



ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

**STATE OF LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND LANGUAGE SHIFT
AMONG THE SAHO SPEAKERS: THE CASE OF IROB**

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STATE OF LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND LANGUAGE SHIFT AMONG THE
SAHO SPEAKERS: THE CASE OF IROB

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

BE	Better Educated
CSA	Central Statistics Agency
EC	Ethiopian Calendar
F	Fair
FR	Farmer
Fr	Frequency
G	Good
GE	Government Employee
IL	Illiterate
JB	Job Less
L1	First language
L2	Second language
LMLS	Language Maintenance and Language Shift
LWE	Less Well Educated
MoFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
NS	No skill
OG	Older Generation
P	Poor
SPCIK	Study and Promotion of Cultural Indigenous Knowledge
VG	Very Good
YG	Younger Generation

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Abstract

This study investigates the state of stability in Saho-Tigrinya bilingualism among the Saho speaking group in Ethiopia – Irob. It has been conducted among members of the community in Dowhan – administrative center of the homeland for the Irob community. It examines various aspects of bilingualism of the target community. These include language use pattern, language attitude, and proficiency. In addition, the study describes various group and individual factors that would possibly influence intergenerational continuity of Saho in the context of the homeland (Irob Wereda).

The investigation is based on sociolinguistic data that has been obtained mainly from primary sources. To a lesser extent, it also employs pieces of information produced from secondary sources. Questionnaire is the main data gathering instrument the study uses. Yet, in supplementing and/or complementing the questionnaire data, interview, vocabulary test, and document analysis, as well as observation are made use of.

The results of this study in general disclose that Saho-Tigrinya bilingualism does not seem a stable one; they rather suggest that Saho's intergenerational continuity is proceeding negatively among the Irob community. The study identifies various symptoms for a possible shift from Saho to Tigrinya. These comprise presence of functional reduction and/or restriction of the ancestral tongue in various domains; Tigrinya's spread or intrusion in public and private life of the native community is found to be remarkable; there is language behavior variation between younger and older generations; there is a sign for higher level of language loss among youngsters etc. The study also presents various large-scale factors (historical, social, economic, socio- psychological, cultural etc.) and attempts to demonstrate how such factors could have contributed to the current unsafe state of Saho in Dowhan and/or how they would possibly affect its long-term survival in the Irob district.

The thesis is organized in four chapters. The first chapter tackles with a brief description of background of the study. It includes a short introduction of the research topic, the speech community and its language, scope of the study, research methodology and the like. The second chapter presents review of literature and related works. The third chapter analyses the data for the study. In the fourth chapter, the overall discussion is first summarized and then major findings and conclusion of the study are forwarded. The chapter concludes by providing possible recommendations on the measures that ought to be taken to improve the ongoing language shift situation of Saho.

CHAPTER ONE

Background of the Study

1.0 Introduction

Bi/multilingualism is a reality for most nations in the world. Most countries overtly state to have more than one ethnolinguistic group. In fact, the number of languages differs from one country to another. While some bilingual countries (such as India, Papua New Guinea, Nigeria) encompass hundreds of languages within their territories, others have few languages to be called so. For instance, Canada has so named for having two languages officially: English and French.

Regardless of the total number of languages a multilingual country holds, it is seldom likely that all languages available would have similar degree of functional use and/or prestige. Almost always, a language or few languages, often termed "majority" or "dominant" or "superordinate", have a wider currency over the rest for various political, social, economic, historical or psychological reasons. As a result, the remaining language(s), or the "minority" or "recessive" or "subordinate", are given least status not only by the speakers of the dominant language(s) but also by the speech communities to which these languages actually belong. Consequently, different minority communities are often pressurized, overtly or covertly, directly or indirectly, to assimilate linguistically to the mainstream culture at the expense of their own.

Today, as Spolsky (1998: 55) suggests, many people across the globe are aware of the extinction of some species of animals, but they probably have no idea about languages that are vanishing as linguists do. As Krauss in Brenzinger (1997:173) proposes, "only 10 percent of the present languages of the world are 'safe' and therefore not threatened by extinction in the future." And, Hale (1992: 1) deems language extinction or loss as "part of a much larger process of LOSS OF CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL DIVERSITY". It is thus in accordance with this and other related facts that studies in aspects of LMLS recently become one of the central concerns of (socio)linguistics inquiry.

Ethiopia, like many other African nations, is a multilingual country where many minority languages are spoken alongside some dominant ones. Very often, minority languages found in Ethiopia are threatened in one or another way by the dominant languages, or by language shift, (Zealealem, 1998: 69). On the other hand, reversing language shift process (or language maintenance) usually gets less concern. Hence, the state of LMLS among speakers of minority

languages in Africa and in Ethiopia in particular is doubtlessly awaiting proper linguistic and anthropological studies. The present study focuses on the description of aspects of LMLS among one of the minority linguistic groups in the country: Irob – the Saho speaking community.

1.1 The People

The homeland for the Irob community is Irob *Wereda* (district), which is situated in Eastern Zone, Tigray Regional State, Ethiopia. The district borders with other Saho speaking groups in Eritrea, particularly with Debrimela to the north east and Hazo/Hado to the east. It also shares narrow boundaries with the Afar speaking groups in Eritrea and Ethiopia (Afar Regional State) to the south west. In the remaining geographical directions, it borders with Tigrinya speaking communities in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Specifically, it borders with Gulomekeda and Sae'se'-Tsa'ada Emba Weredas of Eastern Zone of Tigray to the west and south west, and to the south, respectively; and it borders with Shumezana (in Eritrea) to the north west.

According to an online article written by Souba Hais entitled *Some Facts about Irob*, cited in <http://www.irrob.org/articles-on-irob.html>, "The Irob [sic] lived for centuries between two culturally different societies: the highland Christians [the Tigrinya speaking communities] whose economic life is mainly based on agriculture and the lowland Muslims [the Saho/Afar speaking communities] whose economy is mainly based on pasturing". As a result, a mixture of both cultures of the highlanders and the lowlanders are apparent in the Irob community today. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that Irobs are "much more connected with the Christian peoples of the hinterland than they are to the lowland people of the region ... Religion, food, folklores, marriage customs, social-organizations, etc., are almost identical to that of Tigrinya speaking highlanders" (ibid).

According to the 2007 Ethiopian population and housing census (CSA 2008), the total number of Irobs all over Ethiopia is 33, 372 (p. 86). Out of this number, 25, 862 dwell in the homeland, Irob *Wereda*, of which 12, 576 (48.6%) are male and 13, 286 (51.4%) are female (p. 60).

Predominantly and for so long mixed farming has been the major economic activity for the people. However, due to recent social and ecological changes in the speech community and their environment such as education, urbanization, modernization and recurrent drought, there are Irobs who engage in various socioeconomic activities and professions other than agriculture or farming.

Irobs are predominantly Christians. While some of them are followers of Catholic, others are followers of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. There are also a few Muslim Irobs.

1.2 The Language

Saho is classified under Afro-asiatic, Cushitic, and East Cushitic, particularly Lowland Northern Cushitic language family (Fleming and Bender, 1976:43). As to its internal variation, Saho exhibits dialectal differences among the various Saho speaking groups such as Irobs, Hazo/Hado, Debrimela, Assaurta, and so on (Awash, 1987:1).

There are however controversies in the literature on whether Saho is an independent language or a dialect of Afar, and hence whether the varieties spoken by Hazo, Irob, Debrimela etc., are all dialects of Afar or that of Saho. In his MA thesis, '*Inflectional Morphology of Irob*', Ewonetu (2005) treats Irob as the name of the language spoken in Irob Wereda which has close relations with Afar and Saho. He also confirms that before him "no one has produced a linguistic work entitled 'Irob' except treating it as one of the dialects of Saho and/or Afar" (p.1). He is thus, at least tentatively, the first to treat Irob as a separate language.

On the other hand, according to Souba, cited in <http://www.irrob.org/articles-on-irob.html>, while Irobs who live in the rest of Tigray adopt Tigrinya, those who reside in Irob Wereda speak Saho. Awash (1987) and Tewodros (2009) also took linguistic data from Irob people and produced a BA thesis entitled *Noun Morphology of Saho* and an MA thesis entitled *Morphology of Saho*, respectively. Thus, for these scholars the name of the variety spoken by Irobs is Saho.

Though the situation we have been through points out the need to undertake mutual intelligibility test so as to settle the disputes over whether this variety (spoken by Irobs) belongs to Saho or Afar, or deserves a separate language status, the only option we have in such a circumstance is to rely on what the speech community has called its language.

To this end, as I was told by a concerned government representative, recently, there were a panel discussion held at Dowhan – administrative center of the wereda – up on bringing up the language to the school as a school subject starting from grade one. In the meeting, elders and representatives of the speech community alongside higher officials at regional, zonal and wereda level were participants. One of the themes of the meeting brought for discussion was specifying the name of the language: whether it should be called Irob or Saho. Finally, representatives of the speech community chose Saho to be the name of the language, and Irob the name of the group. Therefore, throughout the study I will employ Saho to refer to the language and Irob to refer to the people.

As indicated above, the language had been a spoken until very recently. Since 2009, it has got its orthography and become a written language. Moreover, it is given as a school subject starting from grade one to grade four in Irob Wereda.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Ethiopia is a home of several linguistic and ethnic groups. Nonetheless, the languages spoken in the country have entertained insignificant number of linguistic studies. Once again, from these insignificant studies, the overwhelming majority have almost exclusively focused on the description of the languages' grammar. For instance, Saho has entertained various descriptive works over the last six or seven decades: *Notes on the Structure of Saho* by Welmers (1952); *The Morphophonemics of Noun and Verb in Saho* by Daniel (1984); *Noun Morphology of Saho* by Awash (1987); *Inflectional Morphology of Irob* by Ewonetu (2005); *Morphology of Saho* by Tewodros (2009). Describing structural properties of a language does not have any problem *per se*; in fact, it is and has been one of the central concerns of linguistic research.

Nevertheless, the scope of contemporary linguistics is not only confined to description of languages' grammar. It subsumes different sub-disciplines that deal with various aspects of language(s). One of the emerging sub-disciplines is sociolinguistics, which generally embarks upon language in relation to society. Sociolinguistic studies and in particular language contact investigations are scarcely available on Ethiopian languages. And Saho is no exception in this regard. Hence, this study intends to fill the gap.

Saho is one of the minority languages spoken in Ethiopia. And minority languages in general are assumed to be threatened by extinction. However, being a minority language does not invariably presuppose that the language is endangered or its speakers are faced language shift (Fasold 1984: 217; Brenzinger 1997: 276). It is thus neither possible nor appropriate to say Saho is an endangered or safe language simply by virtue of, for example, being spoken next to the dominant language in the region, Tigrinya, or it has not official status, or considering the demographic conditions (geographical location, numerical strength) of the group and so on. Because, as has been stated in the literature on LMLS, some factors that have facilitated a given speech community to maintain its language, have linked up with another in accelerating the shift process, hence it is impossible to predict by such kinds of simple observations (Appel and Muysken 1987: 38; Fasold 1984: 217). As a result, it requires a proper investigation to know about the state of LMLS for a given language. Therefore, the absence of such an investigation on Saho among the Irob community makes the present study worth conducting.

1.4 Research Questions

In studying LMLS of a particular group, it is generally assumed that various large-scale socio-economic factors come into play that may affect, positively or negatively, the state of affair at hand. Identifying the factors and in what way(s) such factors contribute to the state of LMLS are believed to be among the worthwhile themes for research (Fasold 1984: 214; Vamarasi 2005: 79). In addition, it has been suggested that one can measure the position of a language, whether it has a chance of long-term survival or a negative future, by undertaking different sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, and linguistic investigation on the verbal behavior of the respective community or the language (Weinreich 1968: 106-110; Fase et al. 1992: 10). These include patterns of language use, attitudes to languages, relative proficiencies in the target languages, degree of language convergence and the like. In view of that, the current research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Is there any evidence for negative intergenerational continuity of the traditional tongue?
2. What is the major pattern of language use among the target community?
3. What is the attitude of subjects towards Saho and Tigrinya?
4. How proficient are members of the Irob community in Saho and in Tigrinya?
5. What role dose gender/sex play in language use, attitude and proficiency?
6. What social (group) factors affect Saho's maintenance in Irob Wereda and in Dowhan in particular?
7. Is there any sign for the impact of intermarriage on Saho's maintenance

1.5 Objective of the Study

Generally, the study intends to describe language contact issues on Saho with particular emphasis being given to the state of LMLS among the Irob community. Hence, it has the following specific objectives:

- A. Identifying factors for LMLS in Dowhan in particular and in the Irob district in general
- B. Analyzing language behaviors (use, attitude, proficiency) of the target community
- C. Examining if there is any indication of mother-tongue loss among younger people
- D. Investigating the interplay of generation and language use, attitude and proficiency
- E. Exploring the impact of sex/gender on language use, attitudes, and proficiency
- F. Examining the impact of mixed marriage on the pattern of language acquisition

1.6 Significance of the Study

The research concerns with one of the least studied language in terms of sociolinguistic investigations. Therefore, it is conducted in the hope that it would pave the way for other scholars to accomplish further study on the socio-linguistic profile of the Saho speaking groups not only in Ethiopia but also the corresponding groups in Eritrea. Moreover, the focus of research on LMLS has been mainly restricted to the description of the state of affair in relation to in-migrant minority groups. Thus it will be complimentary to see the situation with minority languages within their "original" geographical setting. Furthermore, based on the overall findings of the study it will put forward some recommendations; and these may be used as points of reference for any concerned bodies such as language activists, language planners, speakers of the language and the like.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study limits itself to the situation with a variety of Saho spoken in Ethiopia. It does not address the case of speakers of other varieties of Saho in Eritrea. Major areas of study to be covered are language use pattern, language attitude, language proficiency, and factors that account for LMLS.

The primary data for the study has been driven from members of the Irob community in Dowhan. It is selected for some basic reason: its *accessibility*; in terms of both physical and social accessibility. Since Dowhan is center of the district, (a) transportation to and from is mostly available to this town, and (b) it is possible to reach heterogonous social groups (in terms of education, occupation, etc.) and social contexts (domains) of language use.

Also, as a center, the possibility of frequent contact with Tigrinya speaking community is high in Dowhan. Recently, there is a considerable in flow of Tigrinya speaking people to this town, many of them are employees in the various sectors of government offices while others are self-employed, as well as temporary visitors, those who come and go for various governmental fieldwork as well as private purposes. And, this makes it viable for sociolinguistic, specifically LMLS study; for it is supposed that the presence of daily pressure from the dominant language speakers may reveal interesting (socio)linguistic outcomes. Moreover, according to UNESCO's criteria for minority languages endangerment, particularly for those tongues within their indigenous settings, like the case at hand, if there is a negative intergenerational continuity tendency among the urban dwellers of the speech community, the language is considered

endangered no matter it is maintained among their rural counterparts (as learned from a class lecture by Zelealem). Hence, language behaviors and tendencies observed among members of the community in Dowhan would possibly give us an impression to the state of LMLS of the Irob people.

1.8 Research Methodology

1.8.1 Research Design

In accomplishing a given research, one can venture either quantitative or qualitative research, or a combination of both. The choice of the design depends on the subject matter under discussion. As the current research mainly deals with a one-shot survey on various language behaviors of the target community, I employ mainly quantitative research design. However, to complement the results of the quantitative information, and in the process to obtain the merits of both research designs, qualitative research method is employed as well.

1.8.2 Data Sources

As a whole, the research utilizes data that has been obtained from primary as well as secondary sources. The sources for the primary data are the Saho speaking community in and around Dowhan. It comprises different social groups, in terms of age, sex, occupation, social roles (elders, parents, officials) etc. The secondary sources are various publications including online articles, manuscripts, census information and books written on the people (Irob) and/or the language (Saho).

1.8.3 Sampling Techniques

Various attempts have been made to include various subjects in accordance with the various investigations intended to accomplish in the study. To this end, both probabilistic and non-probabilistic sampling techniques were employed depending on their practicality in achieving the required subjects. Subjects participated in the research can fall into three categories: subjects who responded to (1) a questionnaire, (2) interview questions, and (3) a vocabulary test. In what follows, the sampling techniques employed to select each group of interest and the criteria set in doing so will be briefly explained.

1.8.3.1 Subjects Responding to the Questionnaire

As mentioned above, the study has been conducted among Irobs in Dowhan. Thus, the population was Irobs who dwell in this town. The sample group to participate in responding to the questionnaire was identified via probabilistic, specifically *multistage* sampling technique – use of a combination of various randomization methods in dealing with unstructured group that could not be identified via a single technique (Utts and Heckard, 2004:106). It was employed for there was no list of residents that show Irob population in Dowhan, which had made some how difficult to achieve a truly random sample group in the beginning. However, an attempt had been made to reconcile with the gap in hand and to achieve an optimally representative of the population. Accordingly, cluster, stratified and simple random sampling methods (multistage technique) have been utilized in the following steps.

With the help of two research assistants (the criteria for the selection of the assistants will be discussed in the next section), first, an attempt was made to divide the town into tentatively assumed blocks, which were thought to hold nearly similar size of the population of interest. As a result, eleven clusters (blocks) of the population were obtained and the clusters were given numbers from 1 – 11, in accordance with their linear order of geographical set up. Having done that, five blocks named in even number (2, 4, 6, 8 & 10) from the eleven were randomly selected. Then Irobs who resided within these five blocks and aged twelve years old and above were registered in five separate lists, according to the block they belonged to. (The age twelve is selected to be the minimum age for respondents to take part in the study for it is the optimum age for developing fuller language and social behaviors.) The average number of individuals in the five lists was about 60, with the most populous cluster, block 4, consisting of 68 individuals and the least, block 10, consisting of 53. From this, it had been roughly inferred that the 11 blocks (or the town) would possibly hold around 660 Irobs that would represent the total population of interest. Accordingly, the sample size was specified to be 20%, which are about 130 subjects.

Meanwhile, the lists were taken as representing five stratum. Then, the names in the received lists were rearranged randomly so as to widen the chance for being selected. Eventually, from each stratum a random sample of 26 (or 20% of 130) participants were selected (as a result, a total number of 130 informants were identified – even if four of them did not take part in the study for various reasons of their own).

1.8.3.2 Interview Participants

Moreover, interviewees that consisted of various members of the community were selected through convenience and accidental sampling techniques. I was directed to some of them for they were assumed to have good knowledge of the people's history, culture and so on. Others were interviewed accidentally with some consideration of their relevance in the study as well as their willingness to be interviewed. As a result, twenty-five interviewees who consisted of elders, parents, government representatives and young people were interviewed.

1.8.3.3 Examinees in the Vocabulary Test

Both probabilistic and non-probabilistic sampling techniques were used to specify subjects for the vocabulary test administration. The aim of the test was to gather data on the state of mother-tongue competence among Irob teenagers. Specifically speaking, the focus group for such an investigation was Saho-Tigrinya bilinguals of 13-15 years of age who were students of grade eight. The rationales for that are, first, teenagers of that age are supposed to be just beyond the optimum age for complete language acquisition, which is more or less assumed to be 10-11 (Weinreich, 1968: 70) or 11-12 (Schaufeli, 1992: 120).

Second, education has recently become a fact of life among the Irob community. Children are sent to school when they reach the school age. Tigrinya is the medium of instruction in the schools particularly until grade eight. It is also given as a subject throughout primary and secondary educations. Children at this level of education are thus believed to have been formally exposed to Tigrinya for most part of their school life in addition to the informal acquaintance they have had to it. Therefore, an examination of the lexical competence of such teenagers has been done in the hope that it would offer general impression on the impact of the exposure to the dominant language in early ages on the state of mother-tongue proficiency among the young generation of the community under study. Accordingly, the participants were selected from Dowhan Complete Primary School for it was believed to offer an opportunity to identify a truly random sample of the focus group by using the student list available in there.

Accordingly, with the help of the school principal, lists for the two sections of grade-eight pupils were received, which totally consisted of 108 students. In collaboration with their teachers, 81 Irob students, 37 males and 44 females, were identified. Having done that, random lists for the male and the female Irob students were separately prepared. Then, from each list, 11 males and 14 females were selected via simple random sampling method. After this, they

(these 25 first screened subjects) were given a piece of paper to fill in some guided questions concerning their socio-linguistic profiles that would be controlled and examined. Variables intended to be controlled were age (13-15), first language (Saho) and parent's ethnic composition (born in endogamous family) while sex, parents' socioeconomic status (occupation and education), and place of residence (*urban* – in Dowhan Vs. *rural* – in the nearby villages out of Dowhan) were variables which would be examined vis-à-vis the examinees' language behavior. Eventually, based on purposive sampling technique, a sample group of 11 participants (which are nearly 14% of the target group) that had been found to meet the sociolinguistic criteria set out were selected.

1.8.4 Data Gathering Instruments and Methods

Quantitative and qualitative data pertaining to the objective of the research were collected. The principal data gathering instrument employed in the present study was questionnaire: It is selected for its advantage to address large number of participants and to cover various issues within short period of time. However, since data obtained through a single instrument would have reliability shortcoming, other instruments were also utilized as supplementary to the questionnaire. These were interview, vocabulary test, document analysis and observation. In what follows the scope of each of the instruments and how they were employed to accomplish their assigned tasks will be presented in brief.

1.8.4.1 Questionnaire

A semi-structured questionnaire was designed to obtain quantitative data on the following major areas: (a) demographic details, (b) linguistic and ethnic background (c) language use in various domains, (d) attitudes and motivations toward Saho and Tigrinya and (e) proficiency in Saho and Tigrinya. It was designed first in English and translated into Tigrinya. Then, it was distributed among the sample group.

