



***ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY***  
***COLLEGE OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE STUDIES***  
***CENTER FOR FEDERALISM AND GOVERNANCE STUDIES***

**Opportunities and challenges of Accommodation of Linguistic  
Diversity in Addis Ababa University Main Campus:-**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO CENTER OF FEDERALISM AND GOVERNANCE  
STUDIES OF Addis Ababa UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIRMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS (MA) IN FEDERAL  
STUDIES**

March, 2023

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Declaration of Originality**

I, Helen Birhanu, hereby declare that the thesis entitled “Opportunities and Challenges of Accommodation of Linguistic diversity in Addis Ababa University Main Campus”:- is my original work and that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other University. Reference materials employed under this paper have been duly acknowledged.

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## **Acknowledgement**

First I would like to thank God for everything that he has done for me. Next I would like to express my great respect and appreciation to my advisor, Dr. Sisay Kinfu, for the constructive comments and advice. I am also grateful to all the respondents who gave me their precious time and the necessary information needed for this study.

Last but not least I would like to thank my mom, Tiruye Tefera and my husband Andinet Beyene for everything that they have done for me.

## **List of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

AAU.....	Addis Ababa University
Art.....	Article
HEI.....	Higher Education Institution
HEP.....	Higher Education Proclamation
HOF.....	House of Federation
EPRDF.....	Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front
FDRE.....	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FGD.....	Focus Group Discussion
ICCPR.....	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
No. ....	Number
SNNPRS.....	Southern Nation Nationalities and Peoples Regional State
TC.....	Transitional Charter
TG.....	Transitional Government
TPC.....	Transitional Period Charter
TPLF.....	Tigray People Liberation Front
UCAA.....	University College of Addis Ababa
Vol.....	Volume

### **Abstract**

*The FDRE constitution recognize the Amharic language as a sole federal working language, because of this in Ethiopian HEIs other activities, than the learning teaching activities, are held by using the Amharic language. Addis Ababa University as one of HEI of the country is also subject to this language policy. This research paper then tries to address the opportunities and challenges of accommodation of language diversity in Addis Ababa University in the area of catering, dormitory and library services. These specific areas are selected because it is these services that students use on daily bases, so these are the appropriate areas to show how linguistic diversity is accommodated in the university. Based on this, the research findings shows that since the catering, library and dormitory service in the university are given to students mainly by using the Amharic language, students who only spoke their mother tongue language faces difficulties of communication. Meanwhile the paper discusses the language policy of Ethiopia at the federal and sub national level. In order to achieve the objective of the study the researcher collected and analyzed data mainly based on qualitative research method. For the purpose of effective research finding, both primary and secondary sources of data were used. The primary sources of data includes: -field observation, focus group discussion and interviews. Secondary source of data which includes; -articles, books, thesis, dissertations, websites, different proclamations, policies and other sources also applied. Including constitutional amendment, institutional mechanisms such as having a special office or disc, having a multilingual staffs and awareness creation are recommended.*

**Key terms:** *diversity, language, lingua franca, language policy, working language, accommodation, mother tongue,*

# Chapter One

## Introduction

This chapter presents the introductory part of the thesis. Background of the research, objectives, statement of the problem, research questions, significance, methodology, scope and limitations of the research are discussed briefly in this chapter.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The concept linguistic diversity is a broad term used to describe the differences between different languages and the ways that people communicate with each other.<sup>1</sup> Ethiopia was/is the home of four main linguistic groups which incorporate more than 80 languages. These main linguistic groups are Semetic, Cushitic, Omotic and Nilo saharatic.<sup>2</sup> Having these four major language groups Ethiopia has been described as “a museum of peoples” whose population is characterized by a “complex pattern of ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity.”<sup>3</sup> These aspects of diversity are considered to be significant distinguishing features of the country.

The 1995 FDRE constitution grants all ethnic groups the right to speak, write and develop their own language as well as culture.<sup>4</sup> In the constitution although all languages are declared equal, it is only the Amharic language that has retained the status of the working language of the federal government.<sup>5</sup> So federal institutions in the country, uses Amharic as their office language. Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) as a federal institution also uses the Amharic language on activities other than the learning teaching activities. HEIs are the most highly diversified place of schooling. This may be because of a lack of adequate number of HEIs across regions and since

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<sup>1</sup> Linguistic diversity, retrieved from <https://study.com/> accessed at June 30 2021

<sup>2</sup> Asemahagn&Abioden, language policy, ideology and the Ethiopian media ,South Africa journal for communication Theory and Research, 2015, pp 75.

<sup>3</sup> Abebaw Y., Ethnic and religious diversity in higher education in Ethiopia, the case of Bahir Dar University”, Academic Dissertation, University of Tampere, 2014,pp1 cited Beshir(1979).

<sup>4</sup> The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, proclamation No.1/1995, Federal Negarit Gazeta ,1st year No.1, Addis Ababa,21st August 1995,Art.39(2)

<sup>5</sup> FDRE constitution ,Art(5)

the number of HEIs in the nearby area of different cultural, ethnic, language, and religious communities are not sufficient, students from these communities are obliged to come to the limited number of the existing universities. Because of this, a high rate of students' diversity in general and linguistic diversity in particular is quite common in all Ethiopian HEIs.<sup>6</sup> Addis Ababa University as one of HEI of the country is also subject to this fact.

The Higher Education Proclamation (HEP)<sup>7</sup> of Ethiopia states that developing democratic culture, ethics and maintaining cultural diversity is one of the guiding values that universities promote and uphold in pursuance of their mission.<sup>8</sup> Universities also aspire to create a campus climate in which everyone feels welcome, and that contributes to enhance students' personal, social and academic development. The first step toward creating such an environment is to understand the campus climate for diversity in each university. Trying to understand the campus climate for diversity helps the different stakeholder to prepare a suitable compound to accommodate these diversities. So with only one working language it will be difficult to accommodate these diversified students. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to provide a better understanding of the campus climate for accommodation of language diversity in Addis Ababa University main campus on the catering, dormitory and library areas.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

As it's discussed in the background part Ethiopia is a home of different nation nationalities people as well as ethnic groups. More than 80 languages are spoken in the country. With these different languages there was/is different language policy implemented, either in written form or unwritten. Currently the FDRE constitution though, it declared the equality of all languages, under its article 5(2) it only recognize Amharic language as the working language of the federal government.<sup>9</sup> So based on this provision Amharic is serving as a sole working language of the federal government. Higher educational institution, as one of the institution of the federal government, are also subject to this provision. So activities in HEIs, other than the learning

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<sup>6</sup>Abebaw & Tilahun, Higher education institution as pavilions of diversity opportunities and challenges –The case of Bahir Dar University', The Ethiopian journal of higher education,2007,vol.4

<sup>7</sup> It is a proclamation which come to an effect on 12 August 2019 by repelling the previous HEP No.650/2009 and 861/2014.And the main aim was in order to create an appropriate legal framework to guide HEIs in achieving their mission.

<sup>8</sup> Higher Education Proclamation No.1152/2019,Federal Negarit Gazeta,25<sup>th</sup>year,No.78,Addis Ababa,12 August 2019,Art.11(7).

<sup>9</sup> FDRE constitution Art5(2)

teaching process, which uses the English language as a medium of instruction as per the educational policy of Ethiopia<sup>10</sup> and as per article (19)(1) of the higher education proc. no. 1152/2019, are undertaken by the use of Amharic language.

Addis Ababa University as one of the ancient higher educational institution is also subject to the language policy of the federal government. The university has been accepting students from different parts of the country starting from 19 60s, with a different background in terms of ethnic, language, and religion and so on. Since students came from different parts of the country, students who can only speak their mother tongue or students who can talk other language than the working language of the federal government i.e. Amharic join the university as well.

Students in the university uses different services which directly and in directly are relevant to be successful in their field of study. Dorm services, libraries, cafeterias are some of the major services that students use on daily bases in their stay in the university. In order to get the service there has to be some sort of communication between the students and the service givers, the communication will be held mainly by the use of language. In this situation as stated above since the working language of the university is Amharic these services are given by the Amharic language. So in the case students who cannot understand Amharic and speak their mother tongue language only, faces different problems. It is difficult for the students to get the service easily.

The higher education proclamation, proclamation no. 1152/2019 under its article 38 stated that ‘without prejudice to other provisions of this Proclamation and other applicable laws, Students of any institution shall have the right

To:

- a) Free inquiry of truth and freedom of Expression of ideas and thoughts in the Process of learning and conducting Research;
- b) Enjoy the freedom to learn with appropriate opportunities and conditions in classrooms, Campuses and in the larger community’
- C) Protection of their constitutional human rights, personal safety, and security of their personal property on campus;<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> ETP, section( 3.5)

So as per this article students shall have the right to enjoy the freedom to learn with appropriate opportunities and conditions in classrooms, campuses and in the larger community. And also have the protection of their constitutional human rights. The FDRE constitution under its art 39(2) also enshrined people's right to speak, to write and develop its own language. The above stated services which students uses on daily bases i.e. catering , library and dormitory service are essential by one way or another for students to learn their field of study properly. Without the proper provision of these services it is difficult for students to be successful in their field of study. So for students in order to enjoy the freedom to learn with appropriate opportunities and conditions in classrooms, campuses and in the larger community, the overall campus environment has to be comfortable. Whereas in the university with only one working language and without other possible solution to solve the issue it is difficult for students who cannot understand Amharic and can barely speak their mother tongue language to have a comfortable campus environment, which is very essential to be successful in their field of study and also it is difficult for them to speak and write their language as per the FDRE constitution. So this study paper will try to assess the practical challenge that Addis Ababa university undergraduate students are facing on getting of different services because of language diversity and mainly because of the language policy of the country.

Concerning this area of research, while doing this research the researcher found different researches which focuses on the language policy of the country, without addressing the practical challenges of the policy. And a researcher found a PhD. dissertation conducted by Hailemariam Kekeba in the year 2016 with a title of “diversity management and students cross border learning experiences at selected Ethiopian universities”, which the researcher of this paper uses it as source. Addis Ababa University is one of the selected universities in the research. The research is put in a way of addressing the general diversity managements in terms of ethnicity, language and religion in the study site universities. While the scope of this research is focused on the opportunities and the challenges of accommodation of language diversity in Addis Ababa university main campus on giving of library, cafeteria and dormitory services. So this study will have a detail outlook how language diversity is managed on the selected services and tries to

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<sup>11</sup> HEP, Art(38)

show the practical challenge students, who speak their mother tongue language other than Amharic are facing because of the language policy of the country.

### **1.3. Research questions**

This research attempts to answer the following question:

1. What is the language policy of Ethiopia at federal and sub national level of government? Is there problem in the policy of accommodation of linguistic diversity?
2. How Addis Ababa University accommodate linguistic diversity of students in provision of catering, dormitory and library service?
3. What are the opportunities of accommodation of linguistic diversity?
4. Is the campus environment suitable for students who could not understand the Amharic language?
5. How students and staffs of Addis Ababa University understand accommodation of language diversity?
6. How do Addis Ababa University students perceive their campus climate for accommodation of linguistic diversity?
7. What is the role of student service office and student union on accommodation of linguistic diversity in the university?
8. Why the lingua franca of the federation fails to accommodate student's linguistic diversity at HEI?

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.4.1. General Objectives**

The general objective of this study is to assess the opportunities and challenges of accommodation of linguistic diversity of undergraduate students of Addis Ababa University.

## **1.4.2. Specific Objectives**

With the above stated general objectives the study paper have the following specific objectives;-

- To assess the language policy of Ethiopia at the federal and sub national level
- To assess accommodation of linguistic diversity of undergraduate students in Addis Ababa University on the catering service
- To explore accommodation of linguistic diversity in the provision of dormitory service
- To assess the accommodation of linguistic diversity on the provision of library service
- To explore the opportunities of language accommodation in the university
- To explore the awareness for accommodation of language diversity in the University
- To investigate students perception on accommodation of linguistic diversity on the selected services
- To assess the role of student service office and student union on accommodation of language diversity in the university
- To investigate reason for the fail of the lingua franca of the federation to accommodate student's linguistic diversity

## **1.5 Methodology**

### **1.5.1 Research Design**

The research used phenomenological research design to better understand participants' experiences regarding accommodation of language diversity in Addis Ababa University. The researcher had employed empirical research approaches in the course of conducting the study. It is empirical in that it studies the accommodation of language diversity in Addis Ababa university main campus on catering, dormitory and library services. In order to achieve the objective of the study and to answer the research questions the researcher collected and analyzed data mainly based on qualitative research method.

### **1.5.2 Data Sources**

For the purpose of effective research finding, both primary and secondary sources of data were used. The study is mainly focused on the accommodation of language diversity of students mainly who spoke their mother tongue language but not Amharic.

The primary sources of data includes: -field observation, focus group discussion, interviews with the students, interview with the staffs of Addis Ababa University especially staffs from, the library, catering , dorm proctors and also management staffs of the university and student union office. Interview was also conducted with purposively selected undergraduate students, who spoke their mother tongue language. Field observation was held at the cafeteria on lunch time and also at female students' dormitory. Two focus group discussion one with the students and the other with catering staff, each with group of four participants were also held. In order to answer the major research questions the focus group discussion with the students were mainly about the accommodation of language diversity on the dormitory service and other services as well, whereas the focus group discussion with the catering staff deals about the accommodation of linguistic diversity on the catering service. The total numbers of interviewees were about 35 which include 13 staffs and 22 students. Interview was chosen in order to get appropriate and relevant information about the issue at hand. And also constitution as primary sources of data will be applied in the research. The secondary source of data which includes; - magazines, official reports, articles, books, thesis, dissertations, websites, different proclamations, policies and other sources which are relevant for the study were applied in the research.

### **1.5.3. Target Population**

The target population of this study is regular undergraduate students of Addis Ababa university main campus on special attention of students who only speak their mother tongue language. So the data for the research mainly collected from these students, librarians , catering service givers, dorm proctors ,registrar office heads and other people who are relevant for the research.

### **1.5.4 Sampling Techniques**

The sampling technique used intensity and criteria sampling (purposive), because in intensity sampling the selected participant who fit to different levels of the research topic will be asked and in criteria sampling the researcher were selected participants by setting standard criteria, therefore by those two sampling methods the researcher find out sufficient information about the

larger population. Therefore, Purposive sampling method especially to get students who only spoke their mother tongue language was employed.

### **1.5.5 Method of Data Analysis**

The researcher used descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis attempts to clarify/describe the questions asked for the informants. Therefore, the data collected from primary and secondary sources used different instruments was organized and presented in to sub-sections based on their similarities and relations. The data were interpreted and analyzed thematically. Data collected through interview, Key Informants Interview and Focus Group Discussion was analyzed qualitatively based on descriptive analysis.

### **1.6. Scope and Limitation of the Study**

Higher educational institution all over Ethiopia has students who are diverse in terms of language, religion, culture and so on. So among these higher educational institutions the scope of the study will be limited to Addis Ababa University main campus. And the diversity variable that addressed was language. And also it concerned undergraduate students of the university and special attention was given to students who mainly use their mother tongue language as a means of communication. The study was delimited, in terms of area, population, sample and variables so as to make it manageable. And mainly the study tries to assess the accommodation of language diversity in giving of library, dormitory and catering services to the students. So the study area delimited on to these services. In order to make the study manageable it is limited to the above stated areas only.

The major challenge that the researcher encountered in doing this research was unwillingness of the staffs of the service areas and some of the students to co-operate for the interview. And the other major challenge for the researcher was a language barrier, since most of the students interviewed can only speak their mother tongue language; it was difficult for the researcher to try to reach to them. So the interviews were held with the help of other students and for those who can understand English by using the English language.

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

This study in general terms tries to address the accommodation of language diversity in the national level by assessing language policy at the federal and sub national level of government. And mainly it tries to discuss the issue how Addis Ababa university main campus manages diversity of students in terms of language in particular while rendering of catering, dormitory and library services for students, especially for those who can only speak their mother tongue language. This study is significant in a number of ways. It has both theoretical and practical contributions. On discussing the issue the paper will try to bring out the challenges in managing this diversity in Addis Ababa university main campus on rendering of different services. And by doing so the paper showed the possible challenges on managing language diversity in Addis Ababa University and the possible solution for these challenges. So that the study can be used as an input in designing policy, strategic and action plan and so on.

## **1.8. Organizations of the Thesis**

The main body of the thesis was organized in a way that would give clear and coherent understanding of the general message of the study, dividing it in to five chapters. The first chapter is designed to draw on the reader, the general picture of the study. And it gives an insight about the general background, statement of the problem, objectives sought to be achieved, significance of the study, methodologies to be used, limitations and scope of the study. The second chapter focuses on the conceptual and theoretical framework. In this chapter an effort has been made to conceptualize, ethno linguistic diversity, ethno linguistic diversity in HEIs, language policy, educational language policy, working language and other related concepts. The third chapter assess the overall pictures of Ethiopia language policy. In The fourth chapter the collected data findings will be analyzed, presented and discussed. And the final chapter will provide the conclusion and some relevant recommendations.

