than his mother tongue?
- a) Yes
  - b) No (Go to Q. 36)
35. If Yes, please indicate which language/s he speaks/spoke.
- a) Masqan
  - b) Amharic
  - c) Silt'i
  - d) Kistane
  - e) Dobb
  - f) Marek'o (Libido)
  - g) Other, please indicate\_\_\_\_\_
36. What is/was your mother's mother tongue?
- a) Masqan
  - b) Amharic
  - c) Silt'i
  - d) Kistane
  - e) Dobb
  - f) Marek'o (Libido)
  - g) Other, please indicate\_\_\_\_\_
37. Does/did she speak a language other than her mother tongue?
- a) Yes
  - b) No (Go to Q. 39)
38. If Yes, please indicate which language/s she speaks/spoke.
- a) Masqan
  - b) Amharic
  - c) Silt'i
  - d) Kistane
  - e) Dobb
  - f) Marek'o (Libido)
  - g) Other, please indicate\_\_\_\_\_
39. Does/did your mother read and write?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
40. What is/was your father's mother tongue?
- a) Masqan
  - b) Amharic
  - c) Silt'i
  - d) Kistane
  - e) Dobb
  - f) Marek'o (Libido)
  - g) Other, please indicate\_\_\_\_\_





57. Which language do your parents mostly use when they communicate eachother?

- a) Masqan
- b) Amharic
- c) Silt'i
- d) Kistane
- e) Dobbi
- f) Marek'o (Libido)
- g) Other, please indicate\_\_\_\_\_

58. Which language do your brothers mostly use when they communicate eachother?

- a) Masqan
- b) Amharic
- c) Silt'i
- d) Kistane
- e) Dobbi
- f) Marek'o (Libido)
- g) Other, please indicate\_\_\_\_\_

59. Which language do your sisters mostly use when they communicate eachother?

- a) Masqan
- b) Amharic
- c) Silt'i
- d) Kistane
- e) Dobbi
- f) Marek'o (Libido)
- g) Other, please indicate\_\_\_\_\_

60. [Please go to 63 if you do not have a child] Which language do your children mostly use when they communicate eachother?

- a) Masqan
- b) Amharic
- c) Silt'i
- d) Kistane
- e) Dobbi
- f) Marek'o (Libido)
- g) Other, please indicate\_\_\_\_\_

61. Can your children speak Amharic?

- a) Yes
- b) No (Go to Q. 63)

62. If yes, can/could they speak Amharic before they reach/reached school age?

- a) Yes
- b) No

63. Which language do children in this locality/town mostly use in playgrounds?

- a) Masqan
- b) Amharic
- c) Silt'i
- d) Kistane
- e) Dobbi
- f) Marek'o (Libido)



1) Mesqan 2) Amharic 3) Kistane 4) Dobbi 5) Marek'o 6) other language

69. Which language do you use the most often with your:-

father?	mother?	brothers?	sisters?	husband/wife?	children?

If you have a different view, please mention: -----

70. Which language do you use the most often with:-

Relatives who live in rural areas	Relatives who live in urban areas

If you have a different view, please mention: -----

71. Which language do you most often use in the following places?

School	Market	Mosque/Church	Health facility	Work place	Courtroom	Shop	Cafeteria

If you have a different view, please mention: -----

72. Which language do you most often use in the following situations/places?

Praying/blessing	Meeting		Dreaming	Singing		Mourning	Ploughing	Harvesting
	Local Government officials	Social gatherings		Marriage ceremony	Along			

If you have a different view, please mention: -----

73. Which language do you most often use in the following situations?

Angry	counting	Talk secret	Cursing	Praising/Blessing	Insulting
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If you have a different view, please mention: -----

74. Which language do you often use with a person who can speak Mesqan but a speaker of another language?

Silt'i speaker	Kistane speaker	Dobbi speaker	Marek'o speaker	Muher Speaker	Other language speaker

If you have a different view, please mention:-----

75. Which language do you often use with a person who cannot speak Mesqan but speaks the following languages?

Silt'i speaker	Kistane speaker	Dobbi speaker	Marek'o speaker	Muher Speaker	Other language speaker

If you have a different view, please mention: -----

76. Are there cultural practices/ceremonies which require exclusive use of Mesqan?

a) Yes

b) No (Go to Q. 79)

77. If Yes, please mention the cultural practices/ceremonies.

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### III. Language Attitude

78. Do you want your children to speak Mesqan? (If he/she has no child, go to 82)

a) Yes (Go to Q. 82)

b) No

c) I do not mind whichever language they speak

79. Why?

- a) Knowing Mesqan does not have any use
- b) Because it is not spoken by most speakers
- c) If they speak Mesqan, they will be laughed at/ridiculed by others
- d) Please indicate if you have a different reason: -----

80. Do you think your children can speak Mesqan when they become adults?

- a) I do not think so
- b) I think so

81. Which language do you think your grand children speak when they become adults?

- a) Masqan
- b) Amharic
- c) Silt'i
- d) Kistane
- e) Dobbi
- f) Marek'o (Libido)
- g) Other, please indicate \_\_\_\_\_

82. Which language do you think is a useful one?

- a) Masqan
- b) Amharic
- c) Silt'i
- d) Kistane
- e) Dobbi
- f) Marek'o (Libido)
- g) Other, please indicate \_\_\_\_\_

83. To what extent do you think is the ability to speak Mesqan useful?

- a) It does not have any use
- b) It is very useful

84. Do elders get angry when Mesqans use other language (not Mesqan) to communicate amongst themselves?

- a) Yes
- b) No (Go to Q. 86)

85. If your answer is 'Yes', why?

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86. Do you like ethnic non-Mesqans who speak Mesqan?