Having learned the importance of hiring research assistant(s) from the ethnolinguistic group under study, in order to secure cooperation from the community (Al-khatib, 2001:156), and being aware of the norm in almost all communities in small towns and villages in Ethiopia – that teachers are one of the most respected and trusted members of a society – the questionnaires were distributed and collected with the assistance of two male Irob teachers. They were trained on how to collect an appropriate data with the instrument at hand both from academic and ethical point views. Accordingly, the research assistants and I assisted

participants in giving the required guidance on how to deal with the questionnaire and, for illiterate respondents, in reading the questions and writing out or filling in their responses.

1.8.4.2 Interview

In conjunction with the questionnaire, both structured and unstructured interviews were designed to obtain some qualitative data. The structured interview was employed to gather mainly information on institutional support issues and the interviewee was *Ato Desta*, representative of an office for the Study and Promotion of Cultural Indigenous Knowledge (SPCIK). Unstructured interview was conducted with various members of the community – youngsters, elders, parents. It mainly intended to find out more specific information on the various sociolinguistic issues under study, which could not be addressed through the questionnaire for practical as well as ethical reasons. These include the community's and the place's history, norms of language use in various periods, and the like. For convenience, the lengthy response to such interview questions was abridged and employed, depending on the necessity to do so, to supplement the result of data analysis that has been based on the principal instrument – questionnaire. On the other hand, the structured dialogue I had with the SPCIK's representative was aimed at obtaining information on what had been done and what the office intended to do with the indigenous language (Saho). The response to this interview question has been presented and analyzed in a separate section.

All the interviews were personally managed to avoid any external influence or bias.

1.8.4.3 Vocabulary Test

As a complementary study, a vocabulary test was prepared and administered to the focus group. The purpose of the test was to obtain qualitative data on the state of mother-tongue acquisition and/or proficiency among young Irobs. Accordingly, a vocabulary test sheet was prepared first in English and then it was translated into Tigrinya. It comprised 280 items of basic vocabulary – 100 core vocabulary items of the Swadesh's (1972) word list (adopted from Saeed, 2003: 77) and additional 180 content and function words. In terms of their grammatical category, the test includes 135 nouns, 95 verbs, 30 adjectives, 10 prepositions, and 10 pronouns.

In 11 test sheets, the received socio-linguistic backgrounds of the examinees were recorded, and in accordance with that their responses were filled in the separate sheets. The administration of the test was orally managed, giving the words in Tigrinya and seeking to

respond the equivalent word for each test item in Saho. Then, the examinees oral responses for each test item were instantly recorded phonetically, and it was transcribed later phonemically. After this, the results of each examinee were checked or marked against an official word list prepared by SPCIK that presents Saho words with their Tigrinya equivalents. According to the SPCIK's head, the word list was prepared by collecting data from competent Saho speakers so as to use it as an input for various development activities of the language.

A few words in the test were not in the SPCIK's word list, however. To mark the results for these items data was produced from some competent Saho speakers in Dowhan.

Attempts have been made to control some external and internal factors which may influence the validity of the test result. To this end, first, a thorough examination of the test items was made before the administration of the test; and all the Tigrinya words that had been identified to have more than one potential meaning (homophony) were contextualized so that examinees would get the specific meaning the items intended to test. Moreover, the administration of the test was done with one examinee at a time: accomplishing with one and proceeding with another turn by turn. So, to avoid any discussion on the test items between the examined subject(s) and those subjects yet to be examined, the test was administered using three class rooms: one room where all the examinees had been kept before the examination, another room where they had been tested turn by turn, and the third room where they had been sent to after the examination. This was accomplished with the help of the school principal.

Furthermore, examinees were again and again encouraged to ask if they had encountered unfamiliar Tigrinya words so that different contexts of the item would be offered. Nonetheless, this was not a problem as such for almost all the examinees had very good command of Tigrinya and the items were more or less familiar.

The test was personally managed in part to secure its validity and in part to avoid any external influence.

1.8.4.4 Document Analysis

Various publications including online articles, manuscripts, census report and books written on the community and/or the language under study were consulted to obtain some qualitative information. Specifically speaking, it was used to get possible images of the socio-historical, socio-economic, political etc., developments the community has undergone so far; in the process, to identify what external factors did and would possibly influence Saho's maintenance among the Irob community.

1.8.4.5 Observation

Notes from the limited observation I made during my fieldwork were also included depending on the necessity to do so. The general observation I made particularly when conducting the vocabulary test and on language choice of the community in various service areas (private and government) was employed to supplement the vocabulary test data and the questionnaire data, respectively.

1.8.5 Method of Data Analysis

As mentioned above, both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis were employed in this research. The data produced via the questionnaire has been analyzed quantitatively, particularly using simple frequencies and percentages as well as average scores. The results were illustrated in tables and at times in figures. They were interpreted and explained scientifically; relevant qualitative information and scholarly comments were drawn on as explanations for the quantitative description. Based on such interpretations and explanations, relevant conclusions were eventually drawn.

The result of the vocabulary test has been analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. First, a brief description on the overall condition of the state of language loss among the target community was made based on some interviewees' comments and my observational notes while administering the test. These pieces of information were interpreted and their implication was forwarded in line with scholarly comments. Then, lexicostatistical tabulation was undertaken to compare the degree of lexical loss and retention in the target group, in which case quantitative description was in order. The result was presented in a table and its implications were explained. Finally, a psycholinguistic analysis of the test result data was made qualitatively and to a lesser extent quantitatively. The data was interpreted and explained thoroughly. Accordingly, appropriate conclusions were put forward.

The data produced via document analysis, some interviews, as well as the limited observation has been analyzed qualitatively. By taking the relevant information stated in various secondary sources and interpreting it in line with its sociolinguistic implication, it has been tried to draw sound conclusions on the external setting of the language under study. In parallel, some of the qualitative data obtained via interview (on institutional support issues, the people's history, etc.) was transcribed and employed to explain the sociolinguistic situation of the language. Observational notes and comments were made in the analysis where necessary.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature and Related Works

2.0 Introduction

This chapter comprises two main parts. The first part deals with review of the vast literature on the subject matter under discussion, language maintenance and shift. The other part presents review of some previous works on LMLS which are in close relation with the present study. The review of theoretical points is accomplished so as to have foundations for the explanation of the findings of the current study; and the review of related works is made to have a good acquaintance with previous works and in the process to learn how such a study would be best approached.

2.1 Review of Literature

This part of the chapter briefly summarizes the vast literature on the theoretical aspect of LMLS that will be used as a conceptual framework for the present study. Accordingly, issues on language contact and its research paradigms, the notion of language maintenance, shift and loss, factors affecting language maintenance, language behaviors used to determine LMLS (language choice or use, attitude, proficiency) are briefly summed up.

2.1.1. Language Contact

Language contact or contact between different linguistic groups is not a recent phenomenon. It rather dates back to the early times of human history. Unlike modern times, in ancient times, contact between languages requires necessarily some degree of physical contact between two or more linguistic groups. And, the history of physical contact between different linguistic groups, for instance via migration, state formation, trade, pilgrimage, etc., is assumed to be as old as human history. One fundamental reason for this is that nature does not provide or satisfy all what human being needs or desires in its surrounding; and peoples have been in a continuous physical contact with each other in addressing various material gaps and/or immaterial desires they have. The contact could be held peacefully (in hosting migratory group, in conducting trade, via tourism) or violently (via warfare, raid, colonization) but it was and is one of the universals of humanity. In the process, people bring their various socio-cultural identities, deliberately or accidentally, into contact and language contact has been one of the inevitable parts of this larger enterprise.

Currently, language contact has offered various themes of research for the various sub-disciplines of linguistics. It has been studied from the traditional comparative and historical linguistics perspective to the more recent, younger sub-discipline of linguistics – sociolinguistics. Although linguistic studies of language contact dates from more or less the late 19th century, scholars note that the history of the first formal, wide-ranging work on language contact has begun since the mid 20th century (Appel and Muysken, 1987:7). While historical linguists like William Dwight Whitney and creolists like Hugo Schuchardt are the accredited students of language contact in the earlier periods, the commencement of comprehensive view of language contact is particularly associated with Weinreich's (1953) and Haugen's (1953) works (ibid).

2.1.2 Research Paradigms of Language Contact

Language contact is a cause for various linguistic, sociolinguistic, or psycholinguistic phenomena such as structural decay, interference, borrowing, code switching, language shift, language loss, and so on. Depending on the linguistic fact to venture, students of language contact have tackled it from various perspectives. According to Clyne (1992:17-18), there are four paradigms of language contact studies. The first is the *language contact* proper-paradigm. This paradigm is stated to confine initially to the structural consequences of contact between languages, but it latter extended (by Weinreich and Haugen) to subsume considerations of speech interference and the socio-cultural and socio-psychological setting for that. The second paradigm is the *language shift* paradigm, which deals most often with a partial rather than total shift. In doing so, the researcher rely on description of language use pattern, language skills, main language or dominant language and so on. This paradigm does not include examination of structural consequences on the declining language (ibid).

Another paradigm that originally dealt with the sociopolitical factors for language obsolescence and that has been extended to a subset of language shift is the *language death* paradigm. However, unlike the shift paradigm, language death paradigm (a) deals with a declining language that has no speakers other than the community under research, and (b) subsumes linguistic description of the language in question, in addition to sociolinguistic study. The fourth paradigm, which is stated to be basically a psycholinguistic one, is the *language attrition/loss* paradigm. Its domains extended from "aphasia research to the opposite of first and second language acquisition [language loss]" (ibid). Language loss can be partial or total. Although language loss investigations normally requires longitudinal studies, researchers use to

replace them by surrogate methods – such as pretest/posttest, data from competent speakers, control group in country of origin and the like.

Regardless of variation on the choice of linguistic fact and methodology to describe a contact situation, Clyne (1992:17) suggests that there is a considerable overlap in objectives across these four paradigms. Hence, they often complement each other. The current study, as the title suggests, will mainly draw on the shift paradigm. However, in complementing this paradigm and in addressing some specific objective of the study, the other paradigms, particularly the language loss, will be made use of.

2.1.2 The Notion of Language Maintenance and Shift (LMLS)

Many scholars have given various definitions of the terms language maintenance and language shift. Like many other terminologies in sociolinguistics, there is no single, agreed upon definition of these terms. Generally, they are used to denote the presence and/or absence of *linguistic stability* in a given (usually minority) bilingual community. The stability may be revealed through the consideration of various linguistic and/or extra-linguistic variables and thereby various conceptualizations of the terms seem inevitable. In line with this point, Baker (1996: 43) states that the terms are ambiguous, and sociolinguists and linguists use these terms to refer to different linguistic phenomena. Sociolinguists use them to refer to changes in language uses and/or users while other linguists employ them in reference to changes in languages' grammars and vocabulary in due course (ibid). Let alone that, within sociolinguistic works, these terms may be employed to signify different sociolinguistic stabilities of a language minority group: demographical stability, language use stability, language proficiency stability etc. As a sociolinguistic work, in the current research, the notion of language maintenance/shift is invoked to subsurface mainly the functional aspect of a language and proficiency in it.

Sociolinguists describe these terms mainly in line with stability on functional role of a language. Clyne (1997:307) defines language maintenance as, "keeping up the use of specific language entirely or in one or more domains", and language shift as, "shifting partly or wholly to the use of another language". Hoffmann (1991:185-186) also defines language maintenance as retention in the patterns of language choice a bilingual community has always exhibited, and language shift as a gradual adoption of another language at the expense one's own. Likewise, Fasold (1984:213) sees the notion from bilinguals' choice of language use in different functional domains. However, unlike Clyne and Hoffmann, Fasold has perceived these phenomena as results of a collective act of the speech community. He describes language maintenance as a

collective decision of a given speech community to carry on using the language(s) that has been used customarily while language shift happens when a linguistic group starts collectively trespassing language use pattern expected in different domains. Similarly, Slavik (2001:131) describes that maintenance refers to a stable bilingual situation where language shift is a process whereby a community abandons its traditional language.

In line with the above sociologically oriented definitions of the terms, when one discusses language maintenance or shift, one can speak of either partial or total maintenance/shift of language use. In other words, the state of preserving or replacing the language may vary from one domain of language use to another.

Be that as it may, language shifting or maintaining is not always a self-imposed act as the above conceptualizations of the term would rather imply. The pressure for abandoning an ancestral tongue may come from within the respective community or/and it comes perhaps about due to external pressures beyond the community. Most often the external factors, such as government's language policy, socio-economic conditions and the like, may aggravate or settle the internal forces for LMLS, such as communities' attitudes towards the target languages, proficiencies in target languages, or patterns of language use/choice. As a result, shifting communities should be perceived, neutrally speaking, as part of the shift process rather than as the only doer of the shift action. Moreover, shift or maintenance of a particular group can be described in terms of relative proficiency the group has in languages under question. Besides, depending on the contact situation, some shifts might be swift while others might be slow, but it usually requires some generations before the eventual doom of a language. Thus, I found Fishman's (1991) definition of language shift/maintenance all embracing and self-suggesting in these regards. As has been quoted in Kamwangamalu (2003:72), Fishman uses the term language shift to refer to "speech communities whose native languages are threatened because their intergenerational continuity is proceeding negatively, with fewer and fewer users (speakers, readers, writers, and even understanders) or uses every generation." The opposite of language shift is language maintenance.

2.1.3 Language Loss

A shifting community, besides the functional reduction in its language, often undergoes various other downward experiences on language behaviors vis-à-vis the declining language. In this regard, studies show that decline in mother-tongue proficiency is often the accompanying result alongside the downturn of functional roles of the language (Dorian 1981, and Gal 1979, both

cited in Fasold 1984; Zelealem 2000; Sun 2005, etc.). As language shift refers to the functional reduction of a language, language loss is its corresponding term employed in the literature to designate for the gradual shrink down (or contraction) of competence in a given language (Fase et al., 1992:4; Appel and Muysken, 1987:42; Holmes, 1992:63; Tandefelt, 1992:151).

Language shift and loss are closely related phenomena. When they interlinks, they may end up in language death (Appel and Muysken, 1987:45). Having suggested language shift is the main reason for language death in addition to genocide in Africa, Wolf (2000:330) explains how this can happen in progress:

Individuals or whole groups of speakers shift to another language for every day communication and make this their dominant language [language shift]: their former first language becomes dormant [language loss] and eventually forgotten [language death].

The language is deemed dead provided that it has no speakers anywhere else. Otherwise, shift is the appropriate term to signify the situation. Language use and proficiency are thus the two linguistic variables used to separate between the terms language shift and language loss. As Fase et al. (1992: 4) assert, maintenance of a language presupposes maintenance of its use and maintenance of proficiency in it.

2.1.4 Factors LMLS

In their theoretical and empirical works, quite a number of scholars have discussed various factors for LMLS. Kipp et al. (1995), as cited in Yagmur and Akinci (2003:108), have broadly categorized factors for LMLS into two: *group* factors and *individual* factors. Group factors, according to these scholars, are those factors that affect the whole speech community. These include generally large-scale social, economic, political, cultural, demographic factors and the like. On the other hand, individual factors refer to for factors that affect individuals within a speech community. These include sex, age, intermarriage, educational status, religion etc. In line with this, in what follows a brief discussion is made on the several group and some important individual factors for LMLS.

2.1.4.1 Group Factors

There are various, but often interrelated, group factors that are assumed to determine the fate of a minority language – either to be maintained or abandoned. In this regard, the widely cited

model that subsumes various group factors is "ethnolinguistic vitality" of Giles, Bourhis and Taylor. As discussed in Appel and Muysken (1987:33) ethnolinguistic vitality factor is a combination of three sub-factors that in turn hold specific components: *status factor* (economic, social, socio-historical and language status); *demographic factor* (number of speakers and their distribution (location)); and *institutional support factors* (language's representation in education, the media, government administrative units, and religion). Such factors can be described from the perspective of the group (e.g. its socioeconomic status) and/or the language (e.g. its socioeconomic importance) under question.

In what follows a brief summary is made on what has been said in the literature concerning some of these factors which have been assumed to be relatively sounder in the context of the study area of the present work. Moreover, other group factors that have not been included under the ethnolinguistic vitality model (eg. cultural contact, socio-psychological, migration, and so on) are addressed.

Economy has been stated to be the most prominent factor for LMLS. It is generally believed that linguistic groups with low economic condition often incline to abandon their linguistic tradition in favor of dominant (Appel and Muysken, 1987:33). Holmes (1992:65) points out that minority groups become bilingual in dominant language often for their economic well-being, for instance, through obtaining better off jobs, education and so on. Nonetheless, in due course, as Downes (1998:63) argues, the "linguistic market" of languages, their economic value, determines long-term language choice that ultimately may shake the stability of the existing bilingualism. For instance, bilingual parents may begin to opt for the economically advantageous language, at the expense of their own, as a language to be exclusively spoken by their children. Furthermore, Baker (1996: 63) has discussed, in *economics* terms, how economic aspirations threaten people's perceptions of and loyalties to their own traditional language:

When the personal balance sheet includes employment, educational and vocational success, and inter-personal communication, the credit of positive attitude towards language as a cultural and ethnic symbol is diminished by the costs of perceived prior needs and motives. Good will towards the language stops when the personal pay-off is not great.

Baker's point is that bilinguals favorably incline towards one of their languages most often when it is to their economic advantage to do so, not otherwise; and the supposedly symbolic attachment towards ones' own tongue is often overridden by other priorities.

On the other hand, Wolfram (2002: 767) explains that even if a language community has strong alliance with their native tongue, economic condition is a deterrent factor which brings down maintenance capacity of the community; communities with low economic status cannot afford the cost required to promote their language, for instance, through publishing materials, establishing minority language schools and media etc.

Generally, it is probably for these reasons that Grenoble and Whaley (1998b) have argued that for the study of minority language's situation (their viability) "one must take into account the potential of economic issues to outweigh all others combined" (as cited in Wolfram 2002: 767). Thus, in LMLS study, as the case at hand, consideration of economic factor is unavoidable: because, it may be *per se* one potential factor for LMLS; and/or it usually interlinks directly or indirectly with other potential causes of LMLS like attitude.

Another status factor is **social status** of a language. It is closely linked with economic status of a language (Appel and Muysken 1987), and stated to be determinant factor for LMLS (Fasold, 1984:217; Hoffmann, 1991:190; Baker, 1996:53; Downes, 1998:65). Downes (1998:65) has used the term "social meaning" for social status of language and defines it as, "the set of meanings which a language variety encodes and which it derives from the groups whose language variety it is, or the situation in which it is used". Downes, in the same page, suggests that positive ranges of social meanings will enhance maintenance. Baker (1996) and Fasold (1984) also explain that when a minority language is perceived as inferior to a majority language, shift towards the majority language is more likely than not. The point is thus languages with high social prestige or positive social meaning will have better chance of survival, whereas language with low prestige value or less positive (negative) social meanings will be more susceptible to shift.

The remaining couple of factors under status category are **socio-historical and language status**. Baker (1996:53) grouped these factors together and termed them as "symbolic status of language". Language is not merely an instrument employed for communication: it, besides, has a symbolic function for its respective speech community. In line with this, it has been pointed out in the literature that maintenance is favored when a language is seen as essential cultural and ethnic symbol (Holmes, 1992:69; Downes, 1998:64; Appel and Muysken, 1987:34). However, some scholars insist that language is maintained longer when it is intrinsically associated with other core values of a certain culture (such as religion, history and the like) than it is perceived in itself as ethnic symbol (Clyne, 1997:310). Accordingly, Zelealem

(1998:70) has noted the importance of investigating relationship between language and ethnic identity in determining state of LMLS.

Demographic factors are other widely discussed causes for LMLS. **Geographical distribution** of linguistic group is one of the demographic factors that broadly concerns the concentration of certain groups, particularly minority, in particular area and the urban-rural nature of the setting. It is believed that when a group lives in scattered geographical areas, it affects demographic vitality of the group concerned. Quoting the 1985 census study in Wales, Baker (1996:54) has stated to find a correlation between concentration of speakers and language maintenance; he mentions, "in community when over 70% of people speak Welsh, there appears to be more chance of the language surviving". However, Appel and Muysken (1987:36) note that geographical distribution *per se* should not be taken as a causal factors in LMLS; rather, as they argue "related communication patterns and the absence or presence of daily social pressure to use the prestigious language" could produce counter expectations. In other words, if a group, however isolated and live concentrated in particular area, has to use the dominant language on daily basis or when there are existing conditions which promote language shift such as an association of language with social and economic mobility, language policy, etc., its concentration in itself could not be salvator of its ancestral language. In fact, studies among indigenous communalities have proved this to be true (such as Gal 1979, cited in Fasold 1984; Sun 2005; Vamarasi 2005)

Moreover, it is generally believed that language has better chance of survival in **rural** areas than **urban** centers (Fasold, 1984:241; Romaine, 1994:54; Baker, 1996:54). According to Baker (1996) this is so for it is often the case that minority languages do not hold functions and roles in urban areas as they do in rural areas. Possibly, since urban areas are centers of administration, economy, politics there would be less chance for minority language to be used in such settings.

Another group of factor under the vitality model, which is still in close relation with the socioeconomic status factors described above, is institutional support factor. It concerns language's status/function with respect to the media, education, government (administrative) and religious domain. Scholars suggest that representation of a minority language in the **mass media** (television, radio, newspapers etc) will enhance its prestige value, or social meaning, which ultimately enhances language maintenance. It has been also stated that minority language's importance in its respective speakers' **religious affairs** determines its continued existence. That is, language has promising future when it is used in religious activities of the

group (Romaine, 1994:54; Baker, 1996:55). Sometimes a language may be preserved not for its own sake, but, as Appel and Muysken (1987:37) convincingly point out, due to the *divisive* power of religion and ideologies underneath religions. To illustrate this point, they take Kloss' (1966) study among Old Order Amish and Old Order Mennonites of German descendants living in Pennsylvania. According to Kloss, these communities maintain their native tongue in order to keep away themselves from "worldly influences and, perhaps, because change in itself is considered sinful" (ibid). Besides, Baker (1996:55) sees the contribution of religion for language maintenance from another angle, i.e., use of a language for various written purposes in worship places may help achieve standardization of the language.