## Chapter Two

### 2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

#### 2.1. Ethno Linguistic Diversity

The term “diversity” has become one of the most frequently used words in social sciences.<sup>12</sup> However, there is no single way to define diversity. In its Literal term, diversity is a state of being diverse. Besides its literal term scholars define the term differently. In some studies diversity refers to “differences between individuals on any attribute that may lead to the perception that another person is different from the self”.<sup>13</sup> And in other researches it is defined as a variation that exists within and across groups on the basis of race, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and social status.<sup>14</sup> Some documents tries to categorize the term as internal diversity, which characteristics are ones related to situations that a person is born into like that of race, ethnicity and gender and external diversity, which describe things that are related to a person but aren’t characteristics that a person was born with like that of personal interest and religious beliefs. In general terms, diversity can be broadly conceived as all the ways in which people are different. This includes both visible and invisible differences that exist between people both at individual and group level.<sup>15</sup>

Based on the above stated definition of diversity there are a lot of factors that play into diversity. Some things are visible on the outside, but others are just a part of the way people were born. When we see ethno linguistic diversity in accordance with the definition of the term diversity language and ethnicity are interrelated and both serve as markers of identity.<sup>16</sup> The relationship between ethnicity and language is expected to be strong where ethnic groups feel their identity is compromised. And in this case language appears to be a crucial ethnicity component and

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<sup>12</sup> Abebaw Y. ,’diversity in Ethiopia’ ,article in international journal of community diversity ,2013 pp 17 retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307753935> accessed on June 6 2021

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Kibrework L., A Critical Analysis of Ethno-linguistic Diversity Discourses in Ethiopian Government Universities, A PhD Dissertation in Applied Linguistics and Development Addis Ababa University,2013,p 44

something born with.<sup>17</sup> Ethno linguistic identity for individuals greatly helps to identify themselves to which ethnic group they belong. Through defining their ethno-linguistic identity people would understand their history, symbols and the commonly shared values with other ethnic groups. This leads to create a highly diversified ethno-linguistic situation.<sup>18</sup> Ethnic identity can be defined as an innate sense, such as feelings of ethnic belonging, pride, and positive attitudes toward the group through which people identify themselves as a member of the ethnic group. With this, language is considered one of the most important components of ethnic identity because it facilitates social interactions and represents the people who communicate with the language. Since identity is "constructed through language negotiations language and ethnicity are mutually influential, as they are used in such terms as ethno linguistic identity or ethno-linguistic vitality."<sup>19</sup>

## **2.2. Ethno Linguistic Diversity in Higher Education Institutions**

Higher educational institutions are mostly featured as a place, which accommodate students with a different diversify background in terms of ethnicity, language, religion and so on. Since students in higher educational institution came from different places other than where the institution reside, it is the most known place with ethno linguistic diversity.

Ethno linguistic diversity in higher educational institutions encompasses both composition and structure. The former refers to the numerical of diverse groups in an educational institution, whereas the latter explains how individuals interact with others in inter-group social environments. In terms of interaction, diversity relates to broad issues pertaining to diverse co-existence and upholds an all-inclusive diversity management paradigm which encompasses both similarities and differences since people "have both multiple differences and similarities".<sup>20</sup>

From an education point of view, diversity signifies the view that students who value both uniqueness and differences can happily co-exist in an inclusive and accommodating school environment.<sup>21</sup> In education, diversity issues found expression in the introduction of multicultural

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Hailemariam k., Diversity management and students cross-border learning experiences at selected Ethiopian universities,PHD thesis, University of South Africa(UNISA),2016,pp 80

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

education in the 1960s and the 1970s in the USA and some European countries respectively. It was practiced until the late 1980s, it was governed by the theories of multiculturalism, inclusive education and citizenship education which focused on facilitating the learning opportunities of the disadvantaged groups in mainstream schooling systems.<sup>22</sup>

Diversity is not a new phenomenon; discussions on issues of diversity in higher education began in the 1950s following the Civil Rights Movement in the United States of America. At that time, the discussions were mainly focused on equal rights to access to higher education. Later, some scholars advocated various benefits of diversity in higher education based on social theories and assumptions. They tried to show the importance of having a diverse student population through affirmative action, “not only as a means of increasing access to higher education for greater number of students, but also as a means of fostering students’ academic and social growth” . Starting from the late 1990s, abundant research has shown the theoretical, practical, and empirical foundations for linking diversity with the educational and civic mission of higher education.<sup>23</sup>

When we look into Ethiopian schools and universities, ethno linguistic diversity increases as one goes from Kindergartens to higher education institutions, since the lower level of schools are normally reside in the localities of the students. This implies that Higher education institutions (HEIs) are the most highly diversified place of schooling. This may be because of a lack of adequate number of HEIs across regions. Since the number of HEIs in the nearby area of different ethnic and language groups are not sufficient; students from these groups are obliged to come to the limited number of the existing universities. Because of this, a high rate of students’ ethno linguistic diversity is quite common in all Ethiopian HEIs.<sup>24</sup> In the current time the number of government universities in Ethiopia are around 42.<sup>25</sup> So since all students with a different ethnic and language background came to these limited number of universities, the universities became highly diversified in terms of language and ethnicity.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Abebaw Y., Ethnic and religious diversity in higher education in Ethiopia ,the case of Bahir Dar University, Academic Dissertation, University of Tampere ,2014 cited Gurin etal (2002),

<sup>24</sup> Abebaw & Tilahun , supra note 6

<sup>25</sup> <https://free-apply.com/en/articles/country/337996> accessed at June 30 2021

Ethno linguistic diversity, since it brings different benefits, is important at different levels of personal development. But it is thought to be significantly important during the university years because many students come to university in late adolescence and early adulthood, which is a critical stage of development in which individuals define themselves in relation to others and exercise various social roles before making permanent commitments to different issues including professions, close relationships, and social and political groups.<sup>26</sup>

### **2.3. Opportunities and Challenges of Ethno Linguistic Diversity in HEIs**

As the research describes the existence of ethno linguistic diversity in HEIs, it is better here to discuss about the opportunities and challenges of ethno linguistic diversity in HEIs. Different researchers working on the area tries to stipulate the possible opportunities of having ethno linguistic diversified students in higher educational institutions. Among those researchers Abebaw, tries to put different advantages of ethno linguistic diversity in higher educational institutions on his academic paper. So according to Abebaw Campuses that have more diverse student population “tend to create more richly varied educational experiences that enhance students’ learning and better prepare them for participation in a democratic society”.<sup>27</sup> He further argues that universities that accommodate ethno linguistic diverse student population potentially offer a social and intellectual atmosphere which is different from those which students know very well this provides them with opportunities to learn more, and think in deeper and more complex ways.<sup>28</sup>

When presented with opportunities to critically explore these experiences, students can become more accepting, tolerant, and thoughtful members of society. They also get the chance to see and experience various leadership styles from faculty, staff, administrators, and community members. For many students, it’s a chance to see someone from a similar background that they can emulate.<sup>29</sup> Through ethno linguistically diverse classroom and social interactions, students

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<sup>26</sup> Hailemariam k., Supra note 20

<sup>27</sup> Abebaw Y., Ethnic and religious diversity in higher education in Ethiopia ,the case of Bahir Dar University , Academic Dissertation, University of Tampere,2014, p -21cited Milem et al.(2005)

<sup>28</sup> Abebaw Y. Ethnic and religious diversity in higher education in Ethiopia ,the case of Bahir Dar University’, Academic Dissertation, University of Tampere,2014, pp 44

<sup>29</sup> <https://everfi.com/blog/colleges-universities> accessed on June 10 2021

have the opportunity to learn from people with different backgrounds and upbringings, leading to increased innovation and collaboration. Through a diverse campus, students are presented with daily opportunities to interact with people of various backgrounds, which enable them to learn to communicate more effectively and often differently than they are previously accustomed to.<sup>30</sup>

The other stated opportunity of having ethno linguistically diversified students in higher educational institutions is, increasing the representation of students from diverse backgrounds potentially leads to a wider range of thoughts, ideas, and opinions. It also has the potential of creating an enriched academic environment.<sup>31</sup> Research indicates that structural diversity increases the possibility of exposing students to a wider range of viewpoints on a particular issue. The presence of a diverse student population also provides opportunities for interaction among diverse students, which in turn creates opportunities for students to develop the skills and competencies necessary to live and work in a diverse society. Besides their field of study students who learn in a diversified university will get a chance to know how to live with a different student who is not from their group of ethnicity and language. Which, the researcher also thinks, is very important to build a diversified but unified state on the ground.

Although ethno linguistic diversity has various benefits it is not only an opportunity. “Diversity is one of the largest, most urgent challenges facing higher education today. It is also one of the most difficult challenges colleges have ever faced”.<sup>32</sup> Diversity can be a source of challenges that leads to less cohesiveness, less effective communication, increased anxiety, and greater discomfort, tension and conflict among diverse groups. It also indicated that when diversity is not properly addressed or is totally ignored, it can have negative effects, such as “increased egocentrism, and negative relationships characterized by hostility, rejection, divisiveness, scapegoating, bullying, stereotyping, prejudice, and racism”.<sup>33</sup> Its negative impacts often adversely affect campus community members as well as the broader society outside the university. This shows that even though ethno linguistic diversity in higher education is often

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Abebaw Y. ,Ethnic and religious diversity in higher education in Ethiopia ,the case of Bahir Dar University, Academic Dissertation, University of Tampere,2014 cited Shaw(2005)

<sup>32</sup> Ibid cited Levine(1991)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

regarded as a value based on the potential opportunities it provides, in reality, “diversity is not always a value. The same is true in our country case.

## **2.4. Language Policy in Multi Nation Federations**

Language is an important medium through which information is retrieved, processed, interpreted and evaluated. It pervades social life. It is the principal vehicle for the transmission of cultural knowledge, and the primary means by which we gain access to the contents of others' minds.<sup>34</sup> Language is a means through which thoughts are shared and through which one Demonstrates membership to a linguistic group.<sup>35</sup> Language plays an important role in the process of knowledge construction. That is why it is often given a central position “in the teaching and learning process”.<sup>36</sup>

With the definition of the term ‘language’ in mind than language policy in general terms referees to regulation and guidelines set by governments regarding language issues.<sup>37</sup>The concept is mainly related to decisions, rules, regulations and guidelines about the status, use, domains and territories of language and the rights of speakers under question.<sup>38</sup>

The more specific definition for language policy refers to the act of the government officially through legislation, court decision, executive action or other means to determine how languages are used in public contexts, cultivate language skills needed to national priorities or establish the rights of individuals or groups to learn, use and maintain languages. This specific definition point out that language policy is the responsibility of the government.<sup>39</sup> The definition explained the domain of language polices are concerned with determining the status of languages that implies whether languages should be used as national language, language of wider communication, official language, working language, language of instruction, etc. is decided at government level by a policy. Language policies are concerned with domains use, and territories of languages also

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<sup>34</sup> Robert M. & Chi-Y. Language and social behavior, pre edition copy from Hand book of social psychology,vol.2.Columbia university,2014

<sup>35</sup> Hailemariam k., Diversity management and students cross-border learning experiences at selected Ethiopian universities, PHD thesis, University of South Africa(UNISA),2016, cited Jarvis(2006)

<sup>36</sup> Ibid cited Van Rensburg and Lamberti(2009)

<sup>37</sup> Zelalem Y. , The Ethiopian language policy; A historical and typological overview, article, Ethiopian journal of languages and literatures Vol. XII No. 2 June 2012

<sup>38</sup> Derib A. & Getachew A., language policy in Ethiopia ;history and current trend, Art vol 2 no 1 2006, p-38

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

imply that which language should be used in education, administration etc, and to what extent and where should be resolved by language policies.<sup>40</sup>

Language policy can be either overt or covert. Covert language policies make no mention of any language in any administrative code, legal document, etcetera; while overt policies indicate explicitly the rights of any or all linguistic groups to the use of their language in whatever domains they specify.<sup>41</sup> Which indicate that some countries record their language policy in their law or constitutions; others do not. Some implement their written policies; others do not.<sup>42</sup> While talking about overt language policy the India constitution recognizes the Hindi language and English as cross regional official language and allows India's 28 states and 8 union territories to adopt their own official language.<sup>43</sup> Likely the constitution of Switzerland recognize German, French and Italian as fully fledged official languages at the federal level and are thus used for federal authorities' communication with citizens and with other official bodies and recognize Romansh language as semi-official and stipulates that it is an official language only when federal authorities deal with people who speak the language.<sup>44</sup> In Canada also English and French are gets the status of the official language under the constitution.<sup>45</sup> Generally the term language policy refers to the responsibilities of the government in order to accommodate different languages in different modes.

## **2.5 National/Working/ Official language**

As it is described in different parts of these research paper language plays a vital role on day to day activities of individual and most importantly on different activities of the different branches of the government. It is by the use of language that different branches of the government gives services for individuals, that's why different states determine their national or official/working language as a language policy under different legal documents and most importantly under their

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> Yonattan A. , Multilingual language policy and language practice in Ethiopia : opportunities and challenges for national unity and development ,PHD thesis, Addis Ababa University ,2014

<sup>42</sup> Ibid

<sup>43</sup> Asha S. & Abhimanyu s. , Language policy and federalism in independent India, occasional paper series no 58, Forum of federation,2022

<sup>44</sup> Eva M. & Simon M., Linguistic diversity in Switzerland: going beyond territorial accommodation, occasional paper series no 57, Forum of federation,2022

<sup>45</sup> Linda C. & Miranda H., Canada language policies: well established, but still room for improvement, occasional paper series no 58, Forum of federation,2022

constitution. A national language of a country is related to the country's socio-political and cultural functions, while an official language of a county is connected to government affairs such as the functioning of the parliament or the national court.<sup>46</sup> A nation language serves a symbolic function towards the nation represented by it while the function of an official language is mainly utilitarian and national language of a country can become the official language of the same country by default.<sup>47</sup> Official language and working languages does have more or less the same purpose and states use the terms interchangeably. Most federal countries designated more than one language as official language because of language diversity. From these countries when we are looking to the case of Switzerland, Of the many languages spoken in country, four are recognized as official languages, i.e German, French, Italian and Romansh. From these four official languages German, French and Italy are recognized as fully fledged official languages at the federal level and are thus used for federal authorities' communication with citizens and with other official bodies.<sup>48</sup> Whereas the Romansh language only enjoys semi-official status: it is an official language only when federal authorities deal with people who speak the language.<sup>49</sup> Concerning the use of these official languages when communicating with federal authorities or receiving services provided by the federal administration, citizens can use the national language of their choice – irrespective of their place of residence. And all federal laws, regulations and communications are available simultaneously in German, French and Italy and have equal legal status.<sup>50</sup>

In South Africa after the end of the apartheid era the authority has made a decision to 11 languages to be the official languages in the country, these languages are Zulu, Xhosa, Afrikaans, Sepedi, English, Setswana, Sesotho, Xitsonga, Swati, Tshivenda, and Ndebele.<sup>51</sup> Though English remains the dominant language in the field of communication one can conclude that the above stated 11 languages are recognized as official languages of the country.

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<sup>46</sup>Anuradah "What is the Difference Between National Language and Official Language", Art, 2021

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Eva & Simon supra note 44

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

<sup>50</sup> Ibid

<sup>51</sup>Sidik I., The language education policy in South Africa: a gap between policy and efficacy ,universitas pendidikan Indonesia, Art, vol 254,2018,pp 568

Unlike other federal states, which names the term as official languages, in our country case the Amharic language recognized as a working language of the federal government.<sup>52</sup> So when one tries to get service from different offices of the federal government, he/she can get it by the use of the Amharic language. As a home of more than 80 languages, recognizing only one language as a working language became a source of political issues, which the paper will address in the next chapter.