- a) Yes
- b) No, I do not
- c) I do not mind if they speak it or not

87. Have you come across Mesqans who cannot speak Mesqan?

- a) Yes
- b) No (Go to Q. 90)

88. Where do they live?

- a) Butajira town
- b) Butajira rural (Mesqan Woreda rural areas)
- c) In places away from Butajira/Mesqan Woreda
- d) Other\_\_\_\_\_

89. In your opinion, why are they not able to speak Mesqan?

- a) Because they do not have the interest to speak Mesqan
- b) Because they consider speaking Mesqan as a mark of backwardness
- c) Because their parents do not speak Mesqan at home
- d) Because their parents havenot taught them the language from their childhood
- e) Because the ability to speak Mesqan does not have any value Mesqan
- f) Please indicate if you have other reasons as well -----

90. Do you know ethnic Mesqans who have the ability but do not like to speak Mesqan?

- a) Yes
- b) No (Go to Q. 94)

91. Where do they live?

- a) Butajira town
- b) Butajira rural (Mesqan Woreda rural areas)
- c) In places away from Butajira/Mesqan Woreda
- d) Other, please indicate\_\_\_\_\_

92. In your opinion, why are they not interested to speak Mesqan?

- a) Because they are ashamed of their Mesqanness (to conceal their Mesqanness)
- b) Because they assume/believe that speaking Mesqan is a mark of backwardness
- c) Other reason/s\_\_\_\_\_

93. Is there any special place/situation where they do not want to speak Mesqan?

- a) If there are non-ethnic Mesqans around
- b) In towns particularly in public places like cafeteria, Bar, Hotel, and in public transport, etc

c) Everywhere, be it rural or town

d) When they are with youngsters

94. Which language do you want to be the medium of instruction in schools?

a) Masqan

d) Kistane

b) Amharic

e) Dobbi

c) Silt'i

f) Marek'o (Libido)

g) Other, please indicate \_\_\_\_\_

95. Do you want Mesqan to be a written language?

a) Yes

b) No

96. Do you want Mesqan to be broadcasted in radio?

a) Yes

b) No

97. Will you attend if there were schools which teach reading and writing in Mesqan?

a) Yes (Go to Q. 99)

b) No

98. Why?

a) It is of no use

b) I donot have time to attend despite my interest

c) Other reason/s \_\_\_\_\_

99. Do you want your children to be taught in Mesqan in primary school?

a) Yes

b) No (Go to Q.101)

100. If 'Yes', why?

a) It will help them to learn the language

b) They will understand the lessons better if they learn in Mesqan

c) It will help them to know about their ethnic group's history and culture

d) Other reason/s \_\_\_\_\_

101. If the answer to question 99 is 'NO', why?

a) My children may not get a job opportunity in the future

b) Mesqan language cannot serve as a medium of education

c) If the children learn in mesqan in primary school, they will be backward

d) Other reason/s \_\_\_\_\_



112. Do you have many Mesqan friends?  
 a) Yes                      b) No
113. Are you a member of Mesqan-only informal/formal associations (Ex. Mesqan Iddir, Mesqan Development Association)?  
 a) Yes                      b) No
114. What is your stand regarding inter-ethnic marital union of a Mesqan?  
 a) It doesnot matter if a Mesqan gets married to a non-Mesqan  
 b) I do no mind only if a Mesqan gets married to a partner belonging to any of the neighboring ethnic groups (For instance, Marek'o, Silt'i, Kistane (Soddo), Dobbi)  
 c) I strongly believe that a Mesqan should get married to a Mesqan  
 d) A special opinion\_\_\_\_\_
115. If married, which ethnic group does your partner belong to?  
 a) Masqan                      d) Kistane  
 b) Amharaq                      e) Dobbi  
 c) Silt'i                              f) Marek'o (Libido)  
 g) Other, please indicate\_\_\_\_\_
116. If not married, would you mind if you get married toa non-Mesqan?  
 a) Yes                      b) I do not mind
117. Is inter-ethnic marriage common in Mesqans?  
 a) Yes                      b) No
118. Do you know about Mesqan history and culture?  
 a) I know a lot                      b) I know little                      c) I do not know (Go to Q.120)
119. How did you know about it?  
 a) From my parents                      c) From friends  
 b) From my neighbors                      d) other
120. Do you believe that Mesqan language is a marker of your Mesqan identity?

a) Yes (Go to Q.122)

b) No

121. If you say 'NO', why? \_\_\_\_\_

122. Is there a cultural practice peculiar to Mesqan, different from neighboring ethnolinguistic groups?

a) Yes

b) No (Go to Q.124)

123. Please indicate the cultural practices:

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124. What is your opinion regarding development of Mesqan language and culture?

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**THANK YOU**

**DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, declare that this PhD dissertation is my original work and has not been presented for a degree at any other university. All direct and indirect quotes from other works have been duly acknowledged in the dissertation.

**Name:** Getu Shikur Awol

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of submission:** \_\_\_\_\_