Language of education and other government services are two other factors that have been identified to affect vitality of a group. These are directly associated with government language policy. Hoffmann (1991:191) explains that one the powerful factor for language shift is when, "the school language is that of the high-status group and no provision is made for the children of the low-status group to learn to read and write the language of their ancestors". Similarly, Appel and Muysken (1989:37) suggests that maintenance is favored when children of minority group are helped to read and write in their native tongue at school. On the other hand, when the policy favors schooling via or in dominant language only, it inevitably leads to asymmetrical bilingualism, specifically bilingualism without biliteracy. Baker (1996:54) explains the relationship between bilingualism without biliteracy and LMLS as follows: "when someone can speak a minority language and not write in that language, the number of functions and uses of the language is diminished. Bilingualism without biliteracy also means a decrease in the status of that language, and less chances of linguistically stable language".

Cultural proximity/distance is also another factor associated with LMLS. In their lists of factors for LMLS, Conkin and Lourie (1983), cited in Baker (1996:45), suggest that cultural dissimilarity between groups in contact favors maintenance whereas cultural similarity (contact) may facilitate language shift. Similarly, quoting Clyne's (1982) study, Appel and Muysken (1987:38) state that in situation where there is close cultural contact between minority and dominant group, shift is more likely than when there is a cultural gap between the two. This implies that open societies are more susceptible to replace their mother-tongue in favor of another than closed societies.

However, Andersen (1988), as cited in Wolfram (2002 :768), warns us that it is too hasty to conclude that communities who have undergone intense cultural contact (or "open" societies) would necessarily be psychologically open ("exocentric"); and conversely communities who

have had little contact ("closed") would remain psychologically closed ("endocentric"). For Andersen, the level of cultural contact *per se* does not determine direction of shift, rather he emphasizes the importance of degree of **socio-psychological** contact. Consequently, attitude of linguistic group towards its own cultural assets and towards that of others is argued to be fundamental factor for LMLS.

Migration, in its two possible forms, in-migration and out-migration, or a mixture of both, has been indicated to be important factor for LMLS (Fasold, 1984:217; Hoffmann, 1991:189; Spolsky, 1998:55; Clampitt-Dunlap 1995). A portion of an ethnolinguistic group may leave its homeland for new area (s) for various socio-economic reasons where the function of the old language no longer holds. On the other hand, a group of outsiders may come and settle alongside native communities in which they could spread their language into the local communities. Still in and out migration can occur at a time in a community and may make the sociolinguistic situation of the native tongue worse.

Another factor associated with LMLS is **widespread (societal) bilingualism**. Societal bilingualism is a necessary precondition for language shift to occur, albeit it is not a sufficient (Fasold, 1984:216). When we talk about state of LMLS of a particular speech community, what is presupposed is that the community, or the dominant majority within the group, has an acquaintance with more than one language. In line with this point, Lieberman (1972), cited in Fasold (1984:217), convincingly vows that for "intergenerational switching requires the earlier generation to be bilingual, the proportion of a population that is bilingual constitutes an 'exposure to risk' that one of the languages might eventually be lost." Nevertheless, we have been told in the literature that mere presence of widespread bilingualism does not entail that loss of one of the languages is inevitable (Fasold, 1984:217; Downes, 1998:61).

Moreover, extensive bilingualism may lead to another linguistic situation interlinked with LMLS. In long-term language contact phenomena between dominant and minority groups, linguistic convergence towards the dominant language (massive infiltration of linguistic components from the dominant to the minority) is commonly observed while the opposite case is less apparent. This could occur via frequent code mixing and /or switching. This would be so, as Weinreich (1968:88) suggests, "the realization that one's mother-tongue is not a standardized language applicable in all types of formalized communication (governmental activities, literature, radio, school etc.) often makes people indifferent to interference in it". This implies then direction of interference is most often unidirectional: from the dominant language to a subordinate one. Massive infiltration of linguistic items to a given minority language may give

rise to the development of negative attitude by its speakers, especially by younger generations, for it would be evaluated as “un pure” language (Appel and Muysken, 1987:43). The point is thus, since such language behaviors are characteristic features of bilinguals, the greater the number of bilinguals in a minority community, the more the chance for such innovations in the language would be; and the more the innovations (adopted linguistic features), the lesser may be the motivations of its speakers to speak (use) the language. It may thereby lead to downturn of the language concerned.

The last but not the least group factor associated with language preservation or abandonment is **modernization** and/or **urbanization** (Fasold, 1984:217; Hoffmann, 1991:190; Clampitt-Dunlap 1995). Introduction of modern infrastructures, institutions, and technologies (such as improved transportation, telecommunication, electricity, administration and legal systems, health care systems etc.) may play a part in spreading one language at the expense of another. Urbanization, which is closely linked with modernization, may instigate in-migration. That is, outsiders could be attracted by the new developments they see somewhere else. They could come and engage in different activities. This also contributes for the intruder language to take deeper roots in the local communities and ultimately exerts its pressure on the survival of the indigenous tongue.

2.1.4.2 Individual Factors

Since an ethnolinguistic group is not a homogenous entity, there is often variation on language behaviors in individuals within a group. The variation is often associated with demographic variables: age, sex, occupation, educational background, intermarriage, religion etc. I will peruse my discussion with some of the recurrently stated individual factors; they are, age, sex, and mixed marriage.

Age has been identified to be one of the factors for language change and in particular for LMLS. In language contact situation, specifically when a minority group is in contact with a dominant group, scholars suggest that age of exposure to the dominant group's language may affect language behavior of individuals in different ways. For example, Baker (1996:60) explains that when children of subordinate groups exposed to the dominant language at early ages, they will grow up (from the beginning) understanding presence of parity in 'power', 'prestige' and 'preference' between the languages available. Such a knowledge will play a part in developing certain attitudes towards each language, depending on the contexts in which the languages are used or/and the way speakers of each language are. In line with this point, Appel and Muysken

(1987:41) describe that functional restriction of minority languages will degrade motivations of younger people to learn and speak it. Language attitude of younger generations is a well documented cause for LMLS (Gal 1979, and Dorian 1981, as both cited in Fasold 1984; Bentahila and Davis 1992; Zelealem 2000; Chrisp 2005; Harlow 2005)

Furthermore, the age in which language is acquired affects proficiency of bilinguals in each language (Rubin, 1968:354; Weinreich, 1968:76) and it may ultimately be counterproductive in persisting bilingualism at individual level. Corresponding to this, studies show that when children (from minority group) learn the dominant language at their early ages, the traditional language has less chance of retaining (Hakuta and D'Anderea 1992, and Fillmore 1991a, as both cited in Baker, 1996:81). This implies that for successful acquisition of minority language and thereby its better chance of survival, young children ought to build competence in it first.

Another individual factor associated with LMLS is **sex** (Downes, 1998:64; Gal 1979, cited in Naji and David, 2003:95; Al-khatib, 2003:165). Certain variations in language behaviors may correlate with sexual difference and being a member of certain sex group affects the individual's language behavior. Differences in language behaviors between female and male are stated to be attributable to presence and absence of social conditions, which might hinder or promote exposure to languages for the sex groups. Across almost all communities sexual difference finds its parallel in role difference. To be fit for and accomplish the expected societal roles, male and female are nurtured or socialized distinctly. The way they socialize may expose one group to the outside world, but not (or less apparently) the other. In relation to this point, Wardhaugh (1992:322) writes, "men and women differ in the kinds of language they use and how they use it because men and women often fill distinctly different roles in a society."

In other words, the roles and/or socializations may promote for one sex group to have more exposure to certain language(s) in addition to the native language than the other group. This might occur through work experience, travel, education and the like (Rubin 1968: 350) and with differences in degree of exposure, difference in language behavior between them seems inevitable. Therefore, linguistic differences between male and female are most often subject to social explanations.

Another factor that is believed to affect individuals' language behavior within a community is **mixed marriage** or exogamy (particularly, a marriage held between speaker (s) of dominant language and minority language). In the vast theoretical works (Holmes, 1992:68; Appel and Muysken, 1987:35; Romaine, 1994:53; Baker, 1996:44; Brenzinger, 1997:276) and

empirical studies (Zealelem 2000; Cheng 2003; Sun 2005; Mesfin 2009), it has been stated that there is a greater tendency for children born in such households to acquire the dominant language than the minority tongue. In such families, as Appel and Muysken describe, the most prestigious language will become the main language of the household. This is more likely than not for it is the case that the parent from the dominant group does not usually need or devote to learn the minority language while the converse could not often be the case (Sun, 2005:149). As a result, the dominant tongue would win over the minority as the home language and thereby emerges as a mother-tongue of the children. That is why exogamy has been assumed to affect ultimately the intergenerational continuity of languages with minority status.

2.1.5 Language Choice

In bi-multilingual communities life is embedded by language choice. Bilinguals may be compelled or may prefer to use one language in particular setting, or with particular interlocutor, or in discussing certain topic. And only switch to another language (s) in another setting, with another interlocutor etc. According to Hoffmann (1991:177) such language switching are not results of random decisions, rather there are often certain patterns of language use in such communities. The patterns usually attribute to various social factors (Romaine, 1994:44).

In figuring out language use pattern of a community, sociolinguists employ a method called *domain analysis*. Scholars have defined the term 'domain' or domain of language use variously. The definitions are varied for there is variation on focus of application. Some conceptualizes it as "contextualized sphere of communication" (Cooper 1967, cited in Clyne, 1997:308) or as "institutional contexts or socio-ecological co-occurrence" (Fishman, 1971:19). Still for others it is an assemblage of other components: setting, interlocutor and topic (Fasold, 1984:183; Spolsky, 1998:47; Romaine, 1994:43; Kamwangamalu, 2000:100).

In the present study, domain of language use is invoked in Fishman's (1966) sense, who neutrally and/or more generally conceptualizes it as, "the occasions on which one language ... is habitually employed rather than (or in addition to) another" (Fishman 1966, as quoted in Pride, 1971:6). This definition, I argue, matches with what is known about LMLS in some ways. Domains have been conceived as "habitual" spheres of language use and one way of determining state of LMLS is by looking into whether there is a movement from habitual use of the traditional language to another or not. Besides, the definition indicates possibility of habitual use of one or more than one language in a particular domain (or possibility of monolingual or bilingual behavior in one and the same realm). In LMLS literature it has been suggested that a

language could hardly be replaced by another suddenly. The replacing language will rather be used, for some time, in addition to the replaced language where it has traditionally been the role of the latter (Appel and Muysken, 1987: 41). Hence, conceptualizing the notion of domain in this way is assumed to fit best with the objective of the study at hand.

In previous LMLS studies, domains of language use have been conceptualized and described in different ways. Some specified domain mainly in terms of interlocutor (Fasold 1984; Gal 1979, cited in Fasold 1984; and Bentahila and Davis 1992). Others describe it in terms of settings, interlocutors and functions either as independent spheres of language use (Dorian 1981, cited in Fasold 1984; Zelealem 2000) or as a constellation of these components (Al-Khatib 2001). In the present study, the domains of language use are set out in terms of settings, in terms of participants and in terms of functions rather than as a constellation of these components.

According to Weinreich (1968:107), language shift should be examined in terms of the role of the languages in different locales (school, home, etc) since there can be partial or total shift in particular contact situation. Moreover, as Fase et al. (1992:4) argues, LMLS ought to be analyzed in terms of the relation of participants (in-group vs. out-group) in certain communication event. More specifically, language choice for intraethnic communication is held responsible for language shift description. Spolsky (1998:46) also states that bilinguals language choice can be described in terms of "internal functions", i.e., bilinguals may habitually use one language for functions as counting, doing arithmetic, praying and may switch to another language for another function.

In consonance with this view points, in the current study, an investigation is made on language choice in various locales, with various interlocutors and for different functions, which are believed to test the state of LMLS of the target group. More specifically, language (s) most often used in different settings (home, neighborhood, worship place, workplace, school and market); in speaking to different interlocutors, which basically deals with language choice in addressing various ethnolinguistic fellows (family members and other relatives, friends, elders and religious fathers as well as in conversing with Irob(s) in the presence of Tigrinya speaker(s)); and language choice when/during performing certain functions (praying, counting, singing, dreaming and angry) are conceptualized as instances of different domains of language use for the present research.

2.1.6 Language Use as a Sign for LMLS

As has been mentioned above, one way of gauging state of LMLS is to investigate whether there is a movement from habitual use of one language to another in certain domains. In other words, when domains hitherto reserved for a traditional language begin to be invaded by another tongue, language shift can be said in progress, whereas separately using the languages in different contexts represents a case of stable bilingualism, or language maintenance (Fasold, 1984:211). That is why it has been argued that an investigation of LMLS "always entails examining of language use in two (or more) languages" (Hoffmann, 1991:186).

The intrusion of a dominant language in to the domains of an old and its total replacement do not complete overnight. In describing this view point, Appel and Muysken (1987:40-41) write: "Linguistic change [in the form of language shift] takes place by the gradual spread of the 'new form' in a certain domain. Language A ... is never replaced suddenly by language B ..., but language use becomes variable, i.e., A and B are both used in the same social context. After this stage of variable use, the use of B will become categorical." A few lines latter, they also add: "Language shift is in fact the redistribution of varieties of language over certain domains. If the shift is towards the majority language, this language seems to conquer domain after domain via the intermediate stage of bilingual language use." This implies that since language shift is a gradual process, it is not only the monolingual behavior in the dominant language in domains where formerly use of the traditional language was categorical that accounts for the description of LMLS. Rather, bilingual use of both the minority and dominant language in such domains would also suggest a shift in progress.

The trigger for gradual replacement of a minority language can be generation. With the shrinkage of contexts in which a minority language is used, its social meaning devalue, which may eventually shrink down the motivation of younger people to learn and use it. It would also make parents reluctant to pass on the traditional language to their children. In consonance with these, Gupta and Yeok (1995) and Sridhar (1988), both cited in Kamwangamalu (2003:72), claim respectively, "the ability and desire of parents to transmit the ancestral language to their children" or "the extent to which the language is used among younger generation", constitutes the litmus test for language maintenance and shift. Similarly, Fasold (1984:215) suggests, "If there is a genuine shift taking place, it would certainly show up in the larger proportions of older speakers using the declining language than younger speakers." Therefore, language use variation between older and younger generation in general and language parents employ to

address their offspring specifically would possibly reflect the fate of intergenerational continuity of a (minority) language.

2.1.7 The Importance of the Family Domain in LMLS Study

As has been mentioned above, language choice for intraethnic communication is stated to be very crucial for description of LMLS process of minority linguistic groups. A minority language will have a better chance of survival when it is chosen regularly in preference to another language for intraethnic interaction: otherwise, shift will be inevitable. There are various intraethnic situations or informal domains where such languages are supposed to be used so that to secure somehow their long-term existence. Nonetheless, more than any other realms of language use, it is the *family/home* domain that is recurrently emphasized to be the most decisive, practical sphere for language survival, or otherwise for its termination (Clyne, 1997:308; Dittmar, 1976:178; Romaine, 1994:54; Harmers and Blanc, 1989:176; Downes, 1998:62-63; Dorian 1981, cited in Fasold 1984:225).

From the practical point of view of language maintenance (intergenerational continuity of language), the familial interaction is deemed a final spot in which a language can survive. Other community institutions (such as cultural and ceremonial activities, religion, education etc.) may do well in harboring minority languages from total loss, but it is the family domain which has pivotal importance to ensure their 'lively' existence (Fishman 1991, cited in Baker, 1996:68). For instance, Geez, the liturgical language of the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Church, has been used for centuries by many of the followers of the church in religious proceedings. However, saying Geez is maintained is misleading for it does not have any 'lively' role for daily, causal interaction beyond the religious realm; it is not a language being transmitted by the normal process of parent to children interaction. On the other side, one scholar also claims that when learning of a minority language is by and large confined to education, "the variety learned can be rather 'schoolish' and non vernacular" (Downes, 1998:66). Hence, the family, more than any other social institutions can be deemed a pillar or indispensable domain for realistic continued existence of minority languages.

In addition, a family, as inalienable division of a community, represents more or less the social dynamisms of the respective community. For instance, an interaction between grandparents/parents and children at a family level reflects the general pattern of interaction between elders and young people at a community level. Similarly, contradictory behavior observed between mother/sister and father/brother mirrors the gender variation at a community

level. Therefore, in the current study a careful and detail analysis has been made on the language use reports in the family domain, (a) in determining the state of LMLS of the target group and, (b) in comparing language use behavior between social categories (particularly, younger vs. older generation and male vs. female).

2.1.8 Language Attitude

In both secular and spiritual literature, we have been told that life is choice, or to live means to choose. Human creature has to make choices from available social resources, material or immaterial. Many factors determine the choices to endeavor in life and attitude is believed to be the most vital factor that counts. As a scholar from Harvard University confirms, "***The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitude of mind***" (William James, as quoted in Khera, 2002: 2).

Attitude is people's psychological attribute which is assumed, according to Lambert (1972), cited in Dittmar (1976:181), to comprise three components: cognitive (knowledge, belief), affective (feeling, emotion), and conative (behavior, action) components. Likewise, Franzoi (2000) states that the attitude people hold towards some social object is made up of our belief about the object, our feeling about the object, and our behavior towards the object (as cited in Yohannes, 2007:17). Accordingly, Baker (1992: 10) has described attitude as "hypothetical construct which is used to explain the direction and persistence of human behavior". Thus, it stands for psychological makeup of an individual that defines or promotes certain behavior. Franzoi (2000), in the same author, suggests that attitudes are not inborn, but rather learned dispositions we build up from our environment as we mature (p.18).

In bi/multilingual communities, language is often considered as one of the fundamental social resources. It is thought as such for language, besides communicative function, has symbolic association. It usually associates with ethno-cultural identity, power and influence, and prestige. And like any other social objects, it is subject to various opinions, evaluations, or emotional reactions (Appel and Muysken, 1987:16), which ultimately determine people's preference to language. In other words, since in bi/multilingual settings different languages assume different roles, members of such societies inevitably develop some kind of attitudes (positive, negative, or ambivalent) towards the languages available – or towards their own language and towards others. The attitudes are thus derived from the social contexts and functions with which the languages are associated (Holmes, 1992:345-346).

Linguistically speaking, however, there is no scientific ground for such an evaluation, as one language is *better, beautiful, pleasant, inferior*, etc. than another (Papapavlou, 1998:15-16). In other words, language attitudes are emanated from extra-linguistic factors. Such social evaluations of languages in effect could have association with various sociolinguistic phenomena: language learning, code mixing/switching, borrowing, language death/restoration, etc. Therefore, language cannot be immune to attitudinal studies as far as sociolinguistic research is concerned.

Accordingly, various sociolinguists have undertaken attitudinal investigations in dealing with various fields of sociolinguistics inquiries. Quoting a number of studies accomplished by and large in 1950's, 1960's and 1970's, Papapavlou (1998:16) states four major areas where such studies have widely been employed. They are (1) attitudes toward foreign languages and their impact on learning them, (2) attitudes toward neighboring languages and how they affect lexical borrowing, (3) attitudes toward certain social classes and the varieties they speak, and (4) attitude toward minority groups and their languages. In recent times, such studies are also becoming indisputable part of LMLS research for it is an ultimate result of language choice (Fasold 1984: 213). They have been employed, often along with other areas of investigations, in determining the state of LMLS among minority linguistic groups (a) in immigrant context (Al-khatib 2001; Slavik 2001; Cheng 2003; Harlow 2005, etc.), and (b) in indigenous context (Fasold 1984; Bertahila and Davies 1992; Zelealem 2000; Sun 2005; Vamarasi 2005 etc).

In language contact literature, it has been stated that opinions members of minority language communities hold toward their native tongue as well as toward the adjacent, dominant language determine the directionality of change in linguistic behavior (Brenzinger, 1997:277; Holmes, 1992:69; Andersen 1982, cited in Wolfram, 2002:768). More specifically, attitude to language can affect, positively or negatively, (a) language transmission (Baker 1996; Downes 1998; Chrisp 2005), (b) identification with language (Gal 1979, cited in Appel and Muysken 1987; Zelealem 2000), (c) linguistic convergence – code mixing, borrowing, interference (Weinreich 1968), and (d) language proficiency (Weinreich 1968; Rubin 1968). These factors in turn exert in one or another way their pressure on the intergenerational continuity of minority languages.

Scholars have warned us that positive attitude towards own tongue or identification with it does not always guarantee for survival of a language (Romaine, 1995:54; Chrisp, 2005:157; Baker, 1996:68). As Baker argues, positive attitude without positive actions is going to be no more than a time biding until total recession of the language has been completed. Similarly, Fishman (1991) declares, "The road to societal language death is paved with the good

intentions called 'positive attitudes'" (as quoted in Baker, 1996:68). In line with this, Chrisp (2005:158) also suggests that it is not uncommon to find people with positive attitude towards their language but whose actual language use reveals contrary to expectations. For successful intergenerational continuity of a language, Chrisp suggests the importance of 'critical awareness'. That is, the community ought to know that it is the pragmatic language behavior (language use and transmission) rather than the ideal behavior (positive attitude) that ensures the continued existence of the language. In short, positive attitude is deemed important factor when it invokes a positive contribution in underpinning the indispensable language behaviors that count for the intergenerational continuity of the language under question.

In language attitude study, the concept of motive is crucial. According to Gardner and Lambert (1972), cited in Kembo-Sure and Webb (2000), attitudes toward learning or speaking a second/foreign language are associated with two basic human desires: integrativeness and instrumentality. Integrative motivation refers to the wish to be identified with the target linguistic group while instrumental motivation refers to the desire to get material benefits associated with certain language(s).