## **2.6 Language Policy in Education**

Language policy in education refers to a mechanism used to create de facto language practices in education.<sup>53</sup> Language policy in education, particularly, refers to carrying out language policy decisions in the specific contexts of schools, colleges, and universities in relation to mother tongues and to foreign and second languages. These decisions often include several issues such as: Which language(s) to teach and learn in schools? When (at what class level) to begin teaching these languages? For how many years and hours should they be taught?<sup>54</sup> Language in education policy plays an important role in disseminating and implementing the policy including language used as medium of instruction, language taught in the classroom, and students' perception towards the implementation of the policy.<sup>55</sup>

When we look at the Ethiopian case as per the above prescription of education language policy, the 1994 ETP based on the justification of the pedagogical advantage of the child in learning in mother tongue and the rights of nationalities to promote the use of their languages, recognize that primary education to be given in nationality languages and also stipulates the medium of instruction for higher education and secondary education to be the English language.<sup>56</sup> In Switzerland also due to the federalist nature of the country, educational curricula for foreign language instruction are a matter of the cantons and their affiliation to a linguistic region.<sup>57</sup>

Language policy in education is also used as a bottom-up, grassroots mechanism to demand, negotiate, and introduce alternative language policies, it is hence a mechanism through which

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<sup>52</sup> FDRE constitution, Art (5)

<sup>53</sup> Yonatan, supra note(41),PP 60

<sup>54</sup> Ibid

<sup>55</sup> Sidik supra note (51)

<sup>56</sup> ETP, section 3.5

<sup>57</sup> Adrian L., Multi lingual educational language policies in Switzerland & Sweden”,a meta analysis,Malmo university

ideology is meant to turn into practice or practice into ideology.<sup>58</sup> According to Yonnatan since determining media of instruction is most commonly subject to strong political pressures and since education is, from the state's point of view, a primary means of social control and, from the individual's or family's point of view, a means for social mobility, the most controversial area of language policy is that of education.<sup>59</sup> The degree to which educational considerations influence the choice of medium of instruction varies from case to case, but political considerations always play a role.<sup>60</sup> Education policymakers do not adequately consider the consequences of language policies for learning, and when they do, they are often faced with difficult decisions when educational and political agendas are in competition. In particular, although there is clear evidence that mother tongue medium of instruction at primary level of education can provide significant educational advantage in most contexts; policymakers often resist this approach for political reasons.<sup>61</sup>

## **2.7 Mother Tongue Education**

Language is a critical tool that is used for the purposes of communication.<sup>62</sup> Mother tongue is the language of the immediate environment and daily interaction that children grow up with and of which they have learned the grammatical rules before formal schooling. Mother tongue education thus stands for the use of a language that the child learns in early childhood as a medium of instruction.<sup>63</sup>

Different researches on the area stipulates the advantage of using mother tongue language as a medium of instruction, especially at the early stage education. According to Awuor using mother tongue as the medium of instruction in schools generally and in lower grades specifically has several strengths. Using a native language as a medium of instruction is beneficial since learners will have better understanding of the concepts taught than those who study in a foreign language.<sup>64</sup> According to Yonnatan (2014) as well mother tongue education is advantages in a way that results in improved learning achievements, low dropout rates, better adjustments to

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<sup>58</sup> Yonatan supra note 41 pp 61

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup> Ibid

<sup>61</sup> James T. & Amy Tsui, , Language diversity and language policy in educational access and equity",art, university of Hong kong,2014

<sup>62</sup> Awuor Q., Language policy in education: The practicality of its implementation and way forward, journal of language, technology & entrepreneurship in Africa, vol 1, no 1 ,2019

<sup>63</sup> Yonatan supra note 41,pp 57

<sup>64</sup> Awuor supra note 62,pp 97

school, cultural preservation, and self-confidence in children.<sup>65</sup> It also helps in boosting a child's self-esteem since he/she is made aware that his/her local language is not only valued but also acknowledged.<sup>66</sup> In sum, mother tongue enhances cultural identity. Through it children learn who they are, the history of their communities, their customs and beliefs. It also enables them to appreciate themselves as members of the society. It is only then that they can appreciate languages used in other communities.<sup>67</sup>

Understanding the above stated advantage of using mother tongue education, different countries tries to incorporate the system under their language policy. From these states when we look at to the Indian language policy the National Education Policy (NEP) of India proposes that wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language".<sup>68</sup> Not only the NEP, but the Indian constitution also requires states to ensure that linguistic minorities can pursue schooling in their mother tongue.<sup>69</sup> Generally India gives recognition for the implementation of mother tongue education by stipulating it in the education policy and more importantly under the constitution.

In our country case as well mother tongue education is acknowledged under the 1994 Education and Training Policy.<sup>70</sup> The ETP mandates the use of local languages in primary education. This policy specifically provides that "*cognizant of the pedagogical advantage of the child learning in mother tongue, and the rights of nationalities to promote the use of their languages, primary education will be given in nationality languages.*"<sup>71</sup> The policy mandates the provision of mother tongue education until the student completes primary education. This means that a student is expected to receive education in his/her mother tongue until he or she completes 8th grade.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Yonatan supra note 41,pp 58

<sup>66</sup> Awour supra note 62,pp 97

<sup>67</sup> Ibid

<sup>68</sup> Asha & Abhimanyu supra note 43,pp 12

<sup>69</sup> The constitution of India,2020,art 350a

<sup>70</sup> ETP

<sup>71</sup> Ibid

<sup>72</sup> Yonatan T., Language Policy in Federal Ethiopia: Too much or Too Little?, occasional paper series no 60, Forum of federation,2022

## 2.8 Language Policy for HEIs

As the paper tries to deal in the previous parts, Language plays an important role in the process of knowledge construction. That is why it is often given a central position “in the teaching and learning process”.<sup>73</sup> The crucially of language in learning contexts implies that the success of a student in learning mainly depends not only on his/her understanding of the subject matter, but also on his/her ability to reflect on the learning experiences by means of language with fellow students.<sup>74</sup> In order to know what is going on in the class room or outside of the class language plays a vital role for students in general and for HEIs students in particular. For the vitality of language, the selection of languages for instruction and for academic writing is a key component of any language policy in universities.<sup>75</sup> Not only the selection of language for medium of instruction are vital but also the selection of the medium of instruction for other services in the university are also essential for students to have a conducive environment ,which in effect helps them to be successful in their field of study.

Language policies in higher education are transversal because they touch a wide variety of what some refer to as ‘categories of communicative acts’, ‘missions’, ‘activities’ or ‘areas’. The communicative acts include teaching acts, study acts, administrative acts, research acts, writing and other presentation acts, service acts and governance acts.<sup>76</sup> Universities “use languages for (essentially) five types of activities”:<sup>77</sup> the languages taught as subjects; the language or languages of instruction used in the teaching of other, non-linguistic subjects; the languages used by academic staff in research; the languages used by the university in its administrative operations; and the languages used by the university in its external communication.<sup>77</sup> In language policy of HEIs a multitude of language policy and planning actors within and outside of the HEIs are involved in the design, implementation, interpretation, appropriation and/or the evaluation of language regulations.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Hayilemariam Supra note 20 cited Van Rensburg and Lamberity(2009)

<sup>74</sup> Hayilemariam, Supra note 20

<sup>75</sup> Ibid

<sup>76</sup> Jeroen Darquennes, etal, language diversity management in higher education; towards an analytical framework,art,2020 pp 12

<sup>77</sup> Ibid

<sup>78</sup> Ibid

Language policies in higher education are multiple-goal oriented because the goals related to the activities be different depending on the main language users including “current or future students; current or future faculty, lecturers, librarians, service and administrative staff; authorities; other HEIs local communities; the corporate sector; etc.”<sup>79</sup> Language policies in higher education also require “a variety of related policies for effective implementation”, ranging from personnel policy over curriculum policy to resourcing policies.<sup>80</sup>

According to Hailemariam in a multilingual higher education context, the language of the dominant group often becomes the language for the university community and may endow the dominant group with a linguistic advantage in learning and a sense of supremacy. Thus, the groups whose languages are marginalized are likely to deny and resist the use of the dominant language, and may remain defiant to learn or use the language. As a result, when students from different language groups come together, they may refrain from interaction. This might instill not only a sense of dissociation but also that of suspicion and mistrust among student groups and could promote unhealthy and discriminatory relationships. The latter would force each group to shelter itself within its own linguistic identity.<sup>81</sup>

According to researchers different models have been developed to minimize the linguistic problems of higher education students in a multicultural society, the one possible model used by South Africa is multi literacy model which, takes into account the communication skills and knowledge and experiences students arrive with at an institution. It promotes that in the context where students come from diverse linguistic backgrounds and the medium of instruction is different from their mother tongue, students’ mother tongues could be used at the initial stage of the course programs.<sup>82</sup>

In a multilingual society where students come from different linguistic backgrounds, an inability to interact in the language of communication used at an educational institution does not only mean a lack of access to services and learning resources, but also a lack of access to knowledge and skills as part of the education process.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid

<sup>80</sup> Ibid pp 25

<sup>81</sup> Hayilemariam ,Supra note 20

<sup>82</sup> Ibid pp 84

## 2.9 Language Practices of HEIs in Multi linguistic Federations

As it has been defined above, education language policy mainly focused on answering questions like which language(s) to teach and learn in schools? When (at what class level) to begin teaching these languages? For how many years and hours should they be taught? Since HEIs are the highest level of education, language policy in HEIs also deals with answering of these questions. Especially in multi lingual countries choosing the instructional and the office language at HEIs are exposed to different criticism, it has to be undertaking carefully with accommodation of different languages. This part of the research paper tries to discuss about the language of instruction and the office language of HEIs in some multi-linguistic federations

When we look in to the South African case, though there are 11 official language in the country, the English language is a compulsory subject in all schools, and is the preferred medium of instruction in most schools and HEIs (the only other medium of instruction at advanced levels at present being Afrikaans).<sup>83</sup> Prioritizing the English language over the other official language in schools and other activities become a point of discussion and criticism in different literatures. The believe that the English language, serves as favorable condition for success both in higher education and internationally, can be mentioned as a justification for the language to be chosen as a medium of communication on different places over the other local languages. According to Rajendra Chetty, it is curious that even a course like African Linguistics is taught through the medium of a foreign language i.e. English.<sup>84</sup> So when it comes to HEIs of South Africa, though there are 11 official languages, the medium of instruction in the class room as well as outside of the class is mainly the English language.

Switzerland is also another multilingual federation. As the paper address above, of the many languages spoken in Switzerland, four are recognized as national languages – German, French, Italian and Romansh. Multilingualism is constitutive of Swiss identity.<sup>85</sup> The Swiss Constitution assigns responsibility for determining the official language at the subnational level to the cantons. They are largely autonomous in this regard. By choosing the official language, cantons, as a rule, also determine the language used by their authorities, schools and public services. Most

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<sup>83</sup> Rajender C. & Dominique M., “language policy and education in South Africa an alternative view of the position of English and African languages”, art, Cape peninsula university of technology,2008

<sup>84</sup> Ibid

<sup>85</sup>Eva & Simon supra note 44

opt for only one national language. Cantons may set special rules for certain districts or municipalities (for instance, traditional minority regions or cantonal capitals), introduce non-national languages as (partial) official languages (for instance, English in public research and university teaching), or allow education in languages other than official language.<sup>86</sup>

The other multilingual federation, the Belgium constitution under its art (4) stipulates that “Belgium comprises four linguistic regions: the Dutch-speaking region, the French speaking region, the bilingual region of Brussels-Capital and the German-speaking region. Article 129 stipulates that “it is for the French and Flemish Communities to regulate the use of languages for “administrative matters,” “education” and, for all Communities, the “social relations between employers and their personnel, as well as company acts and documents required by the law and by regulations.”<sup>87</sup> As it is stated since its up on the communities to decide on the use of language of education, concerning the language policy of HEIs the legislation of the French Community (art. 75 Decree 2013/2019) has recently been made more flexible to meet the new needs of institutions for mobility (in and out) of their students and staff. In Flanders the law allows for the organization of courses or a full bachelor’s or master’s degree in a foreign language, but with a basic condition that equivalent education is available in Dutch. For example, the University of Antwerp has developed an English Master in Law degree that is given along with the Dutch master’s program.<sup>88</sup>

Although the use of English is very important in an international city like Brussels, French and Dutch are still the official languages of instruction in the capital of Belgium. The present legislation in Flanders allows only 10% of the bachelor degree and only 50% of the master can be taught in a foreign language. This foreign language will be English in most cases.<sup>89</sup>

Concerning the means of communication outside the classroom, though only Dutch, French and German are recognized as the official language of the country, English is very much present in HEIs.<sup>90</sup> Apart from its use as a medium of instruction English is used in oral and written communications. Messages sent out to the students tend to be bilingual Dutch and English. Due

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid

<sup>87</sup> Belgium's Constitution of 1831 with Amendments through 2014, Art (129)

<sup>88</sup> Kristin T. ,Language Policy in Flemish higher education in Belgium: English in an academic context, Department of Applied Linguistics, Erasmushoge school Brussels Belgium ,2011,pp 14

<sup>89</sup> Ibid pp4

<sup>90</sup> Frank van, Higher education in Flanders; English as the other language University of Antwerp,2021 pp 47

to the presence of international staff and students, English often features as the de facto first language, particularly in oral communication.<sup>91</sup> The choice of language may be flexible, and ‘switches’ between Dutch and English occur. For instance, when one participant does not speak Dutch, everyone will switch to English.<sup>92</sup> So it can be concluded that English is increasingly used as a lingua franca language of Flanders HEIs.

## 2.10 Language Diversity Management in HEIs

Linguistic diversity and its management have become increasingly significant for higher education institutions around the world. Different researches indicate that the growth in number of universities and students seems to have gone hand in hand with universities becoming rapidly more diverse (in terms of the students’ and the staff members’ backgrounds and the programs offered).<sup>93</sup> In our country case also as the paper tries to discuss in the next chapter the limited number of HEIs in the country and the different placement of the student and the HEIs the student join are considered as the major factor for HEIs to be diverse in terms of language. Though having diversified students have its own opportunities if it is not managed properly it can be a cause for different challenges. When we talk about language diversity management in HEIs it is by one or other way is related to language policy of HEIs. So the major key for the management is to overlook the language policy of HEIs. The instructional language in the classroom and the working language of the HEIs have to be checked whether they accommodate the language of the diversified students.

According to Jeroen and Josep in terms of language diversity management the HEIs should concern on the choice of the language(s) to be used at the level of teaching (language of instruction), research, and internal as well as external communication.<sup>94</sup> According to them the choice concerns;-

*(1) The weight that a HEIs (in compliance with government regulations) wants to or is forced to give at the level of teaching, research and communication to a language (or potentially two or more languages) that either by law or de facto has (or have) the status and the accompanying*

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid

<sup>92</sup> Ibid

<sup>93</sup> Jeroen Darquennes, et al supra note 76

<sup>94</sup> Ibid

*prestige of administrative language(s) of a state or a region of the state in which the university is located, and*

*(2) The weight that a university (in compliance with government regulations) wants to or is allowed to give to any other language at the level of teaching, research and communication.<sup>95</sup>*

In terms of internal communication with students, teachers and researchers, universities need to carefully consider the kinds of language selections and skills not only of the staff allocated to the international office, but also of staff working in the registration office, the educational administration, the housing service, the HR-service, etc.<sup>96</sup> Other than the selection of language for instruction, research and other directly related matter with the study, selection of language for students to communicate with the staffs of the specific HEI is very crucial for properly manage linguistic diversity in the institution especially in multilingual states like ours.

Therefore, in order to manage linguistic diversity it is a good idea to make a department, a directorate, a unit, or a policy officer responsible for the language policy. The responsibilities include: the coordination of the language policy formulation process in which different meso- and micro-level actors are involved; the definition of certain targets related to certain areas and intended language users; the identification of tools and instruments needed to reach the defined goals; the rollout of the policy implementation pathway; and the evaluation of the outputs and outcomes related to the language policy activities. By doing so a language policy must set out the general principles to be used in particular cases by those who are faced with a decision on which language to use for reading materials, teaching or (formal or informal) meeting.

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid

<sup>96</sup> Ibid

# **Chapter Three**

## **Language Policy of Ethiopia**

### **Introduction**

On this part of the research paper the researcher tries to deal with the issue of language policy in Ethiopia. While discussing the major topic the research paper will try to assess on the historical background of language policy, the current language policy of the country, the educational language policy and language policy of different sub national government.