Language attitude studies can be ventured in line with two approaches: the *behaviorist* and the *mentalist* approaches (Fasold, 1984:147). According to the behaviorist view; attitude to language must be studied by observing the actual language behavior in real social situations. In this approach, attitude is regarded as a dependent variable. On the other hand, the mentalist approach views attitudes as a mental state, which lies between the stimulus and the response. Accordingly, attitudes "cannot be observed directly, but must be inferred from the subject's introspection" (Dittmar, 1976:181).

Both approaches have their own limitations. As Dittmar (1976) discusses, the behaviorist method is unable to identify the fact that attitudes are not inseparable of the stimulus situation (the response of subjects may be influenced by the stimulus); and the mentalist approach cannot specify the possible source for quantifiable data. In giving one possible solution to the problem with the mentalist approach, Dittmar's proposal is, "to regard attitudes as a 'hypothetical construct' that can be validated by verbal responses to a given set of stimuli." (p. 181). In this sense, attitudes represent an independent variable and they can thus be used to explain other forms of social behaviors. Similarly, in the current study, which employs attitudinal study to explain the state of LMLS, I found the mentalist approach more practical and relevant. Besides, as Appel and Muysken (1987:17) assert, "nearly all researchers in the field of language attitude adhere to this latter view [mentalist]".

According to Appel and Muysken (1987), in the mentalist approach, *matched-guise* and *questionnaire* are the widely used techniques for examining language attitudes. Matched-guise is a means of investigating attitude to languages by using a tape recorded passage, about certain topics, by a same speaker in different languages and asking subjects to rate the personal traits of the 'speakers' without knowing the fact that both or all the recordings have been made by the same person. According to Fasold (1984:155), in matched-guise method the researcher has no chance to obtain the reason why subjects behave in a certain way because of the stimulus. On the other hand, attitude can be studied using a questionnaire, set of open or/and closed language-related questions. The current study intends to analyze both the response to certain stimuli (superficial behavior) and the reason (motivation) why subjects show certain behavior because of the stimuli. Accordingly, the instrument employed to investigate the attitude of the target group is questionnaire, because it is through questionnaire that the data for intended task can be obtained.

2.1.9 Language Proficiency

As mentioned above, the upholding of a language does not presuppose only maintenance of its use but also maintenance of proficiency in it. Corresponding to this point, while a decline in the functional role of a language is referred to as language shift, a decline in language proficiency is termed as language loss. Loss and shift are closely related and reinforce one another. In clarifying this point, Brenzinger (1997:284) states that the two sociolinguistic phenomena are in cyclic process: when one rarely uses his/her language, she/he will become less proficient in his/her language, and s/he will lose confidence in the language and decline further in its use and this further result in making the individual less and less proficient in the language concerned. In accordance with this, Fase et al. (1992: 9-10) argue that language loss can be used as a symptom of language shift.

Accordingly, in determining the condition of LMLS of a particular contact situation, sociolinguists often undertake language proficiency studies. In line with this, Rubin (1968:352) points out that language proficiency investigation will enable us to predict direction of language shift. Similarly, David et al. (2003:10) argue that language proficiency assessment would best envisage state of LMLS. According to Dorian 1981, as cited in Zelealem (2000:11), one way of determining whether language shift is proceeding or not is to check whether there is variation in proficiency between the younger and older generation in the ancestral tongue. And if the

younger generations are less competent in the native tongue in comparison to their older counterpart, shift can be said in progress.

Language acquisition and proficiency may correlate with various social variables: age, sex, education, occupation, family, religious affiliation, etc. According to Rubin (1968:350) description of the relationship between social categories and bilinguals' language acquisition and proficiency in the languages concerned should follow by the consideration of social conditions. These include "under what condition each language learned, are the conditions formal or informal, forced or voluntary; and is exposure to either language frequent". She also adds, "the age of acquisition has a considerable part to play in the degree of proficiency in, and probably with the attitude which people have toward, each language" (Rubin, 1968:354).

Description of language proficiency can be tackled from two perspectives: performance and competence. Language performance refers to the linguistic ability to perform certain functions in a language whereas language competence refers to actual knowledge in the formal components of the language concerned (Spolsky 1998). Performance (skill) can be described in terms of the four modes of language use: speaking, listening, writing, and reading. On the other hand, competence in language can be explained in terms of the knowledge speakers have in the language's formal properties: lexical, phonological, and syntactic.

In the present study, both aspects of language proficiency investigations are undertaken. The data for the comparison of language skills in Saho and Tigrinya is obtained via self-assessment questionnaire. The data for the analysis of loss in knowledge of the native tongue, which particularly deals with whether there is lexical loss among the young generation or not, is derived by means of vocabulary test. The focus of such an analysis is with the youngsters for it is generally believed that in linguistic minority groups, like the Saho speaking community under investigation, it is among the young people that loss in the native tongue is normally anticipated (Appel and Muysken 1987). Moreover, the selected element of language structure for the investigation of the linguistic competence is the lexicon. This is because, in declining languages, the lexicon has been confirmed to be the most affected component (Zealelem 2000), and/or the first element to go (Wolfram 2002).

2.2 Review of Related Works to the Current Study

Broadly speaking, LMLS investigations have been undertaken in two contact settings with respect to the target linguistic groups: *immigrant* and *indigenous* settings. In the present study, which deals with an indigenous community, some works that have been conducted among

indigenous communities in different parts of the globe are reviewed. The summary will include the following areas of each work: the focus of the study and the contact situation, the sociolinguistic variables taken into account in measuring the condition of LMLS, the methodology employed and the finding.

The first work revised is Zelealem's (2000) dissertation on K'emant, an Ethiopian language reported to be in a grave threat after its long journey alongside the dominant language in the country – Amharic. The study has been undertaken under the language death paradigm. Accordingly, it examines in detail the external factors for language shift, socio-linguistic profiles of the community and structural aspects of the contact between the languages. I go mainly over the sociolinguistic and the external setting examination parts of the work, which are more relevant to the present study.

The study has been conducted among some rural and urban dwellers of the target community in and around Chilga. To this end, a questionnaire survey was distributed to 269 informants. Besides, some community leaders were interviewed and observation was held via frequent visit to the target group. The main areas of the sociolinguistic survey were mother-tongue comparison across generations, language use in various domains, language attitude, and language and identity relationship.

Generally, the study revealed that the K'emant community was in its last stage of mother-tongue shift. Speakers of the native tongue were by and large beyond 50 years of age; the number of Amharic monolinguals was found to be greater than the number of bilinguals; use of the declining tongue was restricted to a few households and a few personal functions; Amharic was the most frequently used language in various domains, the traditional tongue had been evaluated as an inferior tongue to Amharic; and with the conversion of religious identity, the ancestral tongue had lost its symbolic status to its respective community.

Several large-scale (group) factors are stated to come into play for the decline of the language. The mass religious conversion of the K'emant community in 1950 (from traditional religion of their own to Christianity) was stated to be "the prime" cause for the downturn of the language. Besides, factors such as urbanization and modernization (eg. spread of school and administrative structures, and participation of the people in the political and administration affairs of the dominant group), geographical location of the homeland (being engulfed by the dominant group for centuries), the negative connotation that has been established by their neighbors towards the name K'emant (it designates for "people made of wood"), and intermarriage had been indicated to contribute to the precarious state of K'emant.

Fasold (1984) has conducted a sociolinguistic survey among the Tiwa community of Taos in New Mexico, a border area between Mexico and USA. The community was first under the hegemony of Mexico and later it became under the control of United States of America. Accordingly, during earlier periods the people were largely bilingual in Tiwa and Spanish, and later they had become trilingual in Tiwa, Spanish, and English. The study was based on small self-reported questionnaires: only 48 subjects took part in the study. He has tested patterns of bilingualism (across four 'generations'), language use pattern and language attitudes.

The comparison of bilingualism has been based on information obtained about linguistic background of (language(s) spoken or understood by) respondents, their parents, and grandparents. To achieve the generational categories, he divided his subjects into four uneven age groups (50-75, 30-45, 16-25, & 11-14) and set the responses systematically in descending order. (For example, the responses on language repertoire of parents and grandparents of the older age group, 50-75, and grandparents of the next-to-the-older age group, 30-45, had been taken as representing the first generation, *G1*; and the responses of the younger age group, 11-14, were deemed to stand for the fourth generation, *G4*). As it turned out, the result of this part of the study showed that the community had been more or less maintaining their native tongue, Tiwa, while they had been undergoing a shift in their second language – from Spanish to English. Nevertheless, he pointed out the existence of some sign that English might have displaced Tiwa, "which Spanish never did". That is, there were a few younger people who asserted to be monolinguals in English whereas no one claimed to be monolingual in Tiwa or in Spanish.

In finding out other possible indicators of LMLS, Fasold further made an investigation on domain of language use and language attitudes of subjects. Domain has mainly been conceptualized in terms of interlocutor, i.e., in addressing (a) various family members, (b) Indian friends in the presence of Anglo and Chicano friends and (c) Anglo and Chicano friends. Eventually, he discovered some symptoms for language shift as well as language maintenance.

Indicators of possible shift from Tiwa to English include the presence of language use variations between younger and older speakers: there were higher tendency among younger people to use or to be addressed in monolingual English than in Tiwa or in Tiwa and English; and there was a general tendency to use English with outsiders.

Indicators for positive future of the native tongue include except with outsiders, there was a majority's tendency among bilinguals not to employ monolingual English; there was no general tendency of termination on the handing down of the mother tongue; and the majority's

tendency to show positive attitude towards Tiwa. In concluding his study, Fasold admitted that the case at hand was ambiguous and suggested that it could be taken as an example to show how difficult was predicting the future of minority languages.

The following couple of works reviewed in here have been undertaken in Europe. The first is Suzan Gal's (1979) study in Austria and the other is Nancy Dorian's (1981) study in Scotland. I cannot find their original work, however. But, with their insightful information, they are the oft-discussed and -quoted works in the vast literature on LMLS. Particularly, Fasold (1984) has reviewed these works in great detail. And my summary of these works, which is in fact better stated as a summary of summary, has been based, mainly, on Fasold's discussion. They are presented as follows.

Suzan Gal's research among Oberwartes, where bilingualism in Hungarian and German was a fact of life for generations, show in general how the need to assimilate socially and economically to the mainstream culture, from purely agrarian to industrialized, or 'modern' way of life, affected daily interaction patterns and peoples' perception to languages, which ultimately accounted for the gradual replacement of Hungarian by German.

Using basically an anthropological method, participant observation, and at times employing self-report methods, questionnaire and interview, she pointed out that the linguistic change was undergoing intergenerationally. Contrary to earlier periods, younger parents began to use most often monolingual German to address their children. Younger people also employed German, at the expense of their ancestral tongue, for the most part of their inter- and intra-generational communication. As a result, younger people were found to be less proficient in the native tongue than their older counterparts were. These were so for there had come to surface a variation in the social meanings between Hungarian and German: Hungarian was associated with peasantness, backwardness, while German was perceived as language of economic upward mobility and modern life. Hence, the need to change social identities had come to act against the future of the ancestral language.

Besides the sociolinguistic manifestations, the negative social meanings also played a part to judge, in linguistic terms, the indigenous language as an inferior tongue to German as well as other varieties of Hungarian. Such socio-psychological set up in turn led to another linguistic phenomenon; borrowing, i.e., use of German forms in Hungarian speech event was observed to be widespread language behavior but switching in the opposite direction was stated to be less apparent.

Based on such close and detail studies on the various sociolinguistic behaviors and analysis of the broad based socio-economic milieu of the contact situation, Gal confirmed the presence of unstable bilingualism among Oberwartes and predicted that German would displace Hungarian in the near future.

Another study, which has much similarity with that of Gal's study, is Nancy Dorian's (1981) study among the fishing community of East Sutherland, where bilingualism in Gaelic and English had been a long established societal behavior. Generally, it scrutinized the social and economic forces that directed to the shift from Gaelic to English. The community under investigation had engaged for so long in fishing activity. However, with the collapse of the fishing industry in the early decades of the twentieth century, the community began to engage in other 'modern' economic activities and started to withdraw from the fisher identity. Along line with such socio-economic changes, they started to abandon their language so that to avoid the previous social identity with which the language was intimately linked.

Language attitudes played a great role for the negative intergenerational continuity of the indigenous tongue observed by Dorian. Once Gaelic was perceived as an ethnic insignia, but it had gradually lost this status and become a source of embarrassment. It had been encoded negative social meaning: it had become the language associated with the 'out dated' fishing activity and fisher identity.

Her longitudinal study, which took over a decade, in the form of participant observation revealed the presence of variation between younger and older speakers on language use pattern and proficiency. There was a small tendency in passing on Gaelic to the younger generation. Older people had used Gaelic mostly among themselves and they switched to English in addressing their younger counterparts. They were also stated to be fluent in the native tongue than younger people, who were more competitive in the dominant language – English – than the ancestral language – Gaelic. She used the term 'semi-speakers' to describe young people with terminal competence in the native tongue.

She also found that people often regretted for their 'bad' local Gaelic and used to direct her where 'better' speakers of Gaelic were found. Moreover, she stated that while mixing English forms amidst Gaelic speech event was a common language behavior, mixing in the other way around was less apparent. All in all, Dorian's research has stated to demonstrate the link between social mobility and linguistic change and the ways they influence each other.

Bentahila and Davies (1992) research among Moroccan Berbers and Moroccan Jews show language shift in progress. The study was mainly based on information obtained through

questionnaire and interview responses. The sociolinguistic factors considered were basically language use and attitudes. The investigation of language use pattern focused on the familial interaction. The attitudinal items were set out to examine both superficial and deep-seated attitudes to languages. Informants from the Berber community were young, well-educated and residents of both urban and rural areas: 200 Berber-Arabic bilingual informants aged 12-38 were selected. On the other hand, 86 (Moroccan) Arabic-French bilinguals of the Jew community (specifically, "Toshabim or native Jews") aged 12-63 took part in the study.

Eventually, the researchers found out that in both groups the inter-generational continuity of the native tongues were proceeding negatively. There was a decline on use of the traditional languages while strong intrusion of the replacing language across generations. They also noticed that subjects from both communities did not feel language loss as identity loss. Subjects had been stated to reveal some affection towards the traditional languages, although they perceived them as mere tools for communication than important ethnic symbols. They showed a strong instrumental attitude towards the dominant languages.

Vamarasi (2005) qualitative work on Rotuman, in Pacific, is another study that concern on the analysis of state of LMLS from various perspectives. Using a typology of minority language situation forwarded by Edwards (1992) and modified by Grenoble and Whaley (1998) as a theoretical framework, Vamarasi tried to determine the viability of Rotuman and identify factors for the potential survival of the language as well as factors for language survival in the South Pacific context. Grenoble and Whaley's version of the framework has twelve wide-ranging categories by which human groups can be described: geography, history, economics, sociology, demography, politics, religion, education, literacy, technology, linguistics, and psychology.

Having analyzed the ecology of the language from these perspectives, Vamarasi identified the important factors that favored and disfavored maintenance of Rotuman. Accordingly, geographic (its isolation and productiveness), linguistic (structural distance from neighboring languages), psychological (the community's being proud of its culture), and religious (its functional role in religion) situations were assessed to be positive facets for the continued existence of the language. On the other side, demographic (high rate of out-migration) educational (English than Rotuman was a school medium), and economic (lack of medical facilities and poor transportations) factors stated to affect the language's survival negatively. The researcher, however, mentioned that the different factors highly influenced each other and the discussion on one of them referred unavoidably to others.

CHAPTER THREE

Data Presentation and Analysis

3.0 Introduction

This chapter comprises two parts. In the first part, a preliminary discussion on the raw data is undertaken. As has been indicated in methodology section, the main source of data for the present study is the questionnaire and the research design for the data analysis is basically quantitative. In line with this, the raw questionnaire data have been analyzed quantitatively and the results are presented and discussed in five main sections, which in turn hold various sub-sections. The first section deals with the presentation and description of demographic compositions of the sample group while the other four sections tackle on the presentation and analysis of the principal sociolinguistic data. In supplementing the quantitative discussion, I will draw on pieces of qualitative information produced from interviewees' comments, observational notes, and document analysis.

In the second part of the chapter, further analyses of the sociolinguistic variables (use, attitude, and proficiency) will be made vis-à-vis respondents' social categories (generation and gender). Moreover, the result of the vocabulary test will be presented and discussed in supplementing the results of self-assessment proficiency analysis by generation. Following this, results of the interview with government body is presented and analyzed in separate section. Finally, factors that do and would possibly affect the maintenance of Saho in the context of the homeland will be discussed in brief. In doing so, it shows how results of different sources of data supplement and/or complement to each other.

PART 1. Preliminary Discussion on the Questionnaire Data

3.1 Demographics

This section of the result of the questionnaire survey comes up with a description of the sample's demographics. Accordingly, tables 1-6 show the distribution of the sample in terms of the following social categories: age, sex, education level, occupation, religion and marital status.

Generally, the distribution of the sample within each of the social categories was not equal. In some cases, one or more characteristic (s) within the same category was/were overrepresented and as a result, its counterpart (s) was/were underrepresented. Fortunately, it was able to uphold the diversity of the sample group.

Generation	Age groups	Fr	%
YG	13-24 (youth)	47	37.3
	25-39 (young adult)	32	25.4
OG	40-59 (middle aged)	27	24.4
	60 and above (elderly)	20	15.9
Total		126	100

Table 1. Age distribution of respondents

Sex	Fr	%
Male	59	46.8
Female	67	53.2
Total	126	100

Table 2. Sex distribution of respondents

Table 1 illustrates respondents' generational and age categories. The informants are clustered into two generational categories. This was done in accordance with the history of the community and its sociolinguistic implication as well as considering the age factor. That was, according to an online articles written by Souba, entitled "Some Facts about Irob", and Tsegay, "An Ethno-historical Survey of the Irob Agri-Pastoralists of North Eastern Tigray (Ethiopia)", (both cited in <http://www.irrob.org/articles-on-irob.html>), until the late periods of Emperor Haileselese's reign the Irob district had been an autonomous and semi-autonomous area (which is more or less about 40 years ago). Afterwards it had been merged to other districts, which were Tigrinya speakers, and the people had become under the leadership of others. After this period, as Souba states, "It [Irob disrrict] was deprived not only of its traditional autonomy and the right to elect its leaders but even of its wereda [district] status". Although it has gained its wereda status and administered by ethnic Irobs since the last two decades, sociolinguistically speaking, it is not yet autonomous. Saho does not have any official status; Tigrinya is the medium of government service and administration realms in the wereda.

So, Irobs born after integration may represent a new generation that has come about in the new sociolinguistic milieu, while those who were born before this period may deem to be in different sociolinguistic condition. Consequently, in the current study, the age 40 was tentatively taken as a benchmark for the generational division: respondents below 40 years of age were deemed as the younger generation (YG) and those who were 40 and above as the older generation (OG).

Moreover, these generational categories were divided into small age groups and used, at times, separately when there was a need to describe or emphasis or compare some points within the broader generational divisions. The division is made based on the 2008 Ethiopian population and development indicators categorization of major age groups that is prepared by MoFED.

According to the MoFED's (2009) age categorization, the age range for the "youth" is 15-24 and for the "elderly" 60 and above (p. 2). In line with that, in the present study while the age 24 was taken as a benchmark to divide the YG, the age 60 was used to divide the OG. Accordingly, respondents whose age ranges from 13-24 (taking the upper limit, 24, and adjusting the lower limit, 15, a little bit to 13) are deemed *youth*. The remaining respondents within the YG, 25-39, are deemed *young adult*. Moreover, respondents whose age ranges from 40-59 are named *middle age*, and those above 60 are taken *elderly*.

Occupational and educational level distributions of the sample group are presented respectively in table 3 and 4. Occupational wise, students constituted the larger proportion and jobless did so the least. Moreover, various professionals such as teachers, health practitioners, polices, agricultural experts etc. were included under the government employee sub-category for convenience.

Occupation	Government employee	Student	Traders	Farmers	Jobless	Total
Fr	32	43	22	17	12	126
%	25.4	34.1	17.5	13.9	9.5	100

Table3. Occupational distribution of respondents

Educational level	Illiterate	Elementary & Junior (1-8)	High school (9 th - preparatory)	TVET certificate	College/ university diploma/ degree	Total
Fr	25	27	46	4	24	126
%	19.8	21.4	36.5	3.2	19	100

Table 4. Educational level of respondents

Table 4 demonstrates that education seems a fact of life for Irobs in Dowhan. About 80 % (101) of respondents have various degrees of school contact. Of this, around 70% (71) belonged to the young generation, while nearly 30% (30) were in the category of the old generation. This may attribute to the recent expansion of schools across the district.

Religion	Ethiopian Orthodox	Catholic	Muslim	Total
Fr.	48	76	2	126
%	38.1	60.3	1.6	100

Table 5. Religion of respondents

Marital status	Married	Single	Total
Fr.	71	55	126
%	56.3	43.7	100

Table 6. Marital status of respondents

Table 5 and 6 show religious distribution and marital status of respondent. The majority of respondents were followers of Catholic followed by followers of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and only two Muslims were in the sample. This is in fact consistent with the general population complexes of the Irob community. The proportion of married informants was slightly higher than that of the proportion of unmarried. From the married category, only three informants reported to have Tigrinya speaker partner while the remaining claimed that they had an ethnic fellow spouse. So, it was not able to get adequate informants with mixed marriage so that to pursue the analysis of intermarriage vis-à-vis dominant home language, though it has been treated in some other way.

3.2 Linguistic and Ethnic Background of Respondents

Other areas of assessment produced by the questionnaire data analysis were respondents' first language, second language (another language spoken or understood) and their parents' ethnic background. In the first sub section, which immediately follows this introductory remark, the responses on respondents' first language and their parents' ethnic background are presented. Based on these reports, intermarriage vis-à-vis language first to be learned or spoken is discussed. This is then followed by the description of the data on second language and its implication.

3.2.1 Respondents' First Language and their Parents' Ethnic Background

Of the 126 informants, 107(84.9%) responded that their first language was Saho while 15 (11.6%) informants named Tigrinya and 4 (3.2%) claimed both Saho and Tigrinya. With regard to their parents' ethnic composition 121 and 115 respondents marked to have respectively an Irob mother and father; 5 and 11 respondents did so to have Tigrean mother and father, respectively. Thus, a total of 16 respondents who were born in Saho vs. Tigrinya speaking parent were included in the study. Based on these reports, an attempt has been made to see if

there was any relationship between intermarriage and linguistic profiles of children's born in such families.

3.2.2 Intermarriage vs. First Language

As it turned out, intermarriage appears to have an impact on whether Saho would become the first language of children, and by implication the dominant home language, or not. Of the 16 informants who were from mixed parents, 11 indicated Tigrinya as their first language. Of these, again 9 had Tigrinya speaking fathers while the remaining 2 had Tigrinya speaking mothers. From the remaining 5 informants who were born in mixed marriage, 4 and 1 claimed that their first language was Saho and both Saho and Tigrinya, respectively.

The linguistic consequence of exogamy among the Irob community appears to be more apparent over the last few decades than it had before. This can be deduced from the comparison of mother-tongue reported among informants from the exogamous parent and their respective age group. All the 11(100%) respondents who indicated Tigrinya as their first language above belonged to the YG – eight of them fall under the youth and three belonged to the young adult category. On the other hand, out of the four informants whose first language was Saho, only one was from the young adult while the other three fall under the OG (all were in the elderly category). The remaining informant with Saho and Tigrinya first language belonged to the youth.

To sum up, the data obtained on cases of intermarriage from these limited number of respondents seems to suggest some important points. First, in mixed marriage pattern Saho inclines to have a little chance of winning as a home language, and this seems more apparent since the last few decades than before. Furthermore, the impact of exogamy tends to be strong on the considered situation when the father is Tigrinya speaker and the mother is Saho speaker. The explanation for this may be since across most Ethiopian cultures the father is the respected member of a family and his cultural identities are most often taken for granted in familial affairs. In this sense, children would normally be anticipated to inherit their father's identity.

3.2.3. Second Language(s) of Respondents

As to the responses on second language, all respondents who marked Saho as their first language named Tigrinya as their second language and vice versa. In both cases, some people reported knowledge of other languages (such as Amharic, English, Afar, etc.) in addition to

Saho and Tigrinya. This gives an impression on the degree of language contact held between the two languages and its resultant widespread bilingualism in the target community.

Widespread bilingualism is taken as a precursor of language shift in almost all scholarly works on language contact. However, it has been concurrently suggested that the presence of societal bilingualism in itself is not a unanimous indicator of language displacement, but its accompanied language behaviors and tendencies (Fasold 1984; Downes 1998). In the succeeding sections, results of the examinations of the raw data on patterns of language use, attitudes and motivations, and language proficiency will be discussed.

3.3 Language Use

This section deals with the presentation and analysis of the data on language use pattern of respondents in various domains. In the first sub-section, the data on language use with different interlocutors (family members and relatives, and various members of the ethnolinguistic group) is presented and discussed. Furthermore, language most often used in different settings (such as school, market etc.) and for different functions (such as counting, praying etc.) are put forward and analyzed in successive sub-sections.

Language shift, as Appel and Muysken (1987) propose, is the redistribution of varieties of language over certain domains and if the shift is towards the majority language, this language appears to invade one domain after another via the intermediate stage of bilingual language use. In view of that, throughout the discussions on language use below, it is the reports on the monolingual and/or the bilingual behavior in the dominant tongue (Tigrinya) observed, particularly in the supposedly traditional domains of the old tongue, that are accounted for the shift process of the old tongue (Saho).

3.3.1 Language Use with Various Interlocutors

According to Fase, et al. (1992), investigating language choice for intraethnic communication is very crucial in order to determine the state of LMLS of a particular minority language. Moreover, as has been pointed out by many scholars the interaction within family members is deemed to be the final spot in which a minority language can be used for intraethnic communication and therefrom guarantees its intergenerational continuity (Dittmar 1976; Harmers and Blanc 1987; Romaine 1994, only to mention a few). In consonance with these viewpoints, respondents were asked language they most often used with various family members and relatives and with different ethnolinguistic fellows. The data has been analyzed and the results are presented in

table 7. Yet, for ease and clarity, the discussion of the data is carried on in two separate headings: language use in the family domain and language use with various ethnolinguistic members.

Language most often used with	Responses							
	Saho		Tigrinya		Both		Total	
	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
Grandparents	187	83.9	7	3.1	29	13.0	223	100
<i>Grandmother</i>	96	85.0	4	3.5	13	11.5	113	100
<i>Grandfather</i>	91	82.7	3	2.7	16	14.6	110	100
Parents	157	62.3	31	12.3	64	25.4	252	100
<i>Mother</i>	82	65.1	13	10.3	31	24.6	126	100
<i>Father</i>	75	59.5	18	14.3	33	26.2	126	100
Siblings	122	51.0	42	17.6	75	31.4	239	100
<i>Sister</i>	63	51.6	19	15.6	40	32.8	122	100
<i>Brother</i>	59	50.4	23	19.7	35	29.9	117	100
<i>Spouse</i>	39	54.9	10	14.1	22	31.0	71	100
<i>Children</i>	26	41.9	14	22.6	22	35.5	62	100
<i>Relatives from other parts of Tigray</i>	31	24.6	43	34.1	52	41.3	126	100
<i>Relatives from other areas of Irob Wereda</i>	96	76.2	4	3.2	26	20.6	126	100
<i>Elders</i>	104	82.5	5	4.0	17	13.5	126	100
<i>Friends</i>	55	43.7	29	23.0	42	33.3	126	100
<i>Religious fathers</i>	51	40.5	30	23.8	45	35.7	126	100
<i>An Irob person in the presence of a Tigrean</i>	6	4.8	103	81.7	17	13.5	126	100

Table 7. Respondents' Language use pattern in intraethnic communication

3.3.1.1 Language Use in the Family Domain

As depicted in table 7, overall, Saho appears to be relatively the dominant language in the familial interaction, with grandparents being dominantly addressed in it and relatives from other parts of Tigray being least addressed in it. Besides, use of the traditional tongue with the majority members of a family still tends to be relatively stronger than use of Tigrinya; in fact, with varying degree in each case.

Be that as it may, a close look at the data concurrently portrays a declining pattern of use of the traditional tongue across generations. This can be drawn from rough comparison of the report of use of Saho to address family members of different generation. Accordingly, Saho inclines to be used most often with grandparents (83.9%) than parents (62.3 %) and with parents most often than with siblings (51%); and between spouses (54.9%) most often than with

children (41.9%). Moreover, the data demonstrates that the report on both monolingual and bilingual behaviors in Tigrinya, in the reverse order of addressees considered, rise in a considerable degrees in such private interactions.

The above general discussion suggests two important points in relation to what is generally known of LMLS. On the one hand, following Fishman's (1991), as cited in Kamwangamalu (2003), notion of language shift, the situation of Saho appears to mark negative intergenerational stability, with a declining pattern in its uses vis-à-vis addressees of different generations. On the other hand, language shift is not an out of the blue incident; it is rather a process, as Appel and Muysken (1987) have noted, where use of the new tongue begins as a variable and subsequently emerges as a categorical in domains hitherto reserved only for the native language; and generation is stated to be the basic trigger for such developments (Fasold 1984). In this regard, the present study discloses that intrusion of the dominant language, both as a variable and categorical language, in the supposedly private domain – family – for the old tongue is remarkable. And, needless to say, such a behavior has been observed to associate with generational patterns of interlocutors: use of Tigrinya is relatively stronger with younger members of a family than the elderly.

All in all, these generational based language choice differences among Irobs at Dowhan designate the unstable nature of Saho-Tigrinya bilingualism and it can be taken therefore as a possible indicator of shift in progress from Saho to Tigrinya. Generational vibrations in language use pattern will further be reinforced when the interplay of generation vis-à-vis language behaviors is examined. In what follows a further analysis is undertaken in finding out some specific verification for the presence of an ongoing language shift.

3.3.1.1.1 Is there any specific evidence for a possible language shift?

Fase, et al. (1992) suggests that tracing whether there is a change in the norm of language choice for intraethnic communication is essential to have a good image of the LMLS process of the group under question. Accordingly, as 78- and 81-years-old interviewees commented on the current speech behavior of Irobs in comparison with their days as a youth and children, in previous times, there was an almost exclusive use of Saho when addressing each other within the community and in the familial interaction in particular. Also, they indicated that the use of Tigrinya was dependent on who the conversant was, i.e., if it was monolingual Tigrinya speaker or could not speak Saho. But these days, according to these elders, the speech situations revealed a tendency of using more Tigrinya than Saho in intraethnic interaction. Therefore, we

can infer from this that the norm which governed language choice, perhaps seven or eight decades ago, of the target group was interlocutor based: it conceivably was use Saho with Irobs and Tigrinya with Tigreans and/or outsiders.

Nonetheless, as has been noted by the elders and as the data on familial interaction implies, the norm to choose Tigrinya in interethnic interactions and the ethnic tongue in intraethnic situations does not appear to be maintained anymore. Of course, in the data on language use pattern in the family realm, there were cases, such as language use with parents, where the possibility of use of Tigrinya could be acceptable at least by the need to be understood rather than a case of language reallocation or norm breaking (for there were respondents who were born in mixed marriage). However, even the reported language use in such cases suggest more than this ground. As mentioned above, only 16 informants indicated to have Tigrean (by implication Tigrinya speaker) parents, 5 in case of mothers and 11 in case of fathers. Yet, 13 and 19 were the frequencies of reports for habitual use of exclusive Tigrinya in relation to language use with *mother* and *father*, respectively; also, 30 and 32 were the corresponding occurrences of use of Saho and Tigrinya in such cases. These simple inferences confirms that the norm of language choice among the target group has undergone some changes and now a days it seems normal to switch between the languages regardless of the communication event. Thus, following Fase and his associates, such cases of norm breaking in language choice can be taken as an evidence for language shift in progress. (In fact such behaviors will turn out to be more apparent in the forthcoming discussions on language choice for various functions and in various settings.)

According to Brenzinger (1997:276), "the mere fact that only a few parents may decide not to use the minority language with their children already results in endangering the entire transmission from one generation to the next". Once again, taking into account the report of language used by Irob parents in addressing their offspring in light of Brenzinger's view point, Saho appears to be far from the "safe" zone. Of the 62 respondents who reported to have children, almost $\frac{1}{4}$, (22.6%), responded exclusive use of Tigrinya to address their kids. Although it is difficult to know exactly how small section of parents with such tendency may wreak transmission process of minority tongues referred by Brenzinger's expression, "only a few parents", the current study do reveal at least the existence of such tendencies in a considerable manner. This can also be taken as another manifestation for the endangerment of Saho.

3.3.1.1.2 Implication of Out-migration on Language Choice

Finally, one point worth mentioning as a point of departure from the discussion of language use in the family domains is that internal migration appears to have a remarkable impact on language use pattern in the family realm. This can be inferred from the comparison of the response to language use with relatives from other parts of Tigray and from other areas of the homeland. As has been illustrated in table 7, the reports on use of mother-tongue significantly shrink while addressing relatives from other parts of Tigray (24.6%) than while addressing relatives from other parts of the homeland (76.2%). On the contrary, there exists a remarkable rise in both the monolingual use of Tigrinya (34.1%) and the bilingual behavior (41.3%) in speaking to relatives from other parts of Tigray. In this regard, out-migration (which will be addressed latter) can be taken as one possible source of negative in-group norm reinforcement on intraethnic language use pattern of the Irob community in Dowhan and perhaps language use pattern of the community in the homeland in general.

3.3.1.2 Language Use with Various Ethnic Fellows

As mentioned above, the speech behavior of a minority group reflected in intraethnic communication is basically deemed responsible for the maintenance or shift of the respective minority language. In accordance with this point, respondents language use pattern with different members of the ethnolinguistic group (elders, friends and religious leaders) was another area of investigation produced via the questionnaire data. Besides, a case of language choice which has been indicated by many scholars to have a link with LMLS of a particular minority group, i.e., language use in the presence of speaker(s) of the dominant language, was included.

Generally, the result of the analysis of the data presented in table 7 shows that there is prevailing bilingual behavior in Saho and Tigrinya characterizing the intraethnic communication. Interestingly, the data confirms that generation is a factor for language choice among the Saho speakers in Dowhan. There is greater use of the native language with elders than with friends (which is consistent with the prevalent tendency of the use of Saho observed with grandparent and parents (elders) than with siblings and spouses (peers or friends)). In addition, the data shows that use of the ethnic tongue with religious leaders is not strong while that of Tigrinya alone and Tigrinya together with Saho exhibit an immense proportion. This will be further strengthened and the possible explanations will be forwarded in the next section when language choice in relation to *worship place* and when *praying* are discussed.

Furthermore, the data reveals that use of Saho for intraethnic communication is highly influenced by the presence of Tigrinya speaker(s), i.e., the overwhelming majority of respondents (81.7%) indicate to converge into monolingual Tigrinya in such cases. Fasold (1984) and Gal (1979), cited in Hoffmann (1991), took such pattern of switching to the dominant language at the expense a mother tongue as a sign of language shift among the Tiwa and Oberwart communities, respectively.

Interestingly, this pattern of switching points to another area where negative norm reinforcement for intraethnic interaction would possibly emanate. That is, as out-migration seems an internal factor, in-migration would be taken as an external influence for breaking social rules of language choice, both of which may ultimately contribute to language shift. The negative impact of such a tendency for the maintenance of Saho will be discussed in the next section, particularly in the discussion on language use vis-à-vis the neighborhood.

3.3.2 Language Use in Different Settings

Fishman (2001) suggests that intimate or informal domains (such as the home, the neighborhood etc.) are very crucial realms for minority language maintenance. On the other side, scholars like Brenzinger (1997) suggest that the pressure to minority tongues' maintenance usually comes from status or formal domains such as school, media, etc. Accordingly, language respondents claim to use habitually in various formal and informal locales has been examined and the result is presented in table 8.

Generally speaking, the data suggests that use of Saho is confined to the *home*, the *neighborhood* and the *worship place*, with a relatively greater degree of maintenance at home than at the neighborhood and at the neighborhood than at worship places. (Some informants indicated to use Geez and Arabic in addition to Saho and/or Tigrinya in the religious places). At the same time, the degree of Tigrinya's intrusion exhibits an immense increment in the reverse order of these settings. Tigrinya appears to be the dominant language in the *school*, *workplace* and *market* settings. In what follows the patterns of language use in each case and its implication vis-à-vis LMLS will be discussed in separate headings.

Settings	Responses							
	Saho		Tigrinya		Both		Total	
	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
<i>Home</i>	70	55.5	21	16.7	35	27.8	126	100
<i>Neighborhood</i>	61	48.4	25	19.8	40	31.8	126	100
<i>Worship place</i>	53	42.1	38	30.1	35	27.8	126	100
<i>School</i>	-	-	115	91.3	11	8.7	126	100
<i>Work place</i>	11	15.5	42	59.2	18	25.3	71	100
<i>Market</i>	6	4.8	73	57.9	47	37.3	126	100

Table 8. Respondents' language use pattern in different settings

3.3.2.1 Language Use at Home

Since the home setting is believed to be a last fort where a minority language can be maintained from total loss (Dorian 1981, cited in Fasold 1984), intrusion of the new (dominant) language in this sphere reveals a worst situation for the survival of the old (Downes 1998). Similarly, Clyne (1997) claims that the home is the least locale in which a minority tongues, like Saho, can survive. Corresponding to these remarks, the data demonstrates that Saho is relatively the dominant language of the home, which has been indicated by about 55% of the total respondents. Yet the reports on both bilingual and monolingual behavior in Tigrinya at the home are remarkable, which both make up for nearly 45% of the total respondents. If the home domain is the last bastion of minority languages, the above figures points out then there is a kind of 55 to 45 degree of maintenance and shift of Saho, respectively. This is consistent with the language use pattern described in the family interaction. Consequently, one can argue from this that Saho is in actual jeopardy in Dowhan: there is strong tendency of language shift from Saho to Tigrinya in the next few generations to come unless otherwise the current situation changes dramatically.

3.3.2.2 Language Use in the Neighborhood

The neighborhood is one of the informal or intimate domains deemed crucial for minority language maintenance (Baker 1996; Fishman 2001). In fact, in the context of Saho speaking community in Dowhan, the neighborhood is the normally anticipated locale for use of the ethnic tongue to be remarkable next to the home. Nevertheless, assuming that the bilingual behavior in Tigrinya is representative of transitional stage than a stable one, Saho seems to give way for the dominant tongue, Tigrinya, in the neighborhood. The data suggests that the majority's tendency (for nearly 52% of respondents) is to use either both languages or Tigrinya alone than monolingual Saho (about 48 %) in this locale.

There are some possible explanations for the decline on reports of mother-tongue use and the increment of the influence of Tigrinya in the supposedly next-to-the-home setting for its use. From what I observed and the information obtained from various interviewees, the recent inflow of Tigrinya speakers to the town seems the factor for that.

With the recent introduction or expansion of modern imputes to the community such as schools, health care centers, electricity, legal system, and the like, there is a considerable influx of Tigrinya speakers to the town so as to run these realms. This seems so for there is shortage of skilled manpower among the natives. Still others come and settle in search of self-employed jobs. Some run their own business firms such as shops, bars, teahouse etc., and others are involved as a workforce in such businesses. More seemingly, with them their children and relatives would shelter too. Consequently, the decline on use of mother-tongue in the neighborhood is more likely than not owing to the community's convergence towards Tigrinya in the presence of Tigrinya speakers and the likelihood to exist at least Tigrinya speaker(s) when they get together within the neighborhood.

3.3.2.3 Language Use at Worship Places

It is generally assumed that a language will have a better chance for maintenance when it is used in the religious affairs of its respective speakers (Fishman 1991, as cited in Clyne 1997; Baker 1996) or when the language is assumed to be intrinsically linked with the religion of the group (Clyne 1997); and consequently when change in language use is deemed in itself "sinful" (Kloss 1966, cited in Appel and Muysken 1987). The current study reveals that Saho has no function in the religious affairs of the Irob community as a whole.

As I have been told by some informants, in Orthodox Christian churches, the majority of priests and deacons are Tigrinya speakers. Besides, Geez is the liturgical language of Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Church. Hence every religious proceedings would be held in Geez or/and Tigrinya. In the Catholic Church, most of the praying codes such as the daily prayer 'our father in the heaven...' and other important religious chants and sermons required use of Tigrinya as there was no Saho translated version for such religious activities. These indicate that use of Tigrinya in the religious domain would be even more remarkable than the data suggests. The reported exclusive use of Saho in this sphere seems then a self-imposed behavior rather than an institutionally supported norm.

Cross tabulating respondents' language behavior by religious affiliation confirms that religion does not seem an important factor in this regard. Leaving out the responses of the two

Muslim informants, of the 76 Catholic informants, 32 (42.1%) claimed to use Saho, while 24 (31.6%) named Tigrinya and the remaining 20 (26.3%) reported both. On the other hand, of the 48 Orthodox followers, 19 (39.6%) reported to use Saho while 14 (29.2%) indicated Tigrinya and 15 (31.2%) both. Some respondents, particularly from the orthodox category, added use of Geez in such a case. So, Saho appears to lack one aspect of institutional support, language use in religious domain, which could lessen the chance of its long-term existence.

In addition, according to the official representative of SPCIK, some conservative Christian Irobs did not even like the name Saho to be the language's name for it was believed to denote Islam. It was associated so for it is spoken by their Muslim counterparts in Eritrea. Thus such beliefs associated with the language may have still some impact on the observed language behavior on the religious setting and with religious staff, which will also be noticed in the forthcoming sections when the report of language frequently used during prayer is discussed. In the impending sections, settings where Tigrinya is found to be dominant language are discussed.

3.3.2.4 Language Use in the School

Schools are believed to be one of the main agents of language spread (Fishman 1985). No one reported an exclusive use of Saho at the school (which is also representative of language behavior in other government institutions). It does not surprise however, for all respondents were bilinguals and as a parent or an employee or a student, use of Tigrinya is required in such locales. This is unavoidable at least for two basic reasons. First, Tigrinya is the official language in the Irob district. It is a medium of instruction in schools in particular and a working language of the wereda in general. Second, most of the teachers as well as other staff members are Tigrinya speakers (Tigrean). The observed speech behavior is thus the result of these situations. Hence, the school and indeed other government settings can be considered as crucial realms through which use of Tigrinya is being stretched to the local community.

3.3.2.5 Language Use at the Workplace

As regards to the work sphere, the study also reveals strong tendency of use of Tigrinya and the decline of Saho. This demonstrates the diminishing of Saho's use in the work sphere where it was supposed to be the dominant language for some time in its past. This can be portrayed from the short description of the group's socio-historical milieu. According to various articles cited in <http://www.irrob.org/articles-on-irob.html>, Irobs were originally pastoralists and later

transformed into semi-pastoralists and crop cultivators. Recently, due to ecological factors such as contraction of arable land, low rainfall, drought and the like, the community is shifting to other socioeconomic identities, which fosters urbanization and modernization in its turn. Accordingly, many of them have become traders, teachers, administrative workers, students etc. These changes, both in the speech community and their environment, are not without linguistic consequences, however.