### **3.1. Historical Background of Language Policy in Ethiopia**

On the beginning of the modern Ethiopia i.e the regime of emperor Tewodros, though there was no written document like constitution as to the language policy of the country, the regime have had a promotive language policy that encourage the use of Amharic language.<sup>97</sup> The main and noted contribution of emperor Tewodros on the implementation of the then language policy was his attempt to make Amharic a literary language. He changed the trend of using Geez to write the Royal Chronicles into using Amharic.<sup>98</sup> The promotion of the language in to a written language has contributed to Amharic to be considered the sole candidate as a national lingua franca.<sup>99</sup> During the regime of the emperor a considerable number of letters to European monarchs were written in Amharic. When Europeans visited the Emperor they were expected to use Amharic for communication through or without an interpreter and also during the time correspondences and poems were written in Amharic.<sup>100</sup>

The successor of emperor Tewodros i.e. emperor Yohannes also promoted the same language as Tewodros did in his quest for national unification of his empire.<sup>101</sup> Though Yohannes was himself a native speaker of Tigrinya, he was cautious about the strong relationship between language and power and hence tried to win the hearts and minds of Amharic and non-Amharic speakers in his territory.<sup>102</sup> Though there was no written document about the language policy of the empire, the

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<sup>97</sup> Derib &Getachew, supra note(38),pp 43

<sup>98</sup> Ibid

<sup>99</sup> Zelalem, supra note(37),pp 6

<sup>100</sup> Ibid

<sup>101</sup> Derib &Getachew, supra note(38),

<sup>102</sup> Zelalem, supra note(37),

resolution of the Borumeda council of May 1878 which recognized Amharic as its official language proved the significant role of Emperor Yohannes to the promotion of Amharic.<sup>103</sup>

Menelik like that of his predecessors prefers Amharic language to be the state language. With his intention to modernize the country there was a room to use other languages in different sectors, for instance in education, the first modern school, Menelik II school was established in 1908 using French as a medium of instruction, and also other foreign-based missionary schools started to flourish and were able to use other foreign languages such as English, German, Swedish, Italian, etc. Missionaries were also allowed to translate the Bible into, for instance, Afaan Oromo and Tigrinya.<sup>104</sup>

Haile Sellasie's government had a unique history from its predecessors with regard to language policy. It had a well-established language policy in a written constitution though the 1931 constitution didn't mention anything about language policy of the empire.<sup>105</sup> The language policy of the than empire was dominated by the perception which promoted linguistic and cultural homogeneity as the necessary requirements for social and economic progress and political stability that's why Amharic language serves as a state language like that of the previous regimes.<sup>106</sup> The 1955 revised constitution under its art (125) states that "The official language of the Empire is Amharic".<sup>107</sup> This implies that Amharic instantaneously became the official language of judiciary, mass media, education and other government services. Incidentally, the constitution said nothing about other major languages as well as minor, endangered and least-known languages.<sup>108</sup>

With a policy of national integration the regime wanted to create a national culture, language, and religion for all Ethiopians. As a result of this policy, Amharic was the only local language used for media, court, education, and other publication purposes. It was not legal to teach, publish and broadcast languages other than Amharic and English.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid

<sup>104</sup> Ibid

<sup>105</sup> Derib &Getachew, supra note(38),pp 44

<sup>106</sup> Zelalem, supra note(37),pp 8

<sup>107</sup> The 1955 revised constitution of Ethiopia Art(125)

<sup>108</sup> Zelalem, supra note(37),pp 14

<sup>109</sup> Abebaw supra note 12

In 1947, the national curriculum for elementary schools recognized English as the main language of instruction even in elementary schools. Amharic was taught only as a subject. Missionary and community schools used their own languages such as English, German, Italian and Swedish. The 1958/59 revised curriculum introduced the new education act which made Amharic the language of instruction in primary and English in secondary education.<sup>110</sup>

Following the revolution in 1974, the Derg took power and adopted a socialist ideology in the government of the country. As a result of the ideology which approves the necessity for respecting nationalities' rights, the Derg pronounced through its National Democratic Revolution program there came the time for all nations, nationalities and ethnicities to enjoy the freedom of maintaining, using and developing their language together with many political and economic benefits.<sup>111</sup> The 1976 program under its art (5) states that;-

*“The right of self-determination of all nationalities will be recognized and fully respected. No nationality will dominate another one since the history, culture, language and religion of each nationality will have equal recognition in accordance with the spirit of socialism ... each nationality will have regional autonomy to decide on matters concerning its internal affairs. Within its environs, it has the right to determine the contents of its political, economic and social life, use its own language”<sup>112</sup>*

Based on this it appears that the rights of nationalities including linguistic freedom are integral parts of the establishment of a socialist ideology. The then “Ethiopian Language Academy” was established in 1985, and was given the responsibility to follow up language-related issues in the country. The famous “National Literacy Campaign” took off in 1975 on the basis of the Soviet experience as a model where a nationwide adult literacy program was introduced in minority languages. Among the pronounced contributions of the (1975-1990) national literacy campaign, the institutionalization of the literary use of fifteen local languages was one. A weekly Oromo

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<sup>110</sup> Zelalem, supra note(37),pp 19

<sup>111</sup> Derib &Getachew, supra note(38),pp 47

<sup>112</sup> Zelalem, supra note(47), cited Bender, 1985:273

newspaper called Bariisaa „dawn“ was in print for the first time in 1975 for the first time by the Ministry of Information.<sup>113</sup>

Article 2(3) of the 1987 PDRE constitution recognized the equal recognition of all languages and the right of speakers to develop their respective languages. Article 116 of the constitution stipulates that, “The working language of the Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is Amharic”. The constitution also asserted the rights of self-determination for Ethiopia's nationalities which were defined mainly on the bases of language.<sup>114</sup>

Though there was the above stated attempt to accommodate other language in different areas Derg followed pretty much the same language policy as its predecessor in promoting Amharic as the national official language. The medium for elementary education in all schools all over the country continued in Amharic. Concerning the media only Amharic and English language was broadcasted by the state television. Whereas the then Ethiopia radio aired Afaan Oromo, Tigrinya, Somali and Afar among the indigenous and French, English and Arabic among foreign languages. That was one step forward in language use in the mass media.<sup>115</sup>

Practically, there was no other Ethiopian language given any official status nor there was any implication in the constitution, that other Ethiopian languages could be used for official purposes. Amharic remained the main language that was used in the formal education, judiciary, administration and the media which puts the regime as the same place as its predecessors.<sup>116</sup>

### **3.2. Language Policy of the FDRE Government**

In 1991 after the over through of the Derg regime EPRDF government came to power. The transitional government of Ethiopia (TGE) developed its first charter. The transitional government charter under its article (2) stated among other things that “nation nationality and peoples have the right to.....use its own language”<sup>117</sup> This can be mentioned as the first written document which states about the language policy of the regime.

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid

<sup>114</sup> The constitution of the people’s Democratic Republic of Ethiopia ,proclamation No 1,Negarit Gazetta,Vol.47,Addis Ababa ,12 September 1987 Art(116)

<sup>115</sup> Zelalem, supra note(37),pp 26

<sup>116</sup> Derib &Getachew, supra note(38),pp 47

<sup>117</sup> Transitional period charter of Ethiopia Negarit Gazetta No.1 Addis Ababa 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 1991 Art.(2)

The consequent geopolitical reformation, which introduced the federal system of administration and the ratification of the 1994 constitution, changed the history of the country with regard to language policy. The 1995 constitution came in to effect with recognition of different languages in the country, unlike the previous regimes which by one and other means was neglecting language diversity. ICCPR on its different provisions tries to stipulate for the state parties to respect all the rights enunciated in the covenant without taking in to consideration one's own language diversity. Though the covenant does not clearly stipulate the freedom to use one's own language, by recognition of the right of self-determination<sup>118</sup> and by raising the issue here and there tries to put for state parties to respect the freedom of language. Since Ethiopia is a signing member of the covenant and also since the covenant is an integral part of the law of the land as per article 9(4) of the FDRE constitution, the country has an obligation to ensure the implementation of the right. This and other factors might be the reason for the FDRE constitution to come up with a different provisions which directly and in directly address the issue of language diversity.

Accordingly in the FDRE constitution all languages are declared equal, and Amharic has retained the status of the working language of the federal government.<sup>119</sup> Though the constitution recognizes Amharic as a working language of the federal government, it also grants all ethnic groups the right to speak, write and develop their own language.<sup>120</sup> Regional states have been also given the right to choose their own working language which is applicable within their own territories.<sup>121</sup> This reserved right has given the opportunity to emerge regional official languages, namely Amharic, Afaan Oromo, Tigrinya, Affar and Somali. Amharic besides its role to serve as a working language of the federal government has also gotten a chance to be used as a regional official language in Amhara, SNNPR, Benishangul Gumuz and Gambela regional states. It is also the working language of Addis Ababa and Dire-Dawa special regions.<sup>122</sup> Ethnic groups have the right to choose the language for primary education, but Amharic should be taught as a

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<sup>118</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966 Art.1

<sup>119</sup> FDRE constitution ,Art.(5)

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, Art 5 and 39(2)

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, Art.5(3)

<sup>122</sup> Zelalem, supra note(37),pp 30

language of countrywide communication. Consequently, more than 20 languages are being used as the medium of instruction in the primary education in different regions.<sup>123</sup>

### **3.2.1 Amharic as a Working Language of the Federal Government**

As the paper tries to address in the historical part, Amharic was serving as a state language on the previous regimes. Other local languages were not used for official proposes and were totally neglected. The FDRE constitution though it recognize the equal state recognition of all Ethiopian languages, it recognize the Amharic language as the sole working language of the federal government unlike most of multi linguistic federations which recognize more than one language as an official language of the federations.. Different justifications are stated by scholars about reasons for selecting Amharic to be the working language of the federal government. Zemelak on his article stated the main reason for the selection of Amharic as a working language is that at the time of the drafting of the constitution more people spoke Amharic than the other Ethiopian languages and Amharic was also viewed as more developed than the other Ethiopian languages.<sup>124</sup> More related argument with the recent one also stated that Amharic has been serving as a government working language for decades, which makes it a pride of every nation and nationality. Amharic is once developed for it has been introduced in institutions and so all people understand and use it easily. Therefore, considering Amharic as one basic language because of its historical background is the ready choice at hand.<sup>125</sup>

Since the constitution recognizes, Amharic as the only federal working language and, therefore, this language is served in all federal government structures and in institutions whose accountability is authorized to that federal government. In addition, Amharic is a working language in four of the nine regions and two administrative cities of the country. So based on this among the nine regional states in the country of which five Oromia, Afar, Tigray, Somali and Harari have been privileged to develop their own working languages and the remaining four

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<sup>123</sup> Abebaw Supra note 12 pp 24

<sup>124</sup> Zemelak A., Bilingual federal government for national cohesion, Ethiopian reporter,Article,2017

<sup>125</sup> Yonatan, supra note (41) pp 268

Amhara, Benishangul Gumuz, Gambela and southern nations nationalities and peoples decided to keep with Amharic be their working language.<sup>126</sup>

Aside recognizing and give protection for other language as stated above the constitution is criticized for not adding other language as a working language of the federal government. Chimidi(2018) in his paper stated that “even though article (5) of the constitution guarantees equal recognition of all languages, it didn’t make a detail of its application and so that non-Amharic speakers, especially the Oromo, are suffering from inaccessibility to compete for labor market needed at federal institutions level”.<sup>127</sup>

On the other hand Milkessa on his article argued that “by the 1994 and 2007 national censuses, Ethiopian population who speak Amharic as their mother tongue was 32.7% and 29.3%; while that of Afaan Oromoo was 31.6% and 33.8% respectively. The two languages were ideal for the status of federal official language of Ethiopia though Afaan Oromoo was discriminated against in order to perpetuate the historical exclusion of Oromo from the government”.<sup>128</sup> He further argues that:- “Had the official language choice been reasonable and justifiable, all national groups could have enjoyed fair access to the federal bureaucracies; and the Oromo in particular could have had better access than any other nationalities as they are the largest group in Ethiopia. The knowledge of Amharic language remains essential factor to get employed in the federal public service institutions”.<sup>129</sup>

Zemelak (2017) on his article also argued that “the decision to adopt Amharic as the only working language of the federal government perpetuated the old language policy that discouraged the use of other Ethiopian languages including Affan Oromo”.<sup>130</sup> He further argues that making a sole working language hinders the country to easily achieve the objective that stated under the FDRE constitution. And he suggested that a bilingual federal government with the addition of Affan Oromo language as a working language of the federal government, since

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<sup>126</sup> Chimidi W. choice for a working language in Ethiopia a case study among graduating classes of oromo speakers in selected public universities, macro linguistic Vol.6 No.9,2018 pp 100

<sup>127</sup> Ibid pp 114

<sup>128</sup> Milkessa M., official language choice in Ethiopia: means of inclusion or exclusion’,2014 open accesses library 2014 <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> accessed on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2021

<sup>129</sup> Ibid

<sup>130</sup> Zemelak, supra note (124)

the language is spoken by a large number of the society. He justifies his suggestion by stating that “if Affan oromo, was included as the additional working language of the federal government the country could have achieved a great deal in the past 20 years in terms of creating a sense of national cohesion that is much deeper and stronger than what the whole economic growth and infrastructural developments are claimed to have accomplished”.<sup>131</sup>

As it has been discussed in different parts of this research paper the main aim of the paper is also to show the practical challenge that Addis Ababa University students are facing because of language barrier, which is directly linked with the choice of only one working language.

### **3.2.2. Language Policy Among the Different State of the Federation**

As the paper tries to deal in the above section the FDRE constitution under its article 5(3) reserves the right of the Members of the Federation to determine their respective languages. Based on this the states of the federation determine their language policy on their own regional state constitution. So this part of the research paper tries to assess the language policy of some of the regional states.

As it is described above the FDRE constitution guaranteed the rights of the regional states to determine their language. Based on this different regional states under their state constitution determined their official language. Oromiya regional state is one, which determines its official language. The 2001 revised constitution of the Oromiya regional state under art (5) stated that “Affan Oromo shall be the working language of the regional government and it uses the Latin script”.<sup>132</sup> When we look at this provision of the state constitution it mainly recognize Affan Oromo as a regional state language, setting aside that there are other language spoken in the regional state for example, Amharic. So based on this language policy, Affan Oromo is used in education mainly on primary level, administration, justice and the media.

The constitution of the Amhara regional state under its art (5) stated that “All languages spoken throughout the regional state shall enjoy equal recognition on the part of the state” and under its sub article (2) it states that “Amharic shall be the official working language of the national

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid

<sup>132</sup> The Revised Oromiya regional constitution approval proclamation no /2001

regional state”<sup>133</sup> as per article 5(3) of the FDRE constitution, the Amhara regional state as one member of the Ethiopian federation choose Amharic language to be the state’s working language. The state constitution unlike, Oromiya regional state constitution recognize the recognition of all languages spoken throughout the region. This can be taken as one major step to accommodate different languages spoken throughout the region, and this can be also taken as the regional state intention to recognize language diversity.

In the education sector as well the language policy is implemented. As to the education and training policy of the country which allows the use of mother tongue language as a medium of instruction at primary level education, in the Amhara regional state Amharic, Afan Oromo, Awngi, Xamta are used in the primary education, and Amharic is given as a separate subject in all the educational levels.<sup>134</sup>As to the script selection, Amharic, Awngi and Xamta use the Ethiopic script while Afan Oromo uses the Latin script.<sup>135</sup>

Like that of the Amhara regional state constitution the Gambela peoples national regional state,<sup>136</sup> Benishangul Gumuz regional state<sup>137</sup>, the southern nation, nationality and people regional state<sup>138</sup> constitutions recognize the Amharic language as a working language of their regional state. They also recognize the mother tongue education under their constitution.

### **3.3. Ethiopian Language Policy of Education**

As it has been defined in chapter two of this paper language policy in education, particularly, refers to carrying out language policy decisions in the specific contexts of schools, colleges, and universities in relation to mother tongues and to foreign and second languages. These decisions often include several issues such as: Which language(s) to teach and learn in schools? When (at what class level) to begin teaching these languages? For how many years and hours should they be taught?<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> “The Revised Amhara National Regional State Constitution approval proclamation no 59/2001”

<sup>134</sup> Derib &Getachew, supra note(38),pp 52

<sup>135</sup> Ibid

<sup>136</sup> The 2001 revised Gambela peoples national regional state constitution approval proclamation no 27/2001

<sup>137</sup> The 2001 Revised Benishangul Gumuz regional state constitution approval proclamation no /2001

<sup>138</sup> The 2001 Revised southern nation, nationality and people regional state constitution approval no /2001

<sup>139</sup> Yonatan, supra note 41 pp 60

As stated above during the previous regimes though there was no written language policy, the language policies of education prefers either foreign language or Amharic based on the regimes preference. For instance in education, the first modern school, Menelik II school was established in 1908 using French as a medium of instruction. On the regime of emperor Hayile-sellase as well the 1947, the national curriculum for elementary schools recognized English as the main language of instruction even in elementary schools and in after 1960 Amharic substituted English as a medium of instruction primary education and junior high schools trough out the country, other local language in the country were not considered to serve as a medium of instruction.<sup>140</sup> During Derg, though the regime was in a better position on trying of accommodating different local language, still on the education sector the medium of instruction was the Amharic language, which makes the regime the same as its predecessors on language policy of education.

After the EPRDF government come to power drafted the Educational and Training policy (ETP) in 1994. The policy came up with different general and specific objectives to achieve; the objectives are stated under part 2 of the policy. From these, as stated under part 2.2.12 one of the objectives the policy aim to attain is “To recognize the rights of nations/nationalities to learn in their language, while at the same time providing one language for national and another one for international communication”.<sup>141</sup> In order to achieve this stated objective the policy puts a clearer stand on the language policy of education of the country on part(3.5) of the policy. As we can infer from the provision different language policy of education are stated in the policy exhaustively.

### **3.3.1The Use of Mother Tongue Language for Primary Education**

This can be stated as a pioneer document on language policy of education in the country. As one can witness this is a first policy document which recognizes the rights of nation nationality and peoples to learn on their nationality language at primary level as well as for teachers training for kindergarten and primary education, which the predecessors regimes fails to recognize. The

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<sup>140</sup> Yirgalem A., Language policy of Education and National Identity in Ethiopia,Academic paper, Haramaya University,2020, pp 42

<sup>141</sup> ETP,

Ethiopian Ministry of Education document that explains the implementation of this article states four reasons for the introduction of mother tongue education policy as follows:

- a) Language is not only a medium of instruction for the people but also a symbol of identity;
- b) Learning in a mother tongue enables the student to understand lessons easily, and avoids problems associated with language barriers;
- c) Using a language for instruction enables it to continue to be a living language and saves it from possible extinction;
- d) Learning in one's own mother tongue reinforces identity and enables its users to be proud of their culture and identity. They become self-confident and proud citizens. Such self-confidence coupled with the acquisition of knowledge and skill through schooling makes produce capable and productive citizens possible.<sup>142</sup>

As a document clarifies since Ethiopia is the home of different nation, nationalities and peoples the use of mother tongue language on primary education does have different advantages. According to the document of the Ministry of Education learning in one's own mother tongue reinforces identity and enables its users to be proud of their culture and identity. They become self-confident and proud citizens. Such self-confidence in ones' personal and collective self-boosts academic achievement. Such self-confidence coupled with the acquisition of knowledge and skill through schooling help to produce capable and productive citizens.<sup>143</sup> Based on this policy, there are twenty one languages, which are currently used as media of instruction at primary school level.<sup>144</sup>

Though making the mother tongue language as a medium of instruction in the primary school does have the above stated advantages some writers also stated some disadvantages of the policy on this specific issue by raising different examples. Yirgalem on his article stated that because of language barriers of the students it restricts the geographic mobility of the students and their parents from one part of the country to the other.<sup>145</sup> The other disadvantage of the policy stated as

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<sup>142</sup> Yirgalem , supra note 140 pp 59 cited FDRE, MoE, 2002, p.36

<sup>143</sup> Ibid

<sup>144</sup> Derib & Getachew, supra note(38),pp 30

<sup>145</sup> Yirgalem, supra note 140 pp 62

since mother tongue instruction focuses on local language it makes difficult to communicate with other linguistic community.<sup>146</sup>

### **3.3.2 English as a Medium of Instruction for Secondary and Higher Education**

As stated above the policy makes English language, as a medium of instruction for secondary and higher education. The underlying justifications of making English as a medium of instruction for secondary and higher education is to enable Ethiopian students to be proficient in English for the country's effort in international communication and relationships.<sup>147</sup> Based on the policy the proclamation of higher educational institution under its art (19) states that "The medium of instruction in any institution shall be English unless and otherwise, it is found necessary to make a research and teach in other languages" as stated in the proclamation in higher educational institution teaching in English is obligatory with some exceptions.

Though the above stated justification is given for making the English language as a medium of instruction for secondary and higher education, this specific policy also not healed from criticism. The critic goes as since the policy allows the use of mother tongue language as a medium of instruction at primary education failure to use one's own language as a medium of instruction beyond elementary schools and making English as a medium of instruction is just disregarding ones ethnic or national identity as a whole and does not bring national identity and suggested the use of a local language as a means of instruction.<sup>148</sup>

### **3.3.3 Amharic as a Lingua Franca Language**

As the research paper tries to discuss in the previous parts Amharic was serving as the office language as well as a medium of instruction in the previous regimes. It was the most prestigious and dominant language of the country. It was after the coming in to power of the EPRDF regime in 1991 the empowerment of other languages come to picture. The Transitional government charter and most importantly the FDRE constitution protected people's right of using their own

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid

<sup>147</sup> Ibid pp 74

<sup>148</sup> Ibid pp 78

language. The 1994 education and training policy of the country also recognize the medium of instruction for secondary education to be students' mother tongue language.<sup>149</sup>

Though other language get recognition in the current regimes, Amharic still serves as the sole working language of the federal government. Not only being the working language, Amharic is a de-facto lingua franca language of the federation, especially in Ethiopian towns.<sup>150</sup> Lingua franca in multilingual countries refers to languages which have the specific function of serving inter-ethnic communication within a given context. On deciding the lingua franca language demographic statistics of native speakers' communities, the internal geographic distribution of languages, information about the use of lingua francas and an assessment of the proportion of the population speaking such languages (either as a first or second language) and the functional role of the languages coexisting in a multilingual country should take in to consideration.<sup>151</sup>

The 1994 education and training policy under its section 3.5.4 states that “Amharic shall be taught as a language of countrywide communication”

According to Yirgalem (2006) though the policy intended to make Amharic as a language for countrywide communication, it is not functioning as planned and studies indicated that currently, Amharic language is not serving as a language of national communication. Nationalities could not speak Amharic as required. According to him the majority of the rural community of Ethiopia do not have any or only small access to the lingua franca Amharic and the negative attitude towards the language are some of the reason for the language to be not effective as a lingua franca of the federation.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> ETP

<sup>150</sup> Ronny Meyer ;Amharic as lingua franca in Ethiopia,article,LISSAN,journal of African language and linguistic vol xx, Addis Ababa university Ethiopian languages research center,2006, p-121

<sup>151</sup> Yirgalem , supra note 140

<sup>152</sup> Ibid

## Chapter Four

### Discussion on the findings

#### Introduction

On this part of the paper the major research findings will be discussed. The findings that will be discussed in this part of the paper are researched by using different mechanisms. Special attention is given for primary sources of data on this part. The target students whom are selected purposively, the concerned staff members such as, proctors, librarians, registrars, catering service givers management staffs and other peoples are the main source of the data which will be discussed and analyzed in the next part, field observation by the researcher on the research areas is also the source as well.

#### 4.1 Language Policy of Ethiopian HEIs

Article (19) of higher education proclamation stated that: - “The medium of instruction in any institution shall be English unless and otherwise, it is found necessary to make a research and teach in other languages”<sup>153</sup>

So the medium of instruction in Ethiopia’s higher educational institution is English which has the status of a foreign language in the country. Making English as a medium of instruction in higher educational institution seems has a justification in the proclamation. As stated under article (4) of proclamation one of the objectives of HEIs is “To prepare sufficient knowledgeable, skilled, and attitudinally mature graduates in relevant disciplines with competence to support peace, democracy and national development that can make the country internationally competitive ”<sup>154</sup>.

So in order to make the country internationally competitive it requires having professionals who knows the international language as well. To have skilled man power with the knowledge of international language i.e mainly the English language, the medium of instruction has to be in English.

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<sup>153</sup> HEI proclamation No 1152/2019 Art.19(1)

<sup>154</sup>Ibid Art.4(1)

The Other non-academic services in HEIs are often provided through Amharic, the office language of the Federal Government<sup>155</sup>, as per article (5) of the constitution which declares Amharic as a working language of the federal government. Thus, students who lack adequate proficiency in English and Amharic seem to be linguistically challenged in the Ethiopian higher education context.<sup>156</sup> As it is discussed in different parts of the paper the aim of the paper is to show the possible challenges that Addis Ababa university regular students are facing because of language barrier on getting of different services from the university.

## **4.2 Language Diversity in Addis Ababa University**

Before the establishment of the now Addis Ababa university as University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA) in 1950, some Ethiopians were sent abroad on government scholarships for higher education.<sup>157</sup> The former university college of Addis Ababa was found by Canadian Jesuits who had received permission from emperor Haileselassie . First administrators were a Canadian Jesuit, Lucien Matte, and an American, Harold W. Bentley (1961-1962).<sup>158</sup> The main aim of the University for its Establishment was to supply school teacher for the ministry of education and also to train man power for government offices. Promoting research and supplying personnel for technique advance and economic development also can be added for its formation.<sup>159</sup> In 1961, the UCAA was renamed Haileselassie I University (HSIU) and the emperor became the first chancellor of the University. Following the overthrow of the imperial regime, HSIU was renamed Addis Ababa University in 1974. Addis Ababa University was the only university in the country until Alemaya University established in 1985.<sup>160</sup>

Besides its vital role on being the pioneer of HEIs and its role of bringing different professional for different sectors, Addis Ababa University also played the major role to answer ‘nationality

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<sup>155</sup> Hayilemariam Supra note 20 pp 85

<sup>156</sup> Ibid

<sup>157</sup> Ibid pp 27

<sup>158</sup> Hussein Ahmed ‘Addis Ababa university fifty three years on an insider’s view’2006 retrieved from <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesafricaines/15215a> accessed at 20<sup>th</sup> may 2021

<sup>159</sup> Setargew Kenaw ‘the idea of a university and the increasing pressure of utilitarianism :a critical reflection on Addis Ababa university’EJOSSAH,vol.1/,No.1 2003

<sup>160</sup> Ibid

question' in the current constitution ,since the university was a nucleus for the then student movement.<sup>161</sup>

Addressing this much about the historical development of Addis Ababa University it is better to address the overall picture of language diversity in the university. As it is discussed in the previous parts HEIs in Ethiopia has got students with a different diversity background, this can be in terms of ethnic, language, religion and other variables. As some argued this diversity in HEIs existed mainly because of two reason the first is that the expansion of higher educational institution with the increase number of intake contributed for diversified students to join HEIs and the other reason is the fact that admission and placement of students by MOE, doesn't take in to consideration students ethnic and religious background also plays a great role for students with a diverse background to join higher educational institutions.<sup>162</sup>

AAU as one of the HEI in the country is subject to the above stated fact as well. The researcher was searching if there is a numerical data about the language diversity of the student of Addis Ababa University. According to Ato Mesele, who is the dean of the registrar office, "though students are diverse in terms of language, religion and ethnicity the university doesn't have numerically recorded data as to the diversity of students". As to him the registrar office only categorize students in terms of gender and section for academic purpose and nothing more.<sup>163</sup> So since there is no recorded data, it is difficult to know the numerical figure of the diversity. But according to different respondent since students come from different parts of the country Addis Ababa University got students who is diverse in terms of language.<sup>164</sup>

### **4.3 The Working Language of Addis Ababa University**

As the researcher tries to discuss in the previous part, the FDRE constitution under its article 5(2) sated that Amharic is the working language of the federal government. This is to mean that institution of the federal government uses Amharic as a working language. So based on this since Addis Ababa University is HEIs it is an institution of a federal government, so the working language of the university ought to be Amharic. But Addis Ababa University is not only a

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<sup>161</sup> Baharu Zewede 'Documenting the Ethiopian student movement an exercise in oral history' forum for social studies,2010

<sup>162</sup> Abebaw Supra note 12

<sup>163</sup> Interview with Mesel Berhanu, dean of the registrar office, conducted on July 8 2021

<sup>164</sup> Interview with Samuel, Interview with Mikiyas, proctors at males dormitory, conducted on July 1,2021

federal institution but it is also HEI, so it is also subject to another law i.e. ETP and higher education proclamation no 1152/2019. The proclamation under its Article (19) (1) stated that

*“The medium of instruction in any institution shall be English unless and otherwise, it is found necessary to make a research and teach in other languages”* <sup>165</sup>.

Accordingly the medium of instruction for the learning teaching activity in Addis Ababa University, like that of other HEIs, is English. So it can be concluded that the medium of instruction in the classroom is English, whereas since Addis Ababa University is a federal institution the medium of communication for other services outside the class room is Amharic.

Respondents, who are staffs of Addis Ababa University, also stated that they only use the Amharic language when they give service to the students, despite the fact that student’s linguistic diversity<sup>166</sup>. The idea also reflected on the focus group discussion of students, the participant students claims that when they go to different places in the university in order to get a service the staffs of the university only uses Amharic language, even in the case when they are not understanding what the staffs are saying.<sup>167</sup> Not only the oral communication but most of the written notices are also written in Amharic. As the researcher tries to observe at the different research areas except the insignificant number of notices written in English in the library area, all most all notices are written in Amharic language and the researcher could not find a single notice written in any other local language than Amharic. So it can be concluded that in AAU the working language in the classroom is English, where as in other service areas the working language is only the Amharic language unlike most of multi linguistic federations. As the paper tries to deal in chapter two most of multi linguistic federations recognize more than one language as their official language, by doing this diversified students in HEIs will not be challenged to get different services in the institutions. Not only this but HEIs in some multi linguistic federations go beyond the language policy of the federation and include other language, which in most cases

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<sup>165</sup> HEP Art.19(1)

<sup>166</sup> Interview with Askalech, the meal card ticker(30 June 2021),interview with Yeshialem Zelalem, the proctor for female students( 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2021),Interview with Samuel, the proctor for male students at building No-504 (1<sup>st</sup> of July 2021)

<sup>167</sup> Focus group discussion with 3<sup>rd</sup> year students Beshatu Dirissa, Almaz Iddossa, Hawi Shume and Alemi Bossa conducted on 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2021, Focus group discussion #1 hereinafter

the English language, in order to reach to linguistically diverse students. For example in Belgium though the English language is not recognized as the official language of the federations students are able to get different services in HEIs by using the language.

#### **4.4 Awareness for Accommodation of Language Diversity in Addis Ababa University**

Despite the fact that all language in Ethiopia was not recognized equally in the previous times, the FDRE constitution tries to acknowledge the existence of different languages in the country and it tries to recognize and give protection for these different languages. Among this Article 5(1) of the constitution states that “All Ethiopian language shall enjoy equal state recognition”<sup>168</sup> and Article 39(2) states that “Every nation, nationality and people in Ethiopia has the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language ...”<sup>169</sup>. So based on this provisions one can conclude that in legal perspective language diversity is recognized and get protected at the national level.

When we talk about awareness for language diversity it is to address the issue that how staffs and students of Addis Ababa University understand the existence of different languages and the right of a person to speak, to write and develop its own language as enshrined in the FDRE constitution. Accordingly since the respondent students of the research are the one that speaks other language than Amharic most of them answer that they understand what language diversity is and ads it means the existence of different languages in the university. And they said different languages are spoken by students. Affan Oromo, Tigregna, Somali, Annewa, Nuwere this last two languages are from Gambella, are some of the languages mostly used by students around the dorm, in the cafeteria and every were else in the campus. According to them though these are the languages which have a large No. of speakers there are also other languages which have small No. of speakers. According to students though there are students with a diversified language

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<sup>168</sup> FDRE constitution Art.5(1)

<sup>169</sup> Ibid Art.39(2)

background this diversity is not accommodated properly, especially in the selected service giving areas of the university.<sup>170</sup>

Whereas some of the staffs, though they understand the existence of different languages in the University, they argue that some of the students use only their mother tongue language intentionally. For instance one of the proctors, the researcher interviewed, who was not willing to tell his name, said that some of the students who only use their mother tongue language is not because they cannot speak and listen Amharic but because they do not want to.<sup>171</sup> For him these type of students uses only their mother tongue even when they aware that I don't understand their language when they are asking for a service.<sup>172</sup> The other respondent also stated that “some of the students understand what i am saying for them in Amharic but they act like as if they don't understand it, they do it intentionally since they don't want to speak Amharic”.<sup>173</sup> For the question rose by the researcher how does she/he knows the student can understand Amharic? The respondent answer that i use a mechanism by telling them jokes like ‘you would have been response if i insult u’ and at this time since they understand what i have been saying they laugh , as to her this shows that the students understand Amharic.<sup>174</sup> Not only the direct service gives the director of the student service office also says that though there are students who are diversified linguistically and only speak their mother tongue language the diversity accommodated properly in case of provision of different services. According to him students who claims as if their language is not accommodated in provision of services are those, who try to politicize the issue.<sup>175</sup>

Therefore though all of the questioned respondent understand there are students with a diverse language background in the university as per the researchers perception some of them are not well aware of the legally protected right of language diversity, which off course can be one cause for a problem raised in the service provision areas, as it is discussed in the upcoming sections.

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<sup>170</sup> Interview with Ibsa Abera( july 1,2021), interview with Megersa Gemechu(july 1,2021),interview with Gatlat Khol Yat(july 1 2021)

<sup>171</sup>Interview with Unidetified ( july 2 2021)

<sup>172</sup> Ibid

<sup>173</sup> Interview with unidentified (july 1 2021)

<sup>174</sup> Ibid

<sup>175</sup> Interview with Ato Demesilassie Mengesha, the director of the student service ,conducted on July 5 2021

## **4.5 Accommodation of Language Diversity in AAU**

### **4.5.1 Accommodation of Language Diversity on Catering Service**

According to the rule of the university all students learning in the campus are not eligible to get the catering service, rather there are students who got priorities in order to use the catering service. The students are put in their priority order in the rule. Accordingly the below listed are students who get the catering service in the university as per their priorities

- Disabled students and students with approved medical certificates are priority No-1
- Female students from outside of Addis Ababa – No-2
- Male students from outside of Addis Ababa -No-3
- Female students from suburbs of Addis Ababa are priority No-4 (within the available space)
- Male students from suburbs of Addis Ababa are priority No-5 (within the available space)
- Needy female students from Addis Ababa are priority No-6(within the available space)
- Needy male students from Addis Ababa are priority No-7(within the available space)
- Any students from Addis Ababa are priority No-8(within the available space and according to the physical distance of the student’s permanent residence).<sup>176</sup>

Based on these criteria the two cafeterias in the main campus i.e Ledet and the Main Cafeterias render a catering service for eligible students. From the two cafeterias in the main campus the ‘Lidet’ cafeteria gives service for both Muslim and Christian students in the university. As the researcher tries to discuss above students who are eligible to use the catering service in the university are listed thoroughly. Among these students, female and male students from outside of Addis Ababa are listed as priority no 2 and no 3 respectively. This is the point where students who come from outside of Addis Ababa and whom mainly use their mother tongue language as a means of communication come to use the cafeteria.