Breaking the scores for language use in the workplace by occupation clearly suggests how social changes, from agrarian to other modern ways of life, affect the speech behavior of the community. As illustrated in figure 1, use of exclusive Saho in the work sphere is mainly restricted to the traditional farmer category (67.7%) while no one from respondents engage in the recently introduced occupational identities in the community claim to use exclusive Saho. In contrast, 90.6% of government employees and 59.1% of traders (as opposed to 0% of farmers) indicate exclusive Tigrinya; and the remaining respondents from the three categories mark both.

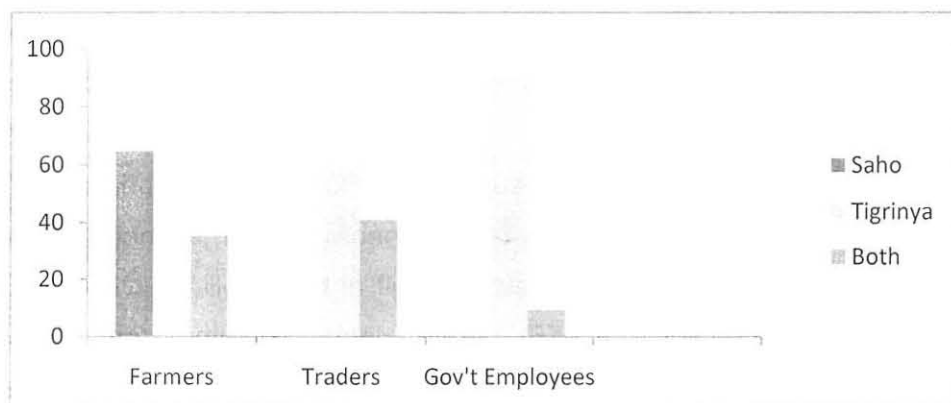


Figure 1. Language use in workplace by occupation

As Fishman (1985:66) points out, “language shift of any kind ... is an indicator of dislocation. It implies ... the alternation of previously recognized role relations, situations and domains, so that these no longer imply or call for language with which they were previously associated”. In line with this point, the downturn of use of Saho in the work domain appears to go hand in hand with the introduction of new working and living atmospheres where the connection of the ethnic language and the new situations no longer embrace.

3.3.2.6 Language Use at the Market

The market setting also discloses a remarkable use of Tigrinya. This is because there is no market place in 'Irobland' (the reason seems economic which will be addressed latter). Thus the people must go to neighboring markets such as *Soubia* – a border town between Irob and Gulomekeda districts – where use of Tigrinya is most prominently required.

3.3.2.7 Concluding Remark

Generally, the linguistic behavior observed in these three latter domains (school, work & market) can and do affect the overall maintenance of Saho. Brenzinger (1997:276) explains minority languages as languages which lives in an unfriendly environments to them “the school, media, administration, etc., being dominated by other languages”. Since such languages have restricted function within the group they belong to, the external coercions to them emanates from these socio-politically and economically important domains (ibid). Thus it can be argued that as use and spread of Tigrinya in such locale acquire strong and deep roots, its extension to the most decisive realms of Saho such as family/home will be more likely than not (of course, such tendencies have already been discovered in the preceding sections).

3.3.3 Language Use for Various Functions

The analysis of language use for various functions figures out that the relatively dominant use of Saho is restricted to when dreaming and getting angry. And, even there, interference of Tigrinya is still noteworthy. On the other hand, use of Tigrinya displays to be higher when people count, sing and pray. Table 9 illustrates the figures for each case.

Language most often used when /during	Responses							
	Saho		Tigrinya		Both		Total	
	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
<i>Praying</i>	24	19.1	59	46.8	43	34.1	126	100
<i>Counting</i>	29	23.0	51	40.5	46	36.5	126	100
<i>Dreaming</i>	61	48.4	35	27.8	30	23.8	126	100
<i>Singing</i>	32	25.4	63	50.0	31	24.6	126	100
<i>Angry</i>	58	46.0	31	24.6	37	29.4	126	100

Table 9. Language choice of respondents for various functions

In my notes of observation in different service areas – such as shops, cafés, eating places etc., one of the prevalent mixed elements while people were talking in Saho were

lexical items of Tigrinya for numeral, especially beyond cardinal numbers. At the beginning, I thought that the language's semantics might not code numbers beyond these figures. However, I discovered in a while, from the word list of Saho prepared by SPCIK and information obtained from some interviewees, that it was the speakers' rather than the language's characterizing behavior.

Structural decline of a language, as shift in its function does, comes about usually after reasonable period of replacement of the language's components by another. In Saho, the native items for numbers appear to be one of the linguistic traits being rapidly replaced by Tigrinya (as the figure of language choice for *counting* and my close observation on such a behavior implied). Though a more detail analysis on the structural consequences of the contact between Saho and Tigrinya may reveal a good image of the situation; the current study gives some impression that there is a language decline tendency in Saho. This is assumed so for it is not a language *per se* that declines, but its speakers' language behavior that determines so; and the presence of higher reliance on lexical items of Tigrinya for numerals at the expense of the natives among the Irob community in Dowhan can be taken as a sign for such tendency to be more likely than not.

As regards to language use pattern reflected when *singing*, modernization may have a push and pull effect for the decline of Saho's use (and for the increment of the report on use of Tigrinya). The recent introduction of electricity and its consequent introductions of audio and video digital technologies to Irobland (such as tape player, television together with satellite receiver, CD, VCD) seem to have made Tigrinya songs more accessible and popular among the Saho community (over the Saho traditional oral songs) these days. Or, possibly, failure of Saho songs to grab the opportunity for access to modern technologies (being transmitted via television, or presented in digital audio video accessories) may have played its negative role for such behavior. That is, as exposure affects our behavior (e.g. language choice), the presence or absence of ease of access to songs in the languages seems to have an effect on the subjects' language choice.

Consistently with language use report noticed at *worship places* and with *religious fathers*, the report of use of mother-tongue during *praying* shows remarkable contraction. Generally, use of Saho in religious domain seems to lack institutional support. Nevertheless, the religious sphere is believed to be one area where a minority language is sought to be used and thereby this would help the language's upholding (Baker 1996).

3.4 Attitudes towards Saho and Tigrinya

Language attitude was another factor investigated to gauge state of LMLS among the Saho speakers in Dowhan. The information on attitude towards their native language and Tigrinya was produced via the questionnaire; and it has been analyzed and the result is demonstrated in table 10a & 10b. In some cases, the quantitative data is supplemented from interview comments and observational note.

Edwards (1992) points out that language attitude questions should not only tap the belief of respondents. As he argues, by allowing subjects to interact only to yes/no or other similar kinds of alternative questions, it is hardly possible to get the deep seated behavior of subjects. So such questions should also come to grip evaluative, emotional or feeling elements (Edwards 1992: 48). Accordingly, in the current study respondents were given seven alternative items but with additional spaces to reflect the rationales behind each response to the stimuli (where they could express the basis for their feelings, emotions, or evaluative remarks). The responses for each item are presented in the tables below and the justifications provided (though some respondents could not do so) have been categorized and they are put forward following the description of the quantitative data.

Items 1-4	Responses							
	Yes		No		Don't know		Total	
	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
1. Is it useful for you to speak Saho?	116	92.1	8	6.3	2	1.6	126	100
2. Is it useful for you to speak Tigrinya?	126	100	-	-	-	-	126	100
3. One can identify him/herself as an ethnic Irob without speaking Saho.	71	56.3	52	41.3	3	2.4	126	100
4. Tigrinya is a more expressive language than Saho.	57	45.2	50	39.7	19	15.1	126	100

Table 10a. Attitude of respondents toward Saho and Tigrinya

Items 5-7	Responses							
	Saho		Tigrinya		Both		Total	
	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
5. Which language better serves for life?	17	13.5	73	57.9	36	28.6	126	100
6. Which language do you want to speak most?	67	53.2	25	19.8	34	27	126	100
7. Which language do you wish your children to speak?	11	8.7	33	26.2	82	65.1	126	100

Table 10b. Attitude of respondents toward Saho and Tigrinya

Asked if it was useful for them to speak Saho, 92.1% of the informants responded affirmatively (as opposed to 100% who did so likewise in the case of Tigrinya), while 6.3% reacted negatively and 1.6% marked 'do not know'. The most frequent remarks, in their descending orders, for interacting to item 1 positively fall, directly or indirectly, under the following three broad categories of justifications: (the majority's tendency) "to communicate with Saho speakers"; followed by "it is my/our symbol of identity" with actual responses such as *it is my/our language; it is our ancestors' language* and the like. The third category which may associate with the second was "to develop/preserve the language". From this, it can be deduced that there is a higher tendency among the Irob informants to see the language as a means of communication than as a symbolic cultural element.

Such feelings can be further strengthened from the responses of subjects with respect to item 3, "One can identify him/herself as an ethnic Irob without speaking Saho"; the majority (56.3%) interacted with this proposition positively (with a common remark that it was possible to be an Irob as long as one can trace its ancestral lineage from Irobs or born in Irobländ). From such responses and justifications, it is possible to argue that the importance of Saho as a symbolic function for its respective ethnic identity appears to be flimsy. According to Holmes (1992) and many other scholars, a minority language is believed to have better chance of maintenance when it is seen as important symbol of ethno-cultural identity. Thus the case at hand suggests the presence of a favorable condition for possible language shift (for in such cases language loss may not be equated with identity loss).

The third explanation is telling on the current threats that bound Saho and the surveillance of some members of the community on what is going on with their language. This can be better understood from what a 49-years-old informant's (and in fact many others who forwarded similar justifications) explicit remark that, "the language is highly amalgamated with other languages and it become endangered of being vanished, so there is a need to use the language in a regular basis and thereby to preserve it". Speaking the language is then sought as an indispensable means of upholding the ethnic language. Such remarks are indicators of the attentiveness of some members of the speech community on the current unsafe state of the home language.

With regard to the importance of Tigrinya (item 2), as mentioned earlier, 100% show a positive attitude towards speaking it. Following Gardner and Lambert (1972), two types of motivations have been attached in relation to the usefulness of speaking Tigrinya: (for the most part) instrumental and (lesser degrees) integrative. The most prominent instrumental rationales

were *it is the majority's language in the region* and *it is administrative/school/media language* etc. Such feeling seems to be widespread among the community which also exhibited in their response to item 5, "Which language better serves for life?", where 57.9% saw Tigrinya as a means of socio-economic upward mobility (as opposed to 13.5% who named Saho and 28.6% claimed both). Moreover, remarks that went to integrative motivation included: *it is our forefather's language; it is our root language* and the like. Such attachments were so for the people have a legend that the founding father of the Irob community, Soummae, son of Wărădä Mehrät, was a Tigrean.

With regard to item 4, for the majority Tigrinya appears to be an expressive language than Saho with explanations such as, "Saho has lots of lexical elements from Tigrinya", "it is because of that Tigrinya become a school/administrative medium", and "Tigrinya is independent language (but Saho is dependent in Tigrinya)". As has been noted by many scholars in various minority communities, such as Hill and Hill (1977) among Nahuatl and Jones (1981) among Irish, as both cited in Appel and Muysken (1987:43), such mind-set are assumed to obligate speakers of minority languages to believe that their language is no longer pure and strong to handle what it is supposed to handle. Similarly, the presence of such feelings among the Irob informants may ultimately contribute to the recession of the indigenous language.

Concerning item 6, the majority indicated that Saho was the language they wanted to speak most. However, their explanations were not only due to the symbolic affection towards the language even if about 37% of these respondents suggested, overtly or covertly, such remarks. Additional comments were also attached to the preference of Saho which did not seem to pledge the connection of the choice and the underlying inclination. These includes, "I live among Irobs/in Irobland" and "I am fluent in Saho". From these explanations, while the first appears still to be reminiscent of the pragmatic motivation towards speaking Saho (i.e., as long as they live among Irobs or in this specific area, it serves them to keep in touch with their ethnic fellows); the second justification reflects language choice due to linguistic capability. So, such preferences still could not guarantee to speak of Saho's maintenance in a full mouth.

In cases of item 7, respondents seem to hold positive attitude toward both Saho and Tigrinya. For 65.1% of respondents, both languages were languages they wished their children to speak, while 8.7% preferred Saho. The selection of Saho may result from misunderstanding the question – it might have been understood as language first to be learned or spoken than the only language to be spoken by their offspring. Otherwise, it would be idealistic! Or, as Bentahila and Davies (1992:201) suggested while studying Berbers of Morocco, "they [respondents]

wished this [Berber] to be the exclusive home language rather than the only one language learnt, as we cannot believe that they want their children to grow up illiterate, which Berber monolingualism would imply". The same holds true in case of Saho, which even further entail that a wish to lock up their children from important social and economical virtues within and out of the homeland.

Be that as it may, when compared respondents who chose only Saho with only Tigrinya, the latter appear to be preferred by three times more than the former: 33 (26.2%) marked Tigrinya in preference to Saho. Of these, about 42% were respondents who already had children. This is in fact consistent with what has been noted in language use pattern in the family domain, in which some parent already reported to employ exclusive Tigrinya when addressing their children.

As a whole, Irob informants seem to hold less positive attitude towards Saho than Tigrinya, which can be regarded as a decisive factor for the overall maintenance of the language. Saho seems no longer a necessary element to signify its respective ethnic identity. This would have an adverse effect on the maintenance of Saho. Besides, the heritage language has been evaluated as inferior to the incoming language (Tigrinya), which is one of the symptoms of language shift discussed by Fasold (1984). Moreover, respondents show on the surface a positive feeling towards the home language particularly in response to items 1 and 6. However, their explanations (deep-seated motivation) have portrayed that such feelings would not be taken as a guarantee for its maintenance. There is a tendency to look the language as a communication tool than an important symbol of ethnic and cultural identity.

3.5 Self-assessment of Language Proficiency

Assessment of language proficiency is another aspect of study employed in the present study to gauge the state of LMLS. Accordingly, using the self-reporting questionnaire, the proficiency of the Irob informants both in Saho and Tigrinya was obtained. It has been computed and the result is displayed in table 11.

Although Saho had been an oral language, it has got its orthography and become a written language since 2009. Hence, both the oral skills (speaking and understanding) and the literacy skills (writing and reading) in the two languages are investigated. However, the inclusion of the analysis of the literacy skills was not taken in a true sense of comparative study (since the literary tradition of Saho with that of Tigrinya is negligible). It was rather accomplished in the hope that how much of the community, especially the educated section, have begun to be

competent in the writing/reading skills of the native tongue. It would in turn give us some picture on the effectiveness of one aspect of institutional support, i.e., whether such activities were backed by the community or not.

In accordance with these points, in the case of the analysis of the oral skills all the responses of the 126 informants were computed while the responses of the 101 informants with various degrees of education regarding their writing and reading abilities were addressed (by excluding the responses of the 25 illiterate informants from such analyses so that to reduce response bias).

The proficiency items were designed to assess subject's skills by offering five levels for the four language skills. Accordingly, respondents were asked to rate their proficiency in each language using *very good, good, fair, poor* or *no skill* proficiency levels. The analysis has been made by taking the "fair" level as the average proficiency level and by collapsing the "very good /good" and "poor/no skill" levels to represent, respectively, beyond and below the average level.

Skills	Responses													
	Saho						Tigrinya						Total	
	VG&G		F		P&NS		VG&G		F		P&NS			
	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
<i>Speaking</i>	103	81.8	23	18.2	-	-	101	80.2	25	19.8	-	-	126	100
<i>Understanding</i>	109	86.5	17	13.5	-	-	103	81.7	21	16.7	2	1.6	126	100
<i>Writing</i>	4	4.0	13	12.9	84	83.1	86	85.1	15	14.9	-	-	101	100
<i>Reading</i>	3	3.0	10	9.9	88	87.1	91	90.1	10	9.90			101	100

Table 11. Respondents' self assessment of proficiency in Saho and Tigrinya

The result of the analysis of all respondents concerning their speaking and understanding skills in the two languages shows that the overwhelming majority are competent enough in both languages. Except 2 informants who claimed to have below average understanding skills in Tigrinya, the rest evaluate their skills an average and beyond. In fact, no one claimed to have no skill at all in both Saho and Tigrinya. This reveals the degree of proficiency in speaking and understanding Tigrinya among the Irob community is very remarkable and thereby the existence of extensive bilingualism among the target group.

Concerning the responses to the literacy skills in Tigrinya, no one assessed his/her skills to be below average skills. The majority marked have beyond an average ability while a few evaluated to have an average writing and reading skills. Thus, the data figures out that Tigrinya have been deep embedded among the Saho speakers in Dowhan and among the educated portion of the community in particular. Regarding such skills in the mother-tongue, the table suggests that majority of the respondents were not able to write and read in it. A few informants

who claimed to have an average skill and beyond in writing and reading Saho might have acquired the new orthography already.

As has been indicated above, this seems obvious for the language had been only a spoken language until recently. Even then there exists only a book on which Saho is being written along with Tigrinya by Berhe entitled *Oral literature of the people of Irob* – in part to codify the language's orthography and in part to preserve the 'orphan' oral literature of the people (Brehe 2001 EC). Be that as it may, the orthography of Saho has been coined based on Ethiopic writing system, particularly, with a few modifications on Tigrinya's orthography to accommodate some unique features of Saho. Since all the 101 educated were supposed to be familiar with the new orthography owing to their prior acquaintance with Tigrinya, it can be argued that majority of the respondents should have mastered and utilized it, at least, for various personal matters. But, as some interviewees explained, they did not seem to spend the unpretentious effort to learn the language's orthography for there was no material to read on the language and there was already Tigrinya to handle whatever affairs they wanted. Although it is difficult to generalize based on these interviewees, the quantitative reports on the reading and writing skills in Saho still correspond with the point that such feelings seem widespread. If this is so, then, the institutional support for the maintenance of Saho appears to face hardship. Besides, bilingualism without biliteracy has been stated to be a cause for language loss and its eventual doom (Weinreich 1968; Baker 1996; Downes 1998).

PART 2. Further Investigations: Interplay of social categories and language behaviors

Linguistic groups are not monolithic wholes. There is usually variation on language behaviors within particular community. The variations often draw a parallel with demographic (social) variables such as age/generation, sex/gender, place of birth, educational background etc. In line with this point, many scholars have warned that in investigating the state of LMLS of a given ethnolinguistic group, it is dangerous to attempt to generalize about the entire community based on socially/demographically undifferentiated reports (Weinreich, 1968; Appel and Muysken, 1987; Harmers and Blanc, 1989; Brenzinger, 1997; etc.). Subjects under study, as they recommended, should be categorized in accordance with the various social categories they belong to and the investigator should see if there is any dissimilarity of behaviors across the various social groupings.

The Saho speaking community under inquiry is unquestionably far from being homogenous. Thus, the above groundwork on the various language behaviors – language use, language attitudes and language proficiency – have been put forward only in the hope that they would provide a bird's eye view to the general trend of the sociolinguistic situation among the community. As a result, in the following sections, each of these sociolinguistic variables will be further examined vis-à-vis respondents' generation (age) and gender (sex) category. And whenever possible and/ or necessary, detail qualitative information will be presented to account for differences that would come out as result of the quantitative analysis.

Before rushing in to the main discussion, there are some general points which should be borne in mind, however. The first point is that the comparison of language choice (use) is carried out only based on respondents language use report in the family domain (particularly, language reported to be used with grandparents, parents, siblings, spouses and children) and in various situations (praying, counting, singing etc.). So, cases of language use in relation to different settings (school, market etc) and with other relatives and ethnic fellows (elders, friends, etc) are excluded. These realms of language use – the family and the situations/activities – are selected for they are supposed to be more private contexts in which use of the ethnic tongue is most importantly anticipated. In other words, the interference of the dominant language in such decisive, private spheres of the old language can be taken as instantly recognizable indicators of language shift. And, as we have already learned from the preliminary discussion above, there was an intrusion of Tigrinya in considerable degrees in such domains. So such analyses have been done in the hope that they would, in their cumulative result, help us determine social groups that are leading the shift process (or that are at *exposure to risk*); or, conversely, social groups whose contribution to the maintenance (intergenerational continuity) of Saho is immense.

Second, the attitudinal items have been designed to figure out both the superficial attitude (judgments/opinions) and deep seated motivations (justifications) of the target group. The responses (both the judgments as well as the motivations) have been scrutinized with regard to the considered social groupings. However, not all respondents could provide explanation for each item. So the categorization of the justifications has been accomplished based on those respondents, from each social category, who were able to provide some. Besides, the description of each item is made based on mainly the majority's tendency in response to each item. However, whenever there is a need to further compare and contrast within the secondary

tendency (scores that could be ranked in the 2nd or 3rd position) they would be described following each main description.

Once again, the comparison of language proficiency across the considered social groups is based only on the reports on the oral skills (speaking and understanding). This is done so for Saho had been an oral language until very recently: it has become a written language since, more or less, the last two years or less. As was explained above, the great majority of respondents have not yet been able to write and read in the language. To stay away from response bias, therefore, the comparisons of reports on such skills are not addressed.

Within each of these sections, the language behaviors are arranged as follows: first, comparison of language use in the family domain is undertaken, and it is followed by language use for various functions. Then, comparisons on language attitude and proficiency are carried out in their respective order. In accordance with this set up, in what follows the interplay of generation and language behaviors are presented.

3.6 Interplay of Generation and Language Behaviors

Generation has been stated to be very critical factor in determining state of LMLS of particular ethnolinguistic group (Fasold 1984; Appel and Muysken 1987; Fishman 1991, cited in Kamwangamalu 2003). In the present study, it has been painstakingly examined in relation to the various language behaviors that have been set out to gauge the state of LMLS.

3.6.1 Generation vs. Language Use in the Family Domain

Table 12 shows the result of the analysis of language(s) frequently used in the familial interaction based on respondents' generational category. The data by and large suggests that generation has an impact on speech behavior of respondents in the family domain. On the one hand, the data indicates that the degree of use of the ethnic tongue among the YG is considerably lesser when compared with that of the OG. On the other hand, it concomitantly points out that the degree of use of Tigrinya, both as an exclusive and variable language, is notably lesser among the OG than the YG. In the overall interactions, on the average (using the nearest tenth), 77%, 7% and 16% of respondents from the OG report to use, respectively, Saho, Tigrinya and both Saho and Tigrinya, as opposed to 49%, 18% and 33% of the YG .

Specifically speaking, generation appears to bring about a remarkable variation on respondents language choice with respect to both their inter- and intra-generational communication. Evidence for variation on inter-generational communication can be deduced

Table 12. Language use in the familial interaction by generation

Language most often used with	Responses															
	Saho				Tigrinya				Both				Total			
	YG		OG		YG		OG		YG		OG		YG		OG	
	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
Grandparents	106	79.1	81	91.0	6	4.5	1	1.1	22	16.4	7	7.9	134	100	89	100
Grandmother	55	80.9	41	91.1	3	4.4	1	2.2	10	14.7	3	6.7	68	100	45	100
Grandfather	51	77.3	40	90.9	3	4.5	-	-	12	18.2	4	9.1	66	100	44	100
Parents	79	50.0	78	83.0	27	17.1	5	5.3	52	32.9	11	11.7	158	100	94	100
Mother	42	53.2	40	85.1	11	13.9	2	4.3	26	32.9	5	10.6	79	100	47	100
Father	37	46.8	38	80.8	16	20.3	3	6.4	26	32.9	6	12.8	79	100	47	100
Siblings	55	37.2	67	73.6	33	22.3	9	9.9	60	40.5	15	16.5	148	100	91	100
Sister	30	39.5	33	71.7	15	19.7	4	8.7	31	40.8	9	19.6	76	100	46	100
Brother	25	34.7	34	75.6	18	25.0	5	11.1	29	40.3	6	13.3	72	100	45	100
Spouse	11	37.9	28	66.7	6	20.7	4	9.5	12	41.4	10	23.8	29	100	42	100
Children	5	21.7	21	53.8	8	34.8	6	15.4	10	43.5	12	30.8	23	100	39	100
Average use in %	49		77		17.9		7.2		33.1		15.8		100		100	

from the comparison of language reported to be used frequently with grandparents, parents and children. Of respondents from the OG, about 91%, 85% and 56% report the use of Saho with their grandparents, parents and children, respectively, while the corresponding percentages for the YG are about 83%, 49% and 22%. Both generations portray a decline on the use of the home language in cross-generational interaction (use of Saho is reported with greater degrees in speaking to elderly and lesser degrees in addressing to children). Yet, the level of recession is undeniably immense among the YG than the OG. This indicates that there is a tendency of inefficient transmission process of the ethnic language to the next generations and this is particularly so among the younger informants.

On the other hand, about 3%, 5% and 13% of the OG and 5%, 17% and 35% of the YG report exclusive use of Tigrinya with their grandparents, parents and children, respectively. This shows that the monolingual behavior in the homeward-bound tongue is relatively greater among subjects of the YG than the OG; and such differences are apparent in speaking to parents and, especially, children.

With regard to the bilingual behavior in Saho and Tigrinya, about 6%, 10% and 16% of the OG and 16%, 34% and 44% of the YG respondents claim to use respectively both languages with their grandparents, parents and children. This reveals that the variable use of Tigrinya, alongside the native language, tends to be stronger among the YG than the OG.

In the cases of intra-generational communication, language choice with siblings and spouses, there also appears noticeable language use variation between the generations. With siblings, nearly 74%, 10% and 16% of the OG, but 38%, 22% and 46% of the YG claim respectively use of Saho, Tigrinya and both languages. With spouse, almost 79%, 5% and 18% of the OG and 31%, 17% and 52% of the YG mark to use Saho, Tigrinya and both languages, respectively. Both cases of language use pattern in intra-generational communication clearly illustrate that Saho is regularly used within the OG than within the YG, whereas Tigrinya, in its variable and categorical form, is most often used within respondents of the YG than the OG.

Generally, the above discussions specify that there is language choice variation among Saho speaking community at Dowhan and this is differentially so by generation. Fasold (1984) point out that when use of the declining tongue is restricted to the older members of a community in comparison to their younger folks, it can be taken as a symptom for an ongoing language shift. In consonance with this view point, the present study suggests that older people use Saho for most part of their inter- and intra-generational communication. The young

generation, on the other hand, exhibits a remarkable bilingual behavior (switching between Saho and Tigrinya) in such cases; and the monolingual behavior in Tigrinya has come to be seen in a considerable manner among younger people when it is compared with that of the older ones. More decisively though, when compared with the exclusive use of Saho, young parents appear to prefer exclusive Tigrinya in addressing their children than their old counterparts whose preference appears to be the reverse. Thus, the sociolinguistic situation among the Irob community at Dowhan seems unstable and in line with Fishman's (1991), as cited in Kamwangamalu (2003), notion of language shift, it appears to signify an ongoing process of shift in language use pattern.

3.6.2 Generation vs. Language Use for Various Functions

As has been discussed above, use of Saho tended to be widespread when people dream and getting angry while its recessive use was observed in cases of praying, counting and singing. In the current section, respondents' language choice pattern in the considered cases has been analyzed vis-à-vis their generational categories. The data is presented in table 13.

Consistently with language use pattern in the familial interaction, the data for language choice for various functions shows that use the ethnic tongue is confined to the OG whereas informants of the YG incline to use Tigrinya. The overall comparison of language choice depicts that on average about 45%, 23% and 32% of the OG and 25%, 46% and 29% of the YG name to use respectively Saho, Tigrinya and both languages.

Relatively speaking, language behavior of both generations demonstrate a fairly similar pattern in cases of *praying* (both show greater use of exclusive Tigrinya) and *angry* (where use of the ethnic language is relatively greater for both groups) as well as *dreaming* (both groups report use of Saho, although such a behavior is by far stronger among the OG than the YG). Nonetheless, there appears remarkable variation on language choice between the generations in cases of *counting* and *singing*: majority of respondents from OG claim monolingual behavior in their native language while their young counterparts claim exclusive Tigrinya in such cases.

Table 13. Language use in various functions by generation

Language most often used when/during	Responses															
	Saho				Tigrinya				Both				Total			
	YG		OG		YG		OG		YG		OG		YG		OG	
	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
<i>Praying</i>	15	19.0	10	21.3	38	48.1	21	44.7	26	32.9	16	34.0	79	100	47	100
<i>Counting</i>	8	10.1	21	44.7	43	54.4	8	17.0	28	35.4	18	38.3	79	100	47	100
<i>Dreaming</i>	29	36.7	32	68.1	27	34.2	3	6.4	23	29.1	12	25.5	79	100	47	100
<i>Singing</i>	12	15.2	20	42.6	51	64.6	12	25.5	16	20.3	15	31.9	79	100	47	100
<i>Angry</i>	35	44.3	23	48.9	21	26.6	10	21.3	23	29.1	14	29.8	79	100	47	100
Average use in %	25.1		45.1		45.6		23		29.4		31.9		100		100	

All in all, the above discussion on language choice for various functions tends to support the result of language use pattern in familial interaction by generation. It consistently reveals that the older people have maintained their native language for most functions while their younger counterparts have shown a shift from monolingual behavior in Saho to monolingual behavior in Tigrinya. Such variations in language choices clearly disclose the unstable nature of bilingualism at the individual level which may, in its cumulative effect, exert its pressure in one or another way on the survival of Saho.

3.6.3 Generation vs. Attitudes toward Saho and Tigrinya

As can be seen from table 14(a), both generation appears to move in the same directions as regards the response to item 1, i.e., for 100% of the OG and for a great majority of the YG Saho seem to be a useful language to speak. However, as regards the justifications for its importance, generation appears to bring about some noticeable variations between the two categories. Majority of respondents from the YG associated the importance of speaking Saho with the communication needs rather than its symbolic value for Irobs' identity. On the other hand, majority of the OG primarily linked its importance for ethnic or/and cultural identification. Moreover, all of the respondents who saw no importance in speaking Saho belong to the YG. They gave remarks such as, "it is useless/does not have currency in and outside the homeland", "it does not help for life" and the like.

With regards to item 2, both generations show a 100 % positive attitude toward speaking Tigrinya. In their explanations, subjects of both the YG and the OG expressed strong tendency of instrumental motivations.

In the interviews participants were asked which language (from Saho and Tigrinya) was more useful to speak. In their responses, younger interviewees inclined favorably towards Tigrinya in preference to Saho with instrumental explanations. This can be better understood from 19-years-old interviewee who made an interesting explanation on why he preferred Tigrinya to Saho: "I know speaking Saho does not bring any harm on me, but it does not take me any where beyond communicating with Irobs ... but Tigrinya is a language you need to speak so that you would have opportunities in life. So speaking it [Saho] does not help in life career as Tigrinya does". According to Downes (1998) "social meaning" of a language – attitudes provoked or denoted by a language which is derived from either the way its speakers are or the contexts it is used – is a crucial factor for LMLS. In view of that, the above explanation does not only reveal strong instrumental attitude young Irobs hold towards Tigrinya

(or the positive social meaning encoded to Tigrinya), but also the negative social meaning which has been coded on the native tongue, which may subsequently accelerate the shift process among the YG.

On the other hand, older interviewees responded favorably for both Saho and Tigrinya, saying it was hard for them to prefer one language from the other. Only few of them preferred Saho for its symbolic function. Contrary to the preference of the younger interviewees, however, no single older interviewee chose exclusive Tigrinya without regard for Saho.

The comments of older speakers of Saho further suggest one interesting point, i.e., the people's sensitivity or enthusiasm towards linguistic capabilities. This can be better understood from the comments of some interviewees who have accompanied their remarks with, what they have called, the people's saying ; that is "A person is as worth as the languages s/he speaks"! (Speaking, for instance, ten languages make you as worth as ten persons.) As sayings are products or mirror images of the dynamics of the community to which they belong, they could direct us to the norm which governs how people should view things around them and how should they behave towards them. In line with this, the aforementioned saying can be taken as a 'signpost' for the community's predisposition for linguistic acculturation: it seems normal and desired behavior. Perhaps, such a social consciousness might have contributed a great deal for the widespread bilingualism observed among the community today. Nevertheless, it may bring about asymmetrical bilingualism as the social, economic, psychological connotations (social meanings) attached with the languages further instigates partiality rather than equality, which eventually leads to the downturn of the indigenous language.

With respect to item 3, there appears a sharp contrast in the responses of the YG and OG. In contrast to the majority of respondents from the OG (61.7%), by the majority of the YG (69.6%) speaking Saho is not felt as necessary cultural constituent to symbolize Irob's identity. In other words, the case with the YG, and in fact to a considerable proportion of the OG (34%), clearly reveals the possibility of what Fishman (1991) calls "Xmen-via-Yish", as quoted by Harlow (2005: 134). That is, it is possible for them to be ethnically Irob through language(s) other than Saho. As they rationalized it, the ancestral lineage or being born from Irob parents was proposed as a pertinent component to be ethnic Irob than speaking Saho. (This appears to be consistent with the reaction of young respondents with respect to item1: Saho has been seen nothing more than a means of communication with their ethnic fellow.) This implies that for the younger members of the community loss of the language may not correspond with loss of ethnic identity. However, it is generally believed that a language will have a better chance of survival when it is

Items 1-4	Responses															
	Yes				No				Do not know				Total			
	YG		OG		YG		OG		YG		OG		YG		OG	
	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
<i>Is it important for you to speak Saho?(1)</i>	69	87.3	47	100	8	10.1	-	-	2	2.5	-	-	79	100	47	100
<i>Is it important for you to speak Tigrinya?(2)</i>	79	100	47	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	79	100	47	100
<i>One can identify him/herself as an ethnic Irob without speaking Saho?(3)</i>	55	69.6	16	34.0	23	29.1	29	61.7	1	1.3	2	4.3	79	100	47	100
<i>Tigrinya is a more expressive language than Saho.(4)</i>	48	60.8	9	19.1	25	31.6	25	53.2	6	7.6	13	27.7	79	100	47	100

Table 14(a). Attitudes toward Saho and Tigrinya by generation

Items 5-7	Responses															
	Saho				Tigrinya				Both				Total			
	YG		OG		YG		OG		YG		OG		YG		OG	
	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
<i>Which language better serves for life?(5)</i>	9	11.5	8	17.0	59	74.8	14	29.8	11	13.9	25	53.2	79	100	47	100
<i>Which language do you want to speak most?(6)</i>	40	50.6	27	57.4	19	24.1	-	-	20	25.3	20	42.6	79	100	47	100
<i>Which language do you wish your children to speak?(7)</i>	9	11.4	2	4.3	28	35.4	5	10.6	42	53.2	40	85.1	79	100	47	100

Table 14(b). Attitudes toward Saho and Tigrinya by generation

deemed essential cultural index or highly valued for its symbolic function (Holmes 1992; Smolicz 1992; Downes 1998). So, such a psychological breakdown between the YG and OG (on the value of the traditional language) suggests the existence of favorable environment for language shift.

In response to item 4, majority of the YG feel that Tigrinya has expressive power over Saho, while majority of the OG do not believe so. More interestingly, the justifications provided by these young respondents were not only based on social evaluation, as some of them associated Saho's expressive power with its "inability" to be school/administration/ media medium etc.; but they were also derived from linguistic criteria/rationale. These include, "it has lots of words from Tigrinya/ it is dependent on Tigrinya" and the like. Such feelings indicate then the double stigma that Saho has faced from its younger speakers.

As regards items 5, a great majority of the YG sees Tigrinya as very important language (or language better serves for life), which is still consistent with their behavior observed in response to item 2. The OG, on the other hand, feel both Saho and Tigrinya as important tongues. The difference of preference of languages seems to be emanated from the way the two generations perceived the meaning of "life". This can be inferred from their respective justifications. 100% of informants from the YG who names Tigrinya in preference to Saho supplemented their choice with strong instrumentally oriented explanations. These include, "Tigrinya is language of education/administration/ media"; "Tigrinya is the regional official language"; "you can work/live/ trade wherever you wish [within Tigray regional state] as long as you have the ability to speak in Tigrinya" and the like.

The majority of informants from the OG who voice for both languages, on the other hand, justified the significance of Saho in their lives in connection with its cultural/symbolic/ affective functions, and Tigrinya in connection with its socio-economic virtues. Their actual remarks include, "Saho is my language/identity/ means of expressing my culture /custom/ history etc." and "Tigrinya is language of administration/legal system/ education"; "it helps you to get in touch with the majority of people in the region" and the like.

As Holmes (1992:345-346) explained people do not show certain behavior towards language in a vacuum. Rather the attitudes are derived from contexts and functions with which the language is associated. In accordance with this view point and the justifications pointed out above, the following explanation can be followed with regard to the possible factor underlining the generational variation on language behavior. For the young, majority, the notion of life, or its betterment seems to find it's parallel with socio-economic advantages (it has been perceived in

the context of material gain). Accordingly, they are inclined favorably towards Tigrinya – the language associated with such functions. On the other hand, for the older Irobs the meaning of life seems to invoke both the economic and cultural component; hence, they chose both Saho and Tigrinya in accordance with the languages' functions in their "lives". In sum, the above discussion suggests the existence of socio-psychological *dislocation*, to use Fishman's (1985) technical term, between the generations with respect to the basics or pillars of life, which has been noted ultimately to bring about difference on language behavior.

As regards the language they want to speak most (item 6), majority of respondents from both generations prefer Saho to Tigrinya however it has been differently rationalized. The majority of the OG inclined towards Saho for its symbolic and affective reasons. Their explanations include, "it is my language"; "it is my ancestors language"; "to develop the language" etc. Still a few others from this category associated its importance with communicative need. In contrast, only a few young informants attached its significance with cultural identification while the remaining majority linked their choice with the communication need it could satisfy. These include, "to communicate with Irobs"; "I live among Irobs/ in Irobland" etc. Still, considerable proportion, about a quarter, of the YG names Tigrinya as language they want to speak most with instrumental justifications. In contrast, no one from the OG inclines towards monolingual Tigrinya in such a case.

Concerning language respondents wish their offspring to speak, an overwhelming majority of the OG and relatively a majority of the YG respondents favorably incline towards both languages. From these, the majority of the OG supplemented their claim with comments associated with preservation of the native language, as it has been so for generations, and the instrumental value of Tigrinya. At times, they also attached a communication motive with both languages. However, relatively the dominant majority of the YG wish their children to speak Saho for its role in intraethnic communication (with some of them even stressed its importance as long as their children dwell in Irobland). The wish for Tigrinya was commonly motivated by its interethnic communication need and instrumental function. Besides, significant proportion of the YG (as opposed to the OG) shows a positive attitude towards exclusive Tigrinya in such a case. Most astonishingly, however, a few respondents from this group of young speakers considered their language (Saho) as "useless" and even expressed it as "crippled" language that could "do nothing"; and accordingly chose Tigrinya at the expense of their "own" language.

Generally, the above discussion demonstrates noticeable linguistic and cultural conflicts between the generations. As has been tried to illustrate in the lengthy discussion, particularly in

response to item 3&5, alternation in values and outlook between the YG and the OG appears to be responsible for such conflicts.

As regards the attitudes toward Tigrinya, the great majority of both older and younger people hold a positive attitude with predominantly instrumental motivations. Nonetheless, there appear remarkable differences, both in the degree of inclination and motivations, between the generations with respect to attitudes towards the heritage language. Majority of respondents from the OG than the YG exhibits a positive attitude towards Saho; and reveal, for the most part, affective, symbolic and cultural affinities in association with it. On the other hand, young people show prevalently and consistently pragmatic attitudes toward Saho; they see Saho as a communication tool rather than an important ethnic or/and cultural symbol. Such pragmatic attitude towards the native/ethnic tongue was also discovered by Bentahila and Davies (1992) among young Moroccan Berbers and Moroccan Jewish who had been reported to undergo mother-tongue shift. They described the speakers' perception of their respective language as "tools to be maintained just as long as they are needed" (p. 210). In fact, for the majority of young people, speaking Saho do not seem a necessary elements to be identified as ethnic Irob. In parallel with such tendencies, significance proportion of them (about 35%) preferred to Tigrinya as a language they wished their children to speak. More prominently, Saho has been evaluated or perceived as inferior to Tigrinya by the young majority (item 4). According to Fasold (1984) when the old language is seen as inferior to the new one, it is sign of last stage of language shift.

Young generation is in general responsible for the intergenerational continuity of any cultural traits of an ethnolinguistic group as a whole and its linguistic tradition specifically. In the current study, the small tendency for young Irobs in Dowhan to show a positive attitude (with more of cultural and/or symbolic attachments rather than pragmatic perceptions, as they do) towards Saho than their older counterparts do designate the presence of favorable environment for negative intergenerational continuity of Saho (assuming that attitudes minority groups, especially the young segment, hold towards their language and the other language affects the status-quo). Therefore, it can be taken as a good sign for a possible shift towards Tigrinya.

3.6.4 Generation vs. Language Proficiency

Wolfram (2002:766) indicates that in gradual shift, "there is often a continuum of language proficiency that correlated with different generations of speakers". Correspondingly, findings of recent studies on language shift have confirmed this hypothesis to be sound (e.g. Zelealem

2000; Detaramani and Lock 2003; Sun 2005). In addition, in unstable contact situation, children of minority language speaking groups have been stated to undergo loss of competence in their mother-tongue, which may be attributed to various social factors (Appel and Muysken 1987; Baker 1996). Some studies also suggest such inclinations are more likely than not (Dorian 1981, as cited in Fasold 1984; Schaufeli 1992).

In line with these points, an attempt has been made to incorporate three levels of language proficiency analyses in relation to the age factor. First, the relationship between respondents' generational category and their claimed proficiencies in the two languages – Saho and Tigrinya – is presented and compared. This is then followed by comparison of proficiency in the home language across four small age-categories. Following this, result of the vocabulary test which has been administered to young Irobs will be presented. Having accomplished these three levels of proficiency analysis, possible explanations for variation in language proficiency between generations are hypothesized.

3.6.4.1 Relationship between Generation and Proficiencies in Saho and Tigrinya

Table 15 compares the two generations self assessment of proficiencies in Saho and Tigrinya. As can be read from the table, the YG seems to exhibit a decline on oral competencies on the home language, while the case with the OG shows a significant proportion of retention. In general (considering the reports of claimed proficiencies in speaking and understanding Saho together), 100% of the OG subjects claim their proficiency to be beyond an average – *very good* or *good*. The corresponding percentages for claiming likewise appear to decline in the case of the YG to nearly 75%.

Separately treating the proportion for citing the *very good* and *good* proficiency levels presents remarkable differences between the two generations. Out of 47 respondents from the OG, 43 (91.5%) and 45 (95.7%) claimed to have a *very good* skills in speaking and understanding Saho, respectively, (the remaining 4 (8.5%) and 2 (4.3%) of them claimed respectively to have *good* skills). On the other hand, of the 79 respondents from the YG, 40 (50.5%) and 42 (53.2%) cited to have *very good* skills in speaking and understanding, respectively; 16 (20.3%) and 20 (25.3%) reported to have *good* speaking and understanding skills. This indicates that the YG are becoming less quite well speakers and understanders of Saho when compared with that of the OG.