Student’s eligible for the service needs to have a meal card, which have to be marked three times a day for breakfast, lunch and dinner services. And the meal card has to be renewed every six

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<sup>176</sup> Retrieved from [www.aa.edu.et/studentlife/housing\\_and\\_dinning](http://www.aa.edu.et/studentlife/housing_and_dinning) ,Addis Ababa University 2021 accessed at June 10 2021

month<sup>177</sup>. According to Asekalech, the meal card ticker in the cafeteria, breakfast service is given from 7:30-9:00 in the morning, lunch from 11:30-1:00 in the afternoon and dinner from 4:30-6:00 in the evening.<sup>178</sup> According to the data they have when the researcher were there, which is 30 June 2021 the total number of students using the cafeteria were 1005.

According to the supervisor of the cafeteria, since the service is primarily organized, what students need to do is take the prepared meal, eat and give back the plate. So students, who use the cafeteria of the university, do not have as such much communication with the staffs of the cafeteria since there is no need of communication, except with that of the meal card tickers, whom are responsible to give the meal card, to renew it, tick it three times a day<sup>179</sup>. So since it is the meal card tickers that have a direct communication with the students the data is mainly collected from them in the form of FGD with a group of three and in the form of an in depth question. So according to the participants of the FGD, “on doing of our work, students who only speak their mother tongue language and who cannot listen and speak Amharic comes to get the catering service on daily bases”<sup>180</sup>. According to the participant most of the students who only speak their mother tongue comes from Oromiya region, next to that a large number of students also came from Gambella and Tigray region<sup>181</sup>.

As stated above this meal card markers are in charge of giving the meal card, renewing it every six month ticking it three times a day. So on doing of these activities according to the discussion of the participants it is a little bit difficult for them to communicate with students who only speak their mother tongue language.<sup>182</sup> For them giving services for students who speak Amharic is easier than giving service for students who only speak their mother tongue language.<sup>183</sup> It needs extra time and energy to communicate with them. For the question raised by the researcher how

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<sup>177</sup> Interview with Askalech, the meal card ticker conducted on 30 June 2021

<sup>178</sup> Ibid

<sup>179</sup> Interview with Asgedech, the supervisor of the cafeteria conducted on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021

<sup>180</sup> Focus group discussion with the staffs of the cafeteria Askalech, Aster, Aseggedech and Alem conducted on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021, Focus group discussion #2 hereinafter

<sup>181</sup> Ibid

<sup>182</sup> Ibid

<sup>183</sup> Ibid

they communicate with the students who only speak their mother tongue language, the participant's answer that "it is either by using other students who can speak both Amharic and the language at hand as a translator or by using some other staff who can speak both language".<sup>184</sup> And they added that sometimes it is difficult to find a translator and this make their work difficult.

Not only the staffs, the students whom the researcher interviewed, also claims that it is difficult for them to communicate with the staff members of the cafeteria because of language barrier. From these respondent one was a freshman student who came from Gambella and who only speak the Nuer language, one of the language in Gambella, and also a little bit of English. So according to him "since the staffs in the cafeteria are only uses the Amharic language and also since i do not understand Amharic and also because there is no solution for the problem at the institutional level it is difficult for me to ask for any service that i want to get"<sup>185</sup>. Other student who came from Gambela also shares this idea. As to this respondent I only speak Anywaa and English but not Amharic so it is difficult for me to communicate with the staffs of the university in general and the staffs of the cafeteria in particular, unless otherwise if there is other student who can translate the language.<sup>186</sup>

Also another third year graduate student from Wallega Oromiya region, who also only speak Affan Oromo, that the researcher tries to reach out by using English and by using other students as a translator, explains that it is very difficult for her to communicate with the staffs of the cafeteria in case of service provision.<sup>187</sup> And she added that she uses her friends who can understand Amharic as a translator. The other 3<sup>rd</sup> year student who came from Ambo, oromiya region and can speak and listen Amharic properly mentioned that when she was a freshman student it was difficult for her to communicate with the staffs of the cafeteria to ask for a service since she was only using Affan Oromo as a means of communication but latter on since she starts to develop her Amharic language it became easy for her to communicate with the staffs.

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid

<sup>185</sup> Interview with Gatlat Khol Yat a freshman student at the university, conducted on July 1<sup>st</sup>2021

<sup>186</sup> Interview with Okunyi Kwot, a 2<sup>nd</sup> year student in the university, conducted on 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2021

<sup>187</sup> Interview with Beshatu Dirissa 3<sup>rd</sup> year student In the university, conducted on July 1, 2021

And she added that currently she meets students in the cafeteria , especially freshman students, who faces difficulties in order to ask a staffs for a service. And according to her when the students are speaking Affan Oromo she helps them by translating the language.<sup>188</sup>

A fresh man student who came from Harari region and only speaks Affan oromo through the translation of other student stated that “for me the overall campus climate is not as such suitable since i am facing different problems because i did not understand the Amharic language. He added that when we were entering the campus there was an orientation given for us for like an hour and above, but since it was in Amharic i did not understand a single word what they were orienting”. As he said the same is true in the cafeteria as well, since the cafeteria staffs are only using Amharic language to reach to them it is not easy for me to communicate to the staff and to ask for a service.<sup>189</sup>

The researcher were also in the Cafeteria for observation at the time when lunch service is given to students<sup>190</sup>. The time was also the week of fresh students entrance, so based on this, different fresh students were coming to the meal card ticker in order to get the meal card, to ask for information and also to get the lunch service, while observing there was this student came from Gambella asks information to the meal card tickers by using his language and a little bit of English language. And the researcher observe that at first it was difficult for the staff what he is saying but latter since he was using some English they tries to understand him and respond to him by using some English and Amharic as well. Later on the student left the place but it is not clear either he gets what they were saying to him. So as per the supervisor of the cafeteria there is no as such need of communication between the staffs and the students, even in the little time they are communicating students who barely speak their mother tongue language faces difficulty because the service in the cafeteria are mainly given by Amharic language without possible alternatives.

Besides the communication undertaken orally written notices in the cafeteria are also posted in Amharic. According to the respondent students if notices were written in the language that they

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<sup>188</sup> Interview with Bontu Desta 3<sup>rd</sup> year student in the university, conducted on July 1, 2021

<sup>189</sup> Interview with Misba Kemal, a freshman student, conducted on July 6, 2021

<sup>190</sup> Researcher observation at the main cafeteria, on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021

spoke it would have been easy for them to understand the messages what the institution are intending to transmit to them. And for them it is also difficult or impossible to read and understand what is written on the notice in Amharic. According to them if the notices were in the language that they understand it will mitigate the oral communication with the service givers, but the absence of that made them to encounter difficulties in the written notices as well as the oral communications.<sup>191</sup>

Most multi linguistic federations such as South Africa and Belgium, besides recognizing more than one language as an official language of the federations, HEIs in the federation also use other language which is not in their official language list just because to reach to linguistically diverse students, unlike Addis Ababa University which only use the Amharic language to give the catering service without taking in to account students linguistic background.

#### **4.5.2 Accommodation of Language Diversity on Dormitory Service**

Eligibility for residential service in Addis Ababa University will be according to the priorities based on the rules of the university<sup>192</sup>. Accordingly the priorities to get a dorm service in the university are the same as with that of the priorities listed in the catering service. So the researcher finds that since the lists are stated in the part where the accommodation of language diversity on catering service is discussed there is no need to put it here. In the priority female students from outside of Addis Ababa and male students from outside of Addis Ababa are put in number2 and in number 3 respectively to get a dormitory service in the university. As stated before this is the point where, students from outside of Addis Ababa who, only speak their mother tongue comes to get a dormitory service.

The proctors, who are hired in order to give the dormitory and related services, are the ones whom have a direct contact with students on daily bases. In order to assess how different languages are accommodated on giving of dormitory service, the researcher tries to collect the data from male and female proctors offices and also from male and female students as well. Especially data from female students' proctors' office is collected mainly through interview as

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<sup>191</sup> Interview with Ibsa, Megersa, Gatlat supra note 170

<sup>192</sup> Retrieved from [www.aau.edu.et/studet life/housing and dinning](http://www.aau.edu.et/studet%20life/housing%20and%20dinning) Addis Ababa University,2021 accessed at June 10 2021

well as by field observation. All the data were collected on the dormitory area and even inside female students' dormitory. So the researcher also got the chance how the proctors are giving services for students who only speak their mother tongue.

According to Yeshialem, one of the proctors for female dormitories, the proctors are in charge of providing staffs such as dormitory keys, Lookers, Mattress, Pillow, and other material for students, facilitating ambulance services while the students are in pain, the overall supervision of the dormitory service, facilitation of maintenance for materials.<sup>193</sup> So students come to the proctors' office, which is of course reside in the block of the dormitories, to get these services. According to the respondent proctors there are so many students starting from freshman to graduating class, who only speak their mother tongue language, come to the office to get different services. According to them since we are giving services mainly by using the Amharic language, it is very difficult to communicate with students who cannot speak and listen Amharic.<sup>194</sup> Almost all the respondent proctors stated that language barrier is the main obstacle for them to give services for such kind of students.<sup>195</sup> Most of the students who can only speak their mother tongue come from Oromiya region, students from Tigray, Somali, Gambella, SNNPR also take the largest share.<sup>196</sup> The entire respondent whom the researcher approached stated that they are giving the services by using the Amharic language.

As one respondent proctors stated giving service for students who do not understand Amharic is time consuming and tiresome.<sup>197</sup> Most of the subject students are not in a position to write and read Amharic, because of this they did not understand the notice what we put on the notice board rules to be followed, and because they don't understand what is written on the notice board, we

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<sup>193</sup> interview with Yeshialem Zelalem, the proctor for female students conducted on 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2021

<sup>194</sup> Interview with Yeshialem Zelalem, the proctor for female students (1<sup>st</sup> of July 2021), Interview with Samuel, the proctor for male students at building No-504 (1<sup>st</sup> of July 2021) Interview with Tigest Fekere, proctor at the female dormitories conducted on July 1, 2021

<sup>195</sup> Ibid

<sup>196</sup> Ibid

<sup>197</sup> Interview with Mikiyas proctor at the males dormitory conducted on July 1, 2021

find this students on violation of different rules.<sup>198</sup> According to the respondent though the problem is more familiar with fresh students it is also common on senior students as well.<sup>199</sup>

The respondent stated that they tried to reach to these students by using different mechanisms. The best possible solution to communicate to these students is through their friends who can understand both languages.<sup>200</sup> And as per some of the respondent they use signs to communicate with them, for instance if they think that the student is asking for a key they will bring a key and they will show to the student and as per them sometimes by using the sign they get what students are asking for and sometimes even using the sign might not solve the problem, ,so in this case they are obliged to use another means to communicate with the students.<sup>201</sup> And male students' proctors stated that since some of the students come from Gambella and Somali region can speak English we try to reach them by using some English for a communication purpose otherwise it is difficult to reach to these students.<sup>202</sup>

The students also share this problem described by the staffs. For the question raised by the researcher whether it is difficult to communicate with the proctors to get the dormitory service, almost all respondent students' response that it is very difficult to communicate with the proctors to get the services.<sup>203</sup> The researcher had an FGD in one of the dorms with a group of four third year Affan Oromo students who all came from Oromiya region Wallega zone, and from which the three of them only can spoke Affan Oromo, it was even very difficult for the researcher to communicate with them since they cannot understand Amharic at all, and not much of the English also. In order to reach to them the issue for discussion were given to them by written form, since they can read English. So they read the issue and discuss it by Affan Oromo and since among the four one was in the position to speak a little bit of Amharic with the help of her the FGD was held. So on the FGD the students claims that "as a researcher witnessed, though we

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<sup>198</sup> Interview with Yeshialem, Samuel,, Tigest Supra note 194

<sup>199</sup> Ibid

<sup>200</sup> Iinterview with Mikiyas Supra note 197

<sup>201</sup> Interview with Yeshialem , interview with Tigest supra note 194

<sup>202</sup> Interview with Samuel supra note 194, interview with Mikiyas supra note 197

<sup>203</sup> Interview with kalid Sultan, fresh man student, conducted in July 6,2021 interview with Salim Ahemde ,freshman student conducted in July 6,2021.

stayed for three years in the university we can't speak and listen Amharic at all. So for us it was/ is very difficult to ask for different services from proctors since they can't understand what we are saying”<sup>204</sup>. According to the participant they are still asking the help of other students to communicate to the proctors so that they can get what they want.<sup>205</sup> The other respondent fresh man student who came from Oromiya region whom the researcher found while the student is asking to get key and pillow from the male proctor stated that “as you witnessed since i can't understand the Amharic language and since proctors are using the Amharic language to communicate with us it is very difficult for me to communicate with them easily”.<sup>206</sup>

Not only the interview and focus group discussion the researcher also uses field observation inside the dormitories of female students and female proctors' office.<sup>207</sup> While observing the provision of different services for the students, one student who only spoke Affan oromo came to the proctors office and tries to ask some questions, the proctor tries to understand what the student is asking for but she couldn't get it. After some explanation the student went to her dorm and came back with another student after a few minutes. And the other student whom can speak both Amharic and Affan Oromo tries to describe what her friend is asking for, finally because of the help of this student the proctors reaches to what she was asking was a spare dorm key since the previous one is not working for her, so they give the spare dorm key and she returns to her dorm.<sup>208</sup>

Like that of the cafeteria and as stated by the proctors as well, different notices around the dormitory are written in Amharic. As it is stated above since students whom only speak their mother tongue language cloud not understand the written notices in Amharic it became the source for violation of the roles put by the service givers. Not only this like that of the cafeteria students also misses the intention of the institution which are transferred through written notices, since they did not understand the notice wrote in Amharic.

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<sup>204</sup>Focus group discussion #1 Supra note 167

<sup>205</sup> Ibid

<sup>206</sup> Interview with Ibsa Abera Supra note 170

<sup>207</sup> Researcher observation female dormitory building No. conducted on July 1,2021

<sup>208</sup> Ibid

### 4.5.3 Accommodation of Language Diversity on the Library Service

Addis Ababa University as a pioneer teaching and research center has got different libraries. Addis Ababa university libraries plays an important role in supporting the university mission of excellence through teaching and research by making information easy, timely and accessible to university library user. And the libraries through its main branch libraries provide vital core services by facilitating and improving the teaching and learning process of Addis Ababa University.<sup>209</sup> The libraries in the university have different guidelines in order to give a proper service for the students, staffs and for the community at large. From these guidelines library values stated as one. The library values also incorporated integrity, respect, collaboration, diversity and other variables. From these variables under respect there is an element that stated libraries shall provide an environment that is inclusive and divers.<sup>210</sup> So based on this value Addis Ababa University libraries ought to be inclusive and divers.

So based on this, different libraries in the main campus are giving services for students, staffs and also for the outside community as well. From these different libraries in the main campus ‘Law library’ is selected purposively in order to collect the data. Since the library are an academic library and since it is the one which have the under graduate students course materials it is mostly used by under graduate students. As the head of the library describes since it is an academic library undergraduate students come to use the library on daily bases. From these undergraduate students, those who come from different parts of the country and who mainly speak their mother tongue language are included. As per to him when such kind of students come for the service it is difficult to communicate with them to some extent.<sup>211</sup> According to him freshman students are more vulnerable to the problem, whereas since the seniors learns some Amharic language, at least for mere communication while staying in the university, it is not as such difficult to communicate with them.<sup>212</sup> The other respondent librarian also stated that since we gives services to the students by using the Amharic language it is difficult for us to reach to

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<sup>209</sup> Retrieved from [www.aau.edu.et/library](http://www.aau.edu.et/library) accessed at July 8,2021

<sup>210</sup> Ibid

<sup>211</sup> Interview with Woldekidane Lemma, the head of the law library, conducted on July 8 2021

<sup>212</sup> Ibid

them easily. According to him in order to reach such kind of students we use different methods. For example if the student is asking for some book and if it is difficult to understand to each other we asked the students to give us their course outline, after seeing the course outline we brings them 3 or 4 available books for the subject and from that the students will pick what they want, as to him this type of communication method is more like that of sign language, which is acceptable in library science.<sup>213</sup>As to him since I didn't speak other local language than Amharic,I could not address students by the language they speak, so at this time In addition to the sign communication I ask the help of other staffs or students to be a translator.<sup>214</sup>

The head of the library also stated that staffs in the library use the help of other staffs or students if they get a difficulty to get to reach to communicate with students who only speak their mother tongue language. He also uses the course outline sign communication method if it is difficult to communicate orally. For the question raised by the researcher as to the institutionally formulated method of solving the problem in the library, he answers that except the method employed by the staffs there is no as such institutionalized solution for the issue. According to him the creation of institutionalized solution for the issue is not as such important, even it is dangers. He illustrate his idea as 'if there is for example a special disk for students who uses their mother tongue language it will be a discrimination for other students and it became the issue of ethnicity, So it is better to resolve the issue informally'.<sup>215</sup>

The other respondent librarian also said that since I did not speak any other local language than Amharic I use the language to communicate with students. Though it is difficult to communicate and give service for students, who uses their mother tongue language, we try to reach and give the service to them by the help of other staffs and students who knows both languages at hand. And he added not only that but if the students knows the English language we also communicate by using the language.<sup>216</sup>One of the respondents stated that in order to resolve the problem and in order to give information about the library, orientation was held for freshman students. For the

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<sup>213</sup> Interview with Mohamed Ali, the librarian at the Law library ,conducted on July 8,2021

<sup>214</sup> Ibid

<sup>215</sup> Interview with Woldekidane Supra note 211

<sup>216</sup> Interview with Fekadu Beshah ,librarian at the Law library, conducted on July 8,2021

question asked by the researcher on what language the orientation was given, he answers that the orientation was given by using the Amharic language only.<sup>217</sup> As one respondent stated the orientation given for freshman students what so ever do not have that much relevance for students who could not understand Amharic since the orientation is held using the Amharic language.<sup>218</sup>

Students also stated that the staff of the library gives us a service by mainly using the Amharic language. So it is not as easy as the Amharic speaker students to get the library service. One respondent student, who came from Gambella described that ‘my mother tongue language is Nuer, I can’t speak and understand Amharic properly, on the other hand the staffs in the library uses the Amharic language in order to get to reach to us, so as to me it is difficult to communicate with them easily, unless and other wise there is a staff that I can try to communicate with the English language’.<sup>219</sup> Students, who come from oromiya region and only spoke Affan Oromo, also share this idea according to them to communicate with the staffs of the library, to ask for a service is difficult. Unless otherwise they bring with them other students whom can speak both Amharic and Affan Oromo.<sup>220</sup> According to the researcher finding there is a field of study in the university, which is called “Affan Oromo” so students who are in the field are mostly come from Oromiya region and speaks Affan Oromo. According to the head of the Law library the materials that is relevant for the field are in the library.<sup>221</sup> So a number of students who only speak Affan Oromo come to the library to get the materials. This is also the point where students face a communication problem with the staffs. As it is discussed previously the respondent staffs of the library told the researcher that the only local language they can speak and listen is the Amharic language, on the contrary students who speaks and listen other language than Amharic are there to get the service. As the result of this a communication gap is existed between the staffs and the students in order to get the required services.

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<sup>217</sup> Interview with Mohamed Supra note 213

<sup>218</sup> Interview with Misba Supra note 189

<sup>219</sup> Interview with Pel Bofb, second year student, conducted on July 2,2021

<sup>220</sup> FGD#1 Supra note 167

<sup>221</sup> Interview with Woldekidane Supra note 211

Unlike the cafeteria and the dormitory services notices in the library are not only wrote by Amharic only, but in Amharic and in English as well. Which according to some respondent especially those came from Gambella is relevant to understand different messages such as the working hour tings not be done and other.<sup>222</sup> But as the researcher observes and according to the respondent students there is no a single notice in the library wrote by any other local language than Amharic.

#### **4.6The Role of Student Service Office on Accommodation of Language Diversity**

The major research area of this paper i.e. the catering service and the dormitory services are rendered by student service office<sup>223</sup>, which is off course located in the main campus. Ambulance services, laboratory services and cost sharing services are some of the services given by the office. The office as a supervisor of these services should be aware of the problems on rendering these services to the subject students. The director of the office stated that “though we are aware of that there are students who only speak their mother tongue language as a means of communication there is no as such a problem on giving services to such kind of students.”<sup>224</sup> According to him though there number is not that much big, there are off course some students who complain about the issue. Let alone the oral communication students also complain about the Amharic written notices, the students claim that the notices should be in different languages whom the students can read and understand it.<sup>225</sup>

For the researcher question on the things that are done on the office in order to accommodate these different languages the director answers that when students who only speak their mother tongue language asks for a service the staffs tries to communicate with them by the help of other staffs and by the help of other students as well. According to him students won't hinder a problem because of this, it is not as such a problem. But as it is discussed in the above parts

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<sup>222</sup> Interview with Okunyi Kwot, 2<sup>nd</sup> year student, conducted on July 2,2021

<sup>223</sup> The office undertakes the distribution of the available dormitories to the eligible students and also manages the cafeterias In the university it also gives related services to the students.

<sup>224</sup> Interview with Demsilassie supra note 175

<sup>225</sup> Ibid

students claim that it is very difficult for them to get service because they can't listen and speak Amharic and also the service givers stated that it is difficult to give services for students who can't listen and speak Amharic. The director of the student service stated that though the issue is not as such a problem but we are doing different activities to accommodate different languages in our service. According to him there is a try in order to hire a multilingual staffs so that they can give a proper service for students who can't listen and speak Amharic. And also efforts are done in order to make written notices by using different languages.<sup>226</sup>As the paper tries to address in the above parts since the staffs are using the Amharic language in order to reach to the students and the written notices in the service provider's areas are also in Amharic respondent student claims that it is difficult to communicate and to get service.

#### **4.7The Role of the Student Union Towards Accommodation of Language Diversity in The University**

According to HEIs proclamation no 1152/2019 “The student union shall be founded on the principle of universality membership in accordance with the pertinent laws so as to promote and protect lawfully , students common interest”.<sup>227</sup> Addis Ababa university also got students union which office is located in the main campus. According to the president of the union since the main aim of the union is to protect students' common interest, the union tries to resolve issues on the areas when there is a student's complaint. As the student union president says Students who came from outside of Addis Ababa especially students who came from Oromiya, Gambella and Somali region faces a problem when they try to get different services in the university since they can only speak their mother tongue language.<sup>228</sup> Based on his observation since the working language of the service givers is Amharic and since these students do not understand the Amharic language it is not easy for them to get service in the cafeteria, dormitory as well as in the library. He added that let alone the communication but since all the written notices are in Amharic it is difficult for students to understand the notices.

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid

<sup>227</sup>HEP Art.38(1)(j)

<sup>228</sup> Interview with Muleta Korme, student union president, conducted 6<sup>th</sup> of July, 2021

According to him students came to the office for such type of complaint, and they told us it is difficult for them to get different services because of language. And as to him if the students bring another student with them for a translation to get different services the staffs are not positive to communicate with the help of other student and they even said that the ‘student by himself should ask for the service not other person’ even knowing that the student couldn’t understand the Amharic language. Students who came to the student office request for staffs who can understand their language so that they can get the service easily. And the president added that most of the student who have such kind of complain asks at least the written notices to be in the languages they can understand.<sup>229</sup>

For the question asked by the researcher if there is any effort that the students union office is doing on answering the question of the subject student, the president of the union answers that though the union by itself cannot answer the request of the subject students, since the mandate of the union is limited, but as a representatives of the students we are forwarding the problem to the institution and we are also recommending on the solutions in order to solve the problem which students are facing. And also for the question if the union is helping students as a translator so that they can approach to the service givers, he answers that except the member of the union by themselves tries to help the students to reach to the service givers if they get any, the union is not doing a translation for students at the institution level.<sup>230</sup>

#### **4.8 Multi-linguality of the Service Giver**

As it is described before since Addis Ababa University is a federal HEI the working language of the university as per article (5) of the constitution is Amharic.<sup>231</sup> Accordingly, as the researcher tries to describe in the previous parts the subject service area of the research mainly held by using Amharic language. As it discussed also there are students who came from different parts of Ethiopia whom only speak their mother tongue language. So there is loophole between the service giver and the service provider in terms of language diversity. So in order to asses this one

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid

<sup>230</sup> Ibid

<sup>231</sup> FDRE constitution Art.5(2)

of the questions provided for the staffs was whether they can speak or understand any other language than Amharic.

Most of the respondent who are working in the cafeteria<sup>232</sup>, dormitory<sup>233</sup> and library<sup>234</sup> stated that they do not speak and listen other local language than Amharic. Some of the respondent stated that not only them most of the co-workers who are not interviewed for the research also do not understand other local language than Amharic<sup>235</sup>. So since this is the fact they claim that it is difficult for them to understand what students, who only speaks their mother tongue language, are saying when they come to get service. And also according to them since most of their co-workers are also do not understand other languages; it makes it difficult for them to ask the co-workers for help in case translation is needed.

One of the respondent claims that she speaks Hadiya (one of the language of SNNPR) other than Amharic and tries to use it in case students who also use the language comes to ask for the service, but she stated that there is no as such a student who uses the language.<sup>236</sup> And some of the respondent claims that even if there is a co-worker who can speak other language than Amharic he/she might not be willing to use it if students who speaks that language come to get a service.<sup>237</sup>

So according to the findings of the research the staffs of the subject service area of the research by one or other reason are not multi lingual ,they only can understand Amharic and uses it to get to reach to students despite the language difference the students have.

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<sup>232</sup> FGD#2, supra note 180

<sup>233</sup> Interview with Yeshialem(supra note 193),interview with Mikiyas(supra note197),interview with Samuel(supra note194)

<sup>234</sup> Interview with Woldekidan(supra note 211), interview with Mohamed(supra note 213),interview with Fekadu(supra note 216)

<sup>235</sup> Interview with Yeshialem(supra note 193)

<sup>236</sup> Interview with Tigest, Supra note 194

<sup>237</sup> Ibid

## 4.9 Students Sense of Belonging in The University

The respondent students who were asked by the researcher what is their perception about the problem they are facing, answer that it is very frustrating for them to ask for a service from a people who do not understand what they are saying.<sup>238</sup> One freshman student who came from Harer said that getting the services are crucial for us, but asking for a service to the people who don't understand what we are saying is frustrating. According to him most of the time i want to read and understand what is written in the notice board but since all the notices are in Amharic i look at it and left without understanding what it is saying and i feel sad about it. And he also added that in the first day when i inter in to the campus everyone in the campus were speaking Amharic and i did not understand a single word what they were saying i was much confused about the situation. As to him at least if the written notices are with the language that i understand it will make the environment a little bit suitable for me.<sup>239</sup> The other student also said that since i only understand Affan Oromo in order to get the service i always go with friends who knows the language so that they can translate what i want to ask. According to him i always follow them as a baby, and that did not make me happy, if there is some other mechanism in order to reach to the staff it would have been helpful.<sup>240</sup> Freshman Students who come from Gambella also share the idea, they stated that though we communicate with English if there are staffs who also understand English, in other cases since it become difficult to communicate with the staffs it did not make us feel good.<sup>241</sup>

The subject staffs also claims that students who only speaks their mother tongue comes to ask for a service feels frustrated if we are not in a position of understanding what they are saying. Some of the respondents even said that “even there are students who cries if they could not transfer the message that they intent to tell”.<sup>242</sup> Others stated that students came to get service

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<sup>238</sup> Interview with Misba, supra note 189, Interview with Kalid supra note 203, interview with Salim supra note 203

<sup>239</sup> Interview with Delbi Naji, freshman student, conducted on July 9, 2021

<sup>240</sup> Interview with Hakim Abdi, freshman student, conducted on July 9, 2021

<sup>241</sup> Interview with Changlwoty Yathep, interview with Duop Wiyual Gatlaak, fresh man students, conducted on July 9, 2021

<sup>242</sup> Interview with Yeshialem (supra note 193) interview with Tigest (Supra note 194)

most of the time return to their dorm without telling them what they want, since they know the staffs are reaching them by Amharic.<sup>243</sup> Other respondent staff said that students whom use their mother tongue language sometimes get afraid to ask for a service. So it is us who persuade them to ask for what they want. As to him some of the students left the place without asking what they want and some asks the service they need to get.<sup>244</sup> This seems that since the students knows the staffs will not understand what they will be asking it will be meaningless for them to speak to the staff without some menses of translator may be the help of other students. For them it will be helpful if they were getting the service by a people whom understand what they are saying.<sup>245</sup> Accordingly sense of belonging in the university for students, who speak their mother tongue language as means of communication, is missing since they are obliged to get the services with a language they did not understand.

#### **4.10 The Availability of Institutional Mechanisms to Accommodate Linguistic Diversity**

According to the higher education proclamation No.1152/2019 one of the guiding values that a higher educational institution should promote is developing democratic culture, ethics and maintaining cultural diversity.<sup>246</sup> So based on this, HIEs should have a room in order to maintain diversities. It is not only the mere existence of diversity that is essential, but the existing diversities should also be accommodated and promoted properly in the institutions. The promotion and maintenance of these diversities also should be done at the institutional level, in other words the accommodation and promotion of diversities in HEIs has to be institutionalized to give a proper recognition.

As the paper tries to deal in the previous parts, on the research area, i.e., Addis Ababa university main campus, diversity in terms of language existed. Though there are students who are diverse in terms language, since the service of catering, dormitory and library are given by Amharic language, language gap existed between the service givers and students who only speak their

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<sup>243</sup> Interview with Mikiyas supra note 197

<sup>244</sup> Interview with Woldkidane supra note 211

<sup>245</sup> Interview with Samuel supra note 194

<sup>246</sup> HEP Art.11(7)

mother tongue language. The researcher was searching whether there is an institutional mechanism to narrow this gap. As the staff respondent tries to explain when students who barely speak their mother tongue language asks for a service and if they can't communicate with each other the only mechanism they have is to ask the help of other staffs, if there is any and mainly by using students who can speak both languages at hand.<sup>247</sup>

Students also share the idea of the staffs. According to the respondent students if there is a misunderstanding between them and the staffs on the provision of services because of language difference, the mechanism they use in order to solve the problem is, asking for the help of other students, since there is no as such an institutional mechanism for the issue.<sup>248</sup>

The director of the student service also admits about the absence of the well-organized institutional mechanism to solve the issue. But according to him this is mainly because, the issue is not as such a problem, which is off cores opposite from the research findings. According to him though the issue is not as such a problem, there is a try to have multilingual staffs at the institutional level, though it is not yet practicable. According to him not only this but there is also a try to make written notices in other language in addition to Amharic, so that students can understand it easily.<sup>249</sup> As the researcher tries to observe in the cafeteria and in females' dormitories all notices were written in Amharic.

The president of the student union also argues that though it is obvious that the language gap existed between the students and the service givers, since there is no as such institutionally formulated mechanism to narrow the gap it makes it difficult for the problem to be solved properly. As to him the problem is handled especially on the effort of students by bringing another student with them to communicate with the staffs and also there is staffs effort to communicate with students. So except the mechanism used by the staffs and students here and there to communicate with each other, there is no institutionally formulated solution for the problem.<sup>250</sup> Students also share as the absence of institutionalized solution for the issue.

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<sup>247</sup> Interview with Woldekidane(supra note 211) interview with Mohamed (supra note 213)interview with Tigest(supra note 194)

<sup>248</sup> Interview with Muleta supra note 228

<sup>249</sup> Interview with Demeselasse supra note 175

<sup>250</sup> Ibid

According to their response it is them who try to resolve the issue and communicate with the staffs mainly by asking the help of other students.<sup>251</sup>

Accordingly as per the respondents idea and also as the researcher observation, except the effort undertaken by the staffs and students here and there, there is no as such institutionally formulated and organized solution at the university level to fill the gap that existed because of a language difference between the students and the service givers. As one respondent student stated the problem that student faces because of language diversity has to be well known and has to have a solution by the institutional level. Because the absence of the institutional solution for the problem hinders students in order to get a proper service from the university and also it might be a reason for students' grievance in the long run.<sup>252</sup>

#### **4.11 Reasons for Amharic Language to Not Serve as a Means of Communication for Students**

As it has been discussed in the previous chapter though it is not stipulated in the constitution, Amharic language besides serving as the working language of the federal government it is also serving as the lingua franca of the federation. Although Amharic language is serving as the working and the de facto lingua franca language of the federation, in practice as the finding of this research shows it is not serving as a gap filling language for HEIs students who came from different parts of the country. As the paper tries to deal in the chapter most of the selected students for this research are not able to speak and understand the Amharic language. Different reasons are in counter for the fail of the language to serve as a lingua franca language. The one reason though it is not the major one, could be the timing or grade level of starting to teach Amharic as a subject. Unlike the English language, which students has to learn starting from grade one, the ETP does not specify the timing to start learning of the Amharic language. Because of this gap there is disparity as to the starting grade of the Amharic language among different regional states.<sup>253</sup> Some regions like Oromiya start to teach Amharic language as a subject starting from grade five. Other regions such as Gambella, Harari, and Tigray start to

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<sup>251</sup> Interview with Misba supra note 189, interview with Delbi supra note 239, interview with Hakim supra note 240

<sup>252</sup> Interview with Muleta supra note 228

<sup>253</sup> Yirgalem supra note 140, pp 66

teach the language as a subject starting from grade three.<sup>254</sup> According to Zelalem (2012) “The fact that Amharic is taught in non-Amhara areas only as a subject is not sufficient to make Amharic a trans-ethnic media of communication”.<sup>255</sup> This can be in counter for the fail of better acquisition and proficiency of the Amharic language since it is the early stage of the child hood that students can have the better acquisition of language.

The other reason for the fail of the language to not serve as lingua franca is that student’s attitude towards the language. There is a tendency for some ethnic groups to relate Amharic with past domination and injustice. At times, official documents of the government whether intentionally or unintentionally disseminate negative attitude to the language.<sup>256</sup> For instance, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education document states that in previous regimes, Amharic was "deliberately imposed" throughout the country as the official medium of instruction in all primary schools as a tool to "deepen and broaden the patterns of ethnic domination".<sup>257</sup> (FDRE, MoE, 2002, P.13). Basically the tendency makes students to not have a positive attitude towards the language. According to Yirgalem(2020) it is very difficult for a person to have a positive attitude to the language that was historically imposed on him/her as a means of domination. If a person does not like to speak Amharic, he/she will not speak it even if he/she knows it very well, let alone learning it.

The researcher also tries to collect a primary data from the selected students on the issue. One respondent student from Oromiya region and was not willing to tell his name responds that i did not speak Amharic totally but can listen little words, but am not that much interested to know the language. He added that considered that making the Amharic language as a sole working language of the federal government is a continuation of the past oppression and dictatorship. For him if Affan Oromo is also included in the list of the federal working language list it would have been better for students to choose Affan Oromo as a means of communication but not Amharic.<sup>258</sup> Other student from Oromiya also stated that “making Amharic language the only working language of the federal government is not fair for me since i could not understand the language and also not willing to know the language”. He added that if it is not possible to include

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid

<sup>255</sup> Zelalem supra note 37

<sup>256</sup> Yirgalem supra note 140, pp 67

<sup>257</sup> Ibid

<sup>258</sup> Interview with unidentified conducted on 20 November 2022

Affan Oromo in the working language list of the federal government i prefer the English language to be the working language of the federal government.<sup>259</sup> Other respondent student who came from Gambella stated that “my knowledge to the Amharic language is poor not because I don’t want know the language but because the language is very difficult to understand”. He added that “I tried to learn the language so many times and am continuing to learn it and to become a good speaker on the language”.<sup>260</sup> So basically the respondent students got poor proficiency in Amharic language because of either they are not willing to know the language or they could not understand the language easily.

#### **4.12 Opportunities of Accommodation of Language Diversity**

The enrollment of diverse students in institutions of higher education is considered a major success in the efforts to embrace and even celebrate diversity.<sup>261</sup> It is necessary to note that although the mere presence of students from diverse backgrounds is an opportunity for meaningful interactions among diverse peers it does not guarantee to benefit from diversity as if it is not managed properly. University leadership has the obligation to manage diversity by creating a safe, welcoming, and conflict free environment in which each member of this diversified student body has the capacity to succeed and feel a sense of belonging.<sup>262</sup>

Having linguistically diverse students and accommodating this diverse language properly is valuable because it potentially leads to a wider range of thoughts, ideas, and opinions, increases the likelihood of socializing with diverse groups and discussing various diversity-related issues and creates an enriched academic environment. This, in turn, contributes to developing mutual understanding and positive intergroup relations by challenging students to refine their way of thinking and reducing prejudices toward out group members.<sup>263</sup>

The area of this study is mainly concerning on catering, dormitory and library services. So when we look at in to these specific areas, as the paper tries to discuss in the previous parts, since linguistic diversity is not accommodated properly it will be difficult to find out its opportunity.

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<sup>259</sup> Interview with unidentified conducted on 20 November 2022

<sup>260</sup> Interview with unidentified conducted on 20 November 2022

<sup>261</sup> Mesfin & Angela, campus climate for diversity and students sense of belonging in Ethiopian public university, education planning 2, vol 28 no 4 2021 pp 5

<sup>262</sup> Ibid

<sup>263</sup> Abebaw Y, student ethnic diversity management in Ethiopian Universities practices, challenges and way forward, department of educational planning and management Addis Ababa University, 2022 pp 2

Respondent students claims that, since their language is not accommodated or since they could not get the services by using their mother tongue language in the specific areas, it is frustrating for them to ask and get what they want. And according to some students because of this feeling of a sense of belongingness to the university is missing.<sup>264</sup> According to the staff of the specific selected areas even there are students who are crying if they could not transmit what they want.<sup>265</sup> So since opportunity of linguistic diversity has a direct link to the proper accommodation it is difficult to get the opportunity of linguistic diversity in the specific selected areas since it is not accommodated properly.

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<sup>264</sup> Interview with Delbi&Changlwoty conducted on july 9,2021

<sup>265</sup> Interview with Yeshialem (supra note 193) interview with Tigest(Supra note 194)

## **Chapter Five**

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### **5.1 Conclusions**

As some researches are indicating currently there are about 42 governmental HEIs in Ethiopia. Because of the No. of HEIs are limited and because of the Ethiopian society at large got diversity futures, students with diverse backgrounds in terms of ethnic, religion and language are joining different HEIs, which are residing in different parts of Ethiopia. From these, students who can't speak and listen Amharic but only speak their mother tongue language are some of them. Addis Ababa University as one of the pioneer universities in the country also has students who only speak their mother tongue language.

In this research paper the researcher tries to discuss the accommodation of language diversity in Addis Ababa University in the provision of catering, dormitory and library services .And the main concern of the paper was also on students who only speak their mother tongue language other than Amharic. As per the proclamation No.1152/2019 Art.38 (1)(b) students shall have the right to enjoy the freedom to learn with appropriate opportunities and conditions in the class rooms, campuses and in the larger community. Again developing democratic culture, ethics, and maintaining cultural diversity stated under the proclamation as one of the guiding principle that a HEIs shall promote. So as per the provisions the overall campus environment has to be comfortable for all students in order to enjoy their freedom to learn. Whereas as the research findings show that in Addis Ababa University this is not practicable for students who speaks their mother tongue language only.

Based on the finding of the study nevertheless there are students who only speak their mother tongue language, the catering.the dormitory and the library service in Addis Ababa University are given by Amharic language only, According to the findings, students who spoke Affan Oromo, students came from Gambella, Somali and Tigray take the largest share in the list of mother tongue language speaker. From these students some of them try to communicate with the staffs by using the English language as a means of communication especially students who came from Gambella are prominent. But most of them are using only their mother tongue language.

So for these students it is not as such easy to ask and get the catering, dormitory and library services like that of the students who can understand Amharic. Not only from students perspective but it is also difficult for the service givers to give these services to the students, as some respondent staffs says it needs an extra time and energy to give service to those students.

Though the catering area doesn't need as much linguistic communication with the staffs and the students ,as the respondent staffs and the students said in case of the time of communication it is difficult for both of them to understand each other. As per the research findings the problem is prominent in the dormitory area. The student who only speak their mother tongue languages faces problem if they try to ask for a dormitory and related services from the proctors. The same is also true in the library.

Based on the research findings, though there are students linguistically diverse the service givers on the contrary are not as much diverse or multi linguistic. These is the major gab between the service giver and the students, the means of communication i.e. language are missing in this case. So because of this students faces problem to ask for a service on these service givers areas, and also it became a source of frustration for students. Not only had this but for such type of students belongingness to the campus are also missing since the campus are giving service by the language which they don't understand. Besides these gap the awareness of some staffs with regard to language diversity is also the area that needs work.

According to the research findings not only the oral communication, but students are not also in a position to understand a written notices, since most of which are written in Amharic. Because of this students misses different information on the notice in the dormitory area, in the cafeteria as well as in the library. Not only the missing of the information but it also became a reason for students to not cope up with the updated code of conduct of the research area service givers. To show it on example, as the finding shows proctors put different notices by using Amharic around the dormitory area, but since students who do not understand the language don't get what the notice is all about, they won't be able to practice what is on the notice, which in effect causes them to violate the rules unintentionally.

Despite the fact that students problem which they face because of a language gap between them and the service givers, there is no as such an institutionally formed solution to solve the problem.

As the research finding shows when the students wants to ask for a service for these areas of service givers it is common to ask for a help of other student whom can understand both languages at hand, and who can serve as a translator. The staffs also ask the help of other staffs to reach to the subject students so that to understand what the students are requesting for. These are the main solution students and the staffs' uses in order to get through each other. Besides the individual effort of students and staffs, there are no institutionalized solutions for the issue in the University.

Generally, there is a gap in terms of language between students who only speak their mother tongue language only and the service givers in the provision of cafeteria, dormitory and library services, And since there is no institutionalized solution to feel this gap in the university the subject students face different difficulties in these different service providers. And it can be concluded that different languages are not properly accommodated on the specific research area of the university.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

Addis Ababa University as one of HEIs of Ethiopia is a federal institution, and besides the learning- teaching activities it is subject to the Amharic working language as per the FDRE constitution. Though this is the case since it is HEIs, it is a home for different students who came from different parts of the country who also are diverse in terms of language. From these students, students who only speak their mother tongue language are facing different difficulties to get catering, dormitory and library services since the service givers use Amharic as a means of communication.

As it is stipulated under Art 38(1) (b) students has a right in order to enjoy the freedom to learn with appropriate opportunities and conditions in the classrooms, campuses and in the larger community. The catering, dormitory and library service are areas which students uses on daily bases and also are essential for students to undertake their main stay in the university i.e. learning teaching activities. As per the above stated provision the overall campus environment has to be suitable for students so that students can learn with appropriate opportunities, but for students comes from different parts of the country and speak their mother tongue language only the

campus environment is not as such suitable because of the difficulty they are facing on getting different services since they can't speak and listen Amharic language.

So Based on the findings of the research, the researcher forwards the following recommendations, with no order of priority

- As the research finding shows the issue is raised because, there are diverse students in terms of language and there is an absence of diverse staffs in terms of language on the catering, dormitory and library areas. So it is recommended that an effort has to be done in order to have diverse staffs in terms of language or to have staffs whom are multi lingual so that they can reach to students who only speak their mother tongue language easily.
- Since awareness is basic in order to resolve the issue, awareness creation has to be done for the staffs about the existence of language diversity, about the constitutionally guaranteed right of peoples to speak, to write and to develop their own language and also about different related area which in effect can resolve the issue at hand.
- The mechanism in order to communicate with students has to be also institutionalized. As the research finding shows it is the students or the staffs individually that tries to communicate with each other by asking the help of other students or other staffs. So in order to resolve or minimize the issue the solutions has to be formulated and implemented institutionally. One can be, having a multilingual staffs as stated before or having a special office or desk which helps students to get to reach to the concerned service givers.
- Besides having a multilingual staffs the institution should also make a research in order to identify what language speakers are vulnerable to this problem, so that it will help the institution to have a special office or desk that serves as a bridge to relate the students and the service givers. Based on the financial capacity of the institution this special office has also spread to address other language speakers whom have less No of students also.

- The other possible solution which can be done by the institution is to give basic lingual training for the service givers. On doing this research the researcher finds out that the university gives sign language training for the different staffs so that they can communicate with disabled students who cannot listen and speak. As the researcher observe the staffs were easily communicated with such kind of students and it was not as such difficult to give service for these students, which the effort of the university has to be admired here. The same has to be done in order to resolve the problem caused because of language diversity. Training on basic terms of the different language helps the staffs to communicate with the students, so that they can give different services for the students easily, and also helps them to transfer the message they have to the students .
- The other possible recommendation is that written notices, which are very essential for students to know the intent of the service givers, should also be in different languages which the students can understand. By making this the service givers may transfer their messages to the students easily and students also be able to understand and be able to practice what is on the notice. The use of the English language and some local languages that have a large number of speakers are highly recommended.
- The Ministry of Education and the institution i.e Addis Ababa University need to formulate language diversity-related national and institutional policies and strategies which help to strategically manage linguistic diversity on the selected areas.
- Last but not least since the basic cause of the problem is the constitutionally stipulated working language of the country at the national level, constitutional amendment for the inclusion of other working language is recommended. As Amharic is the only working language of the federal government HEIs are also subject to this. This causes students who only speak their mother tongue language not to get the different services easily unlike that of students who can speak and listen Amharic. So in order to resolve the problem at the national level constitutional amendment is needed with the inclusion of

at least the languages that are subject to such kind of problem as working language of the federal government.

So based on the above stated recommendation and based on the findings of other researches concerning other service givers in the university the problems of students who only speak their mother tongue language should be resolved once and for all, so that it helps to get successful students in their field of discipline which in effect helps the country in getting of different efficient students in different fields.

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3. Interview with Muleta Korme, president of the student union Addis Ababa University, conducted on(
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5. Interview with Asgedech, supervisor of the cafeteria Addis Ababa University, conducted on (June 30 2021)
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22. Interview with Gatlat Khol Yat, fresh man student, conducted on (July 1 2021)
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30. Interview with Pel Bofb,2<sup>nd</sup> year student, conducted on
31. Interview with Okuyi Kwot, 2<sup>nd</sup> year student, conducted on

**Annexes**  
**Addis Ababa University**  
**College of Law and Governance**  
**Center for Federalism and Governance Studies**

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE HEAD**

Interview Questions for all selected participants.

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Interview -----

**I. Interview guideline for in-depth interview for Target Groups students**

1. Would you tell me your full name? (If necessary)
2. Would you tell me your field of study (department) and the year?
3. Where Did you came from (your home town?)
4. What is your mother tongue language?
5. Do you speak and listen Amharic properly?
6. Do u think Addis Ababa University accommodated language diversity properly?
7. Do you think the staff of Addis Ababa University is linguistically diverse?
8. Is it difficult for you to get different services because of language? Such as library, cafeteria, dormitory other services
9. If your answer is for the above question, is there any institutionally established solution in the University?
10. Then how do you communicate with the staffs
11. Do the staffs try to give you the service by using the language that you spoke?
12. If your answer is yes for the above question what is your feeling about it?
13. And what possible solution do you think should be done in order to resolve the problem?

## **II. Interview guideline for in-depth interview for the staffs /cafeteria, librarians and proctors/**

Name .....

Position.....

Your experience in Addis Ababa university in years.....

1. Please tell me your name and your work experience?
2. How do you understand language diversity?
3. Do you think Addis Ababa University is diversified in terms of language?
4. In what language do you give service for students?
5. Do you speak any other language other than Amharic?
6. Do you have a chance to meet students who doesn't speak and lesson Amharic while you are doing your job?
7. What language is used by most of them?
8. How do you communicate with this kind of students?
9. Do you use other language than the required one to communicate with these types of students?
10. Is this difficult for you to give service for such students?
11. Is there any solution stipulated at the institutional level
12. Is there any formally established/recognized institution to solve such problem?
13. What possible suggestion do you suggest in order to resolve the problem once and for all?

**III. Interview guideline for in-depth interview for the Director the office of student service**

Name .....

Position.....

Your experience in Addis Ababa university in years.....

1. Please tell me your name and your work experience?
2. How do you understand language diversity?
3. Do you think Addis Ababa University is diversified in terms of language?
4. Do you think these diversities are accommodated properly in the university?
5. As a head of student service are they students who uses the catering and the dormitory service but speak their mother tongue language only?
6. How does the staffs communicate with such kind of students?
7. Is it difficult for the staffs/students to give/receive the service?
8. If the answer is yes for the above question is there any solution institutionally applied?
9. Is being multilingual a criteria for hiring staffs for the cafeteria and for the dormitory?
10. What possible solution is designed in order to resolve the problem?

**IV. Interview guiding questions for the president of the student union**

Name .....

Position.....

Your experience in Addis Ababa university in years.....

1. Please tell me your name and your position in the union?
2. How do you understand language diversity?
3. Do you think Addis Ababa University is diversified in terms of language?
4. In what language do you give service for students?
5. Do you speak any other language other than Amharic?
6. How do students who doesn't speak and listen Amharic get the service of library, dormitory and cafeteria?

7. Do you think there is a problem on rendering of these services because of language barrier?
8. Do they have complained about the language barrier they hinder while getting these services?
9. How do you resolve the students' problem as a union?
10. What possible solution should be made at the institutional level to resolve the problem?

## **V. Interview Guideline for focus group discussion**

1. In what language did you give service to the students?
2. As the staff who directly contact to the students, how do you communicate with students who can't understand Amharic?
3. Is this difficult to give service to these students?
4. Is there institutionally formulated solution for the problem?

## **VI. Interview guideline for focus group discussion**

1. Can you communicate with the staffs of Addis Ababa University by Amharic?
2. How do you communicate with them?
3. Is it difficult for you to get service in the cafeteria, library or in the proctors office because of language
4. Is there any institutionally established solution to narrow the gap?