On the other dimension, the table shows that the great majority of the YG than the OG have a level beyond average in the oral skills in Tigrinya; the reported average oral competencies in

Table 15. Proficiency in Saho and Tigrinya by generation

Skills	Saho												Tigrinya											
	YG						OG						YG						OG					
	VG/G		F		P		VG/G		F		P		VG/G		F		P		VG/G		F		P	
	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
<i>Speaking</i>	56	70.9	23	29.1	-	-	47	100	-	-	-	-	72	91.1	7	8.9	-	-	29	61.7	18	38.3	-	-
<i>Understanding</i>	62	78.5	17	21.5	-	-	47	100	-	-	-	-	74	93.7	5	6.3	-	-	29	61.7	16	34.0	2	4.3

Tigrinya are in large part noticeable among the OG than the YG. Two informants from the OG claim to be *poor* in understanding Tigrinya. No one from the YG, however, claim to have *poor* oral skills in Tigrinya; and only small proportion of them indicated to have *fair* proficiencies. This suggests that the YG than the OG are more proficient in Tigrinya.

3.6.4.2 Comparison of Proficiency in Saho across Four Age groups

Under this sub-section a further comparison has been made to identify the *confident* speakers /understanders of Saho by age-group. The groupings are based on the age division set in the demographic section. These are, the youth (13-24), the young adult (25-39), the middle aged (40-59) and the elderly (60 and above). As indicated above, the purpose of such a comparison is to determine whether there is variation on the proportion of claimed *fluent/confident* speakers/understanders of Saho across these age-groups. This may in turn help us see whether there appears proficiency continuum (or not) across the various age-groups vis-à-vis the traditional tongue and thereby to identify a symptom for language decline. In accordance with this, the comparison has been based only on the reports of respondents from each category who self-assessed to have “very good” oral competences in the language (assuming that this label marks the most proficient or confident informants).

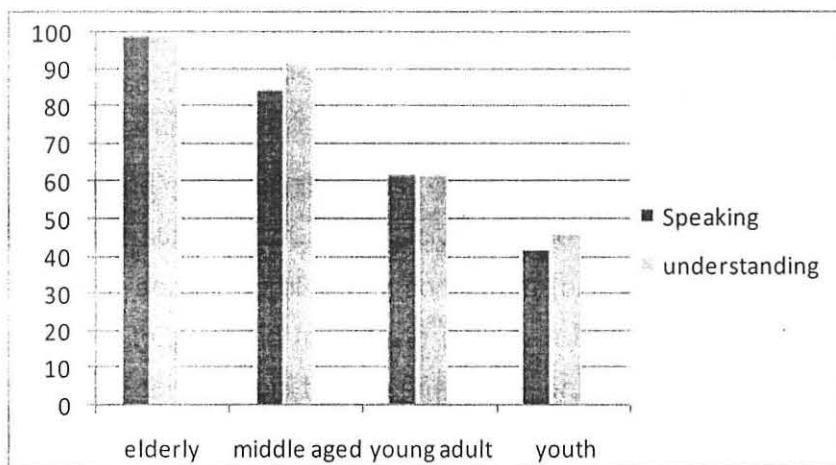


Figure 2. Comparison of claimed fluent speakers/understanders of Saho by age-group

As illustrated in figure 2, there appears a clear case of a declining trend on the claims to be fluent speakers/understanders of Saho when we go down from the elderly to the youth. In both cases, the highest proportion of claims for speaking and understanding Saho confidently are found among the elderly, while the smallest proportion is found among the Youth. When the

comparative differences across the age-groups are considered, first we note the presence of slight proportional decline between the elderly and the middle aged category. As we further contrast the decline with the other two younger clusters, there appears a considerable collapse of proportion in the fluent speakers/understanders of the language. This implies then that the decline on the confident speakers/understanders of Saho has started a few decades ago and nowadays such a trend seems to be rapid. This is further reinforced in the following section, which deals with the discussion of the vocabulary test result.

3.6.4.3 Results of the Vocabulary Test

The aim of this section of the research is to investigate whether there is any possible objective symptom for language loss among the young generation. It deals specifically with the analysis of lexical competence of young speakers of Saho in their mother-tongue. In doing so, it presents various processes of lexical loss and compensating strategies for the lexical gap. Also, it tries to establish possible social correlates of lexical loss in particular and language loss in general.

The considered sociolinguistic variables are sex, parents' socio-economic status (occupation and education background) and place of residence. All examinees have acquired Saho as a first language, born in endogamy family and have the same educational background.

As stated in the methodology section, chapter one, the test included 280 items of the basic vocabulary and the results were checked against the official Saho-Tigrinya word list prepared by SPCIK as well as the data obtained from some competent speakers.

3.6.4.3.1 Results

Before the presentation of the main part, there are some preliminary points to be made concerning the overall condition of mother-tongue proficiency among the Irob community in Dowhan. Wolfram (2002) suggests that lexical loss is one aspect of language loss that both linguists and *speakers* of the language can comment on. Also, Fasold (1984) suggests that one possible sign for an ongoing language shift is when the community in question has a feeling that the variety they spoke is inferior to another variety spoken by other segments of the same linguistic group. Accordingly, some important members of the community under study, for example, head of SPCIK, vice-chairperson of the district's council and some elders used to direct me that original words of Saho (by implication, more proficient speakers of the language) are found in the speeches among rural communities than urban dwellers. They straightforwardly confessed that the variety of Saho spoken in urban areas had been influenced by Tigrinya, and

they felt that the condition with the young generation was worse. As has been noted in other studies, such as Gal (1971) and Dorian (1981), as both cited in Fasold (1984), and Zelealem (2000), such comments were commonplace suggestions in their respective communities that had undergone language shift. In the current study, such comments would give us some impression to the state of language loss/shift among the target community and among younger members in particular.

Furthermore, in declining languages, as Zelealem (2000: 104) indicates, the lexicon has been reported to be the first component to be affected. Likewise, Appel and Muysken (1987) point out that among the members declining language communities, children are often reported to have a word-finding problem in their mother-tongue, which is in turn accompanied by introducing foreign elements to the primary system. By the same token, during the administration of the test, most of the examinees used to tell me that they had known some words but could not remember it now. Once again, at times, after giving the correct Saho equivalent for some words, they gave additional words that had been borrowed from Tigrinya, which were synonymous to the test items. (This will be addressed with illustrative examples in the following sub-sections.) These indicate thus the presence of lack of confidence in the competence in the mother-tongue among the young Saho speakers. Bearing these remarks in mind, let us see the result of the vocabulary test and its implications.

Examinees' Rank	Age	Sex	Occupation of parents'		Educational status of parents'		Place of residence		Lexical Retention		Lexical Loss	
			Father	Mother	Father	Mother	Urban	Rural	Fr	%	Fr	%
1 st	15	Female	FR	FR	IL	IL		√	263	93.9	17	6.1
2 nd	13	Male	FR	FR	LWE	IL		√	259	92.5	21	7.5
3 rd	15	Female	FR	--	IL	--	√		252	90.0	28	10.0
4 th	13	Female	GE	JL	BE	LWE	√		252	90.0	28	10.0
4 th	14	Female	FR	FR	IL	IL		√	235	83.9	45	16.1
5 th	14	Male	--	MR	--	LWE	√		233	83.2	47	16.8
6 th	15	Male	GE	MR	BE	LWE	√		219	78.2	61	21.8
7 th	13	Female	GE	GE	BE	LWE	√		219	78.2	61	21.8
7 th	15	Female	MR	MR	LWE	IL	√		185	66.1	95	33.9
8 th	14	Male	GE	GE	BE	BE	√		174	62.1	106	37.9
9 th	14	Male	GE	JL	LWE	IL	√		157	56.1	123	43.9

Table 16. Degree of lexical retention and loss of examinees

As can be understood from table 16, there is a general tendency of lexical loss among the young generation. No one scored 100% retention of lexical competence in his or her native tongue. Moreover, the loss seems to find its parallel with the socio-linguistic profile of the examinees: sex, their parents socio-economic background as well as place of residence. Accordingly, females exhibit better lexical competence than their male counterparts. Only one male examinee belongs to the first five best scorers. Moreover, examinees' parents' occupational and educational backgrounds appear to associate with the matter in question. Children whose parents are farmers show better competence than those who belonged to merchants or/and government employees. In terms of the educational status of examinees' parents, those who have illiterate parents are more competent than those who have less well educated parents; and those who have less well educated parents are more competent than those who have better educated parents. Furthermore, rural children appear to show better retention than their urban counterparts.

3.6.4.3.2 Modes of Lexical Loss

Detail examination of the data in hand reveals different ways of lexical attrition experience among the target group. Generally, the kinds of loss identified are not unique to this community. They have been rather identified among other communities who had had similar sociolinguistic experiences. The most prevalent modes of language loss discovered in the current research are (a) not knowing (probably not acquired) some native lexical items at all, (b) problem of identifying semantically related words (semantic collapse), (c) adopting borrowed Tigrinya items that are used as synonymy alongside native items and forgetting the natives, and, contrary to this, (d) adding Tigrinya items, which are not yet integrated in to Saho, as synonymy to native items. In what follows, each of these experiences will be described with some illustrative examples.

(a) *Some native lexical items are lost or not acquired all together*

In the previous studies, it has been confirmed that words with low frequency may not have been acquired at all or are more likely to have been forgotten than high frequency words (Schaufeli 1992: 118). On the other hand, Dorian's (1981) study among speakers of a variety of Gaelic in East Sutherland, suggests that high frequency words could also be unstable in these regards (as cited in Zelealem 2000: 104). The present study demonstrates that most of the lost items

among the target group were low frequency words though few can be regarded as high frequency.

Example 1. The following are Saho lexical items that *all* examinees missed

aglə	“meeting”	ʒanada/ʒanado	“handsome/beautiful”
mablo	“opinion”	li:so	“engagement”
redato	“leader”	ʒufihewinta	“stress/anxiety”
reda	“leadership”	diba	“war”
sera	“team”	wagiye	“he, wished”
deso:/dawod	“preservation”	yəyəʒə	“he, disclosed”
ʒigida	“age”	yəmondəʒə	“he, sank”
ħato	“aid”		

(b) Some native items are replaced by another semantically related words, but different meanings.

Such manner of loss is termed in the literature as semantic collapse (e.g. Zelealem 2000).

Example 2:

dəmħa	“cold”	instead of	galʒo	“frost”
wayə	“he, cried”	instead of	dərə	“he, screamed”
iko	“tooth”	instead of	ʒaqa	“molar tooth”
giʒa	“quarrel”	instead of	djiba	“war”

(c) Borrowed words that are in variable use with native words are retained or acquired.

When there are native words and borrowed Tigrinya words that are in variable use in Saho's lexical inventory, the native words were most often forgotten (or possibly not acquired) while the incorporated items were retained.

Example 3:

Native	Borrowed	Tigrinya	Gloss
a:qa	ingidʒa	?ingidʒa	“shoulder”
ʒadilaw	sigam	sīgəm	“barley”
didub	meda:	mayda	“plain”
do:ro	maras'a	mərəs'a	“election”

In his longitudinal language loss study of the Anong language, Sun (2005) observed that from native words recorded at time one (t1), some of them had been replaced totally by

borrowed items at t2 (after three decades); and borrowed items had been used as variable items along with some other indigenous. In the current study, as the items in example 3 implied, such variable uses of borrowed elements seem unstable – representing transitional stages until the total substitution of Saho words by Tigrinya has been accomplished.

(d) At times, the native items are accompanied by another synonym of the Tigrinya test item.

Example 4:

Native items	Tigrinya test items	Synonym	Gloss
agiro	gīgna	təbaʔ	"brave"
ʕaraḥ	məngədi	t'irgiʔa	"road"

3.6.4.3.3 Compensating Strategies for Lexical Gap in Mother-tongue

Based on Faerch and Kasper's (1983) model of second language (L2) learners' mechanisms for filling lexical gaps, Schaufeli (1992: 119) proposes two basic strategies that may also be utilized by bilinguals who have to fill up lexical gap in their first language (L1). They are generally *L1-* and *L2-based* strategies (or *primary* and *secondary accommodation*, as some scholars refer to them (e.g. Casagrande 1954/5, cited in Appel and Muysken 1987:167)). The L1-based strategies, use of other native words or expressions, comprise (a) *generalization* (use of superordinate terms instead of specific terms), (b) *substitution* (replacing words by other semantically related words), (c) *paraphrase* (description, exemplification), and (d) *word-coinage*. The L2-based strategies, use of foreign words or expressions, include (a) borrowing – adoption of L2 lexical items colored in the phonological and morphological patterns of the native tongue or direct accommodation, and (b) loan translation/shift – literal translation of L2 items into L1. The aforementioned L1 and L2 strategies are most anticipated in studies that deal with L1 vocabulary test results rather than spontaneous speech data (ibid).

In line with Schaufeli's proposal, the current study discloses that both strategies, L1- and L2-based, were apparent mechanisms that examinees used to rely on in filling the lexical gap they had in their mother-tongue.

a) L1-based strategies

From the L1-based strategies discussed, generalization and substitution have been identified as the most shared strategies across the Irob youngsters under discussion. Also, one child

demonstrated, though rarely, a case of paraphrasing of some item. Most of the participants either gave a more general native word instead of a specific word or substituted some native words by another, usually semantically related, native word. In this regard some of the most frequent items were the following:

Example5: Cases of generalization

- a. instead of the noun /ʕaɖa/ "molar tooth", nine examinees gave the general term /iko/ "tooth"
- b. instead of the adjective /ʕanada/ʕanado/ "handsome/beautiful", all examinees gave the term /məʕə/ the general word used to designate "goodness"
- c. instead of the adjective /galʕo/ "frost", seven examinees gave /dəmħa/ "cold"

Example 6: Cases of substitution

- a. Nine examinees substituted the noun /giʕa/ "quarrel" for /diba/ "war"
- b. Six examinees substituted the verb /wayə/ "he, cried" for /dərə/ "he, screamed"
- c. Five examinees substituted the adjective /ʕumbi/ "all" for /migyə/ "full"
- d. Five examinees substituted the verb /sayə/ "he, stepped in" for /yəmondəʕə/ "he, sank"

As a leading language contact student points out, one of the ways through which lexical interference can occur is *semantic extension*, extending the meaning of a native word in the model of a foreign word (Weinreich 1968). He writes, "If two languages have semantemes, or units of content, which are partly similar, the interference consists in the identification and adjustment of the semantemes to fuller congruence" (p. 48). Accordingly, example 5b above seems to represent a case of semantic extension. In Tigrinya, the semanteme designated by the adjective /s'ibux'/ holds the concept of "goodness" of the referent, concrete or abstract. Similarly, in Saho, the semanteme represented by the adjective /məʕə/ comprises the concept of "goodness" of the referent, concrete or abstract. However, the Tigrinya expression is used to modify a person's "beauty", but not kindness of a person. On the contrary, the Saho expression is used to designate "kindness" of a person, but not its beauty, which is represented by the specific term [ʕanada/ʕanado]. As a result, through the interference of the Tigrinya word s'ibux', məʕə might have been semantically extended to modify a person's beauty too.

Example 7: *A case of paraphrasing*: instead of giving the native word for “opinion”, which is [mablo], one examinee described it as follows:

ħa:sab yoħyənmo
 idea to-give
 “to give an idea”

a) L2-based strategies

The examinees also relied on a secondary accommodation too. They included negative transference as well as loan shift. Out right transference of words from their second language, Tigrinya, modified as well as direct, was the most common L2-based mechanism that characterizes all the examinees. It was used most frequently when they did not know the native equivalent item for the given Tigrinya item and less frequently when they were confused to identify a native word from a Tigrinya word.

Example 8:

Borrowed items	Native items
akaba	agle “meeting”
riŋito	mablo “opinion”
marahni	redato “leader”
ganta	sera “team”
ŋidmə	ŋigida “age”
ŋik’ba	deso:/dawod “preservation”
č’ink’i	ŋufihewinta “stress/anxiety”
hagez	ħato “aid”

Finally, one more strategy that has not been included in Schafuile hypotheses above, but observed, though less apparently, among Irob teenagers is what is being referred to in the literature as *loan blend*, a word coinage method via blending a native word with a foreign word. This can be better understood from the two examples below.

Example 9: *the bold items are Tigrinya items*

- a. mangom **ħizbe** for hiyaw “people”
 many people
 “people”
- b. **ŋidmə** kə ħiyawto for ŋigida “age”
 age poss. human-sg
 “human’s age”

This method cannot simply be grouped under L1 or L2 strategies for it involves both systems.

As a whole, the result of the vocabulary test tends to support somehow the result of the self-assessment proficiency data analysis. Both suggest that younger people are becoming less

competent in the traditional language. The remaining agenda is thus what possible factors would be put forward to account for the observed proficiency variation between the generations and the rapid loss noticed among the youth. The next section hypothesizes some explanations for these.

3.6.4.4 Possible Explanations for Proficiency Variation between the Generations

According to Rubin (1968:350) description of the relationship between social categories and bilinguals' language acquisition and proficiency in the languages concerned should follow by the consideration of social conditions. These include "under what condition each language learned; are the conditions formal or informal, forced or voluntary; and is exposure to either language frequent". She also adds, "the age of acquisition has a considerable part to play in the degree of proficiency in, and probably with the attitude which people have toward, each language" (p.354).

In consonance with Rubin's suggestions, the explanation for the difference appears to draw a parallel, in general, with social and psychological factors. Although both generations have acquired Saho by the normal process of intergenerational transference via their parents, there appear important differences between the two groups on reinforcing and deterring conditions for its successful acquisition, which may in turn affect the degree of proficiency in the language.

Unlike the period of the YG, in early periods of the OG (in their childhood or adolescence) Saho was dominantly used in almost every domains and functions; they grew up showing dominant monolingual behavior in Saho. Of course, Tigrinya was spoken and understood by most of them. But, as has been indicated above, it had been mainly employed for interethnic communication. Besides, unlike today, there were a few Tigreans who permanently inhabit in the Dowhan (and it was so mainly for interethnic marriage reason). Furthermore, the spread of modern infrastructures such as education, electricity, improved road-networks to/from the Tigrinya speaking neighbors and the like were not widespread, which imply that older people had limited exposure to Tigrinya for most of their previous lives. Moreover, since language attitudes are associated with their socio-economic roles in a society and exposure to them, it is seldom possible that young Irobs 5 or 6 decades ago or so and young Irobs today would hold the same attitude toward the languages. This could have an effect on the language learning process of the two generations. Such social as well as psychological conditions may have created opportunities for the OG to learn the home language better than Tigrinya; that is, the acquisition of Saho was not exclusively reinforced by the common parent to children interaction,

but they learned it for they had frequent exposures to it at crucial stages of their lives in their surroundings.

Unlike the OG, the YG, on the other hand, has had restricted exposure to Saho while they have had continuous and formally established contact with Tigrinya. Studies confirm that when children of minority tongues are exposed to a dominant tongue at their early age, loss in the minority language is more likely than not (Baker 1996). Likewise, young Irobs have started to be bilingual in Tigrinya in their early childhood, if not at their infancy (as some young informants maintained both language as their first languages and, in fact, I came across no children even below five years age who could not speak or/and understand Tigrinya during my brief stay at Dowhan). Besides, unlike Saho, they learn Tigrinya both formally – via schools as a subject and medium of instruction – and informally from both their parents (as majority of parents claimed to pass both language to their children, cf. the dissuasion on language use pattern) and from their surroundings (for there are considerable number of Tigrinya speaking community who permanently settle recently as government employees and in search of self-employment). The presence of Tigreans with their children and relatives fosters particularly peer to peer influence in learning Tigrinya, in areas such as the play ground. (Many of Irob teenagers with whom I had an informal dialogue complained that their Tigrean friends could not speak Saho and that was why they switch to Tigrinya whenever they happened to play with them.)

According to Weinreich (1968) one of the measures for language dominance of bilinguals is the mode of use or manner of learning in either language. If one of the two languages is learned or used only orally and the other language both orally and visually (via reading and writing), the latter will be dominant than the former. Accordingly, the YG uses and learns Saho only orally, while they do so with Tigrinya both orally and visually. Though the recent graphitization and introduction of Saho as a school subject may somehow improve the situation in the generations to come, the contexts for the current, YG had only been in favor of being dominant in Tigrinya. Hence, it can be taken as an account for the greater proficiency they have in Tigrinya when compared with that of the heritage language.

More importantly, Tigrinya has become a language highly linked with social advancement. It is the official working language of the region (Tigray) and the district (Irob). According to Gardner and Lambert, cited in <http://www.ups.nus.edu.sg/post/india/hohenthal/6.1.html>, when a second language has a wider function in a society, instrumental motivations make its learning more effective. By the same token, such a motivation, which has been observed to be a pervasive one in speaking Tigrinya among the community, seems to facilitate among the YG the

acquisition of Tigrinya than the acquisition of the home language – which has been mainly associated with intraethnic communication.

3.6.4.5 Concluding Remark

All in all, both the quantitative and qualitative information on language proficiencies of the two generations adds up to the following conclusions: compared with the OG, younger people are showing a general tendency of language loss in Saho while they are becoming to a considerable degree competent in Tigrinya. The difference in proficiency between the generations seems to correlate generally with the presence and absence of social and psychological conditions. Education, in-migration and language status (language policy) appeared to be crucial social factors. From the psychological factors, which indeed associated more or less with the social conditions, age and manner of learning the languages and language attitude seemed to be profound factors interrelated with the acquisition of each language.

3.7 Interplay of Gender and Language Behaviors

Various empirical studies on LMLS (e.g. Al-khatib 2001; Detaramani and Lock 2003; Gal 1979, cited in Naji and David 2003; Zelealem 2000) and theoretical works which touch up on the link between language and sex (e.g. Trudgill 1974; Hudson 1992; Labov 1972; Brenzinger 1997; Wardhaugh 1992) have suggested the presence of variation in language behavior between the sexes. In the current study, an attempt has been made to investigate the relationship, if any, between gender/sex and language behaviors and to determine ultimately if there is gender-related variation on the state of LMLS. In what follows, the data for the considered behaviors are presented and analyzed in separate sub-sections.

3.7.1 Gender vs. Language Use in the Family Domain

Table 17 compares language frequently used in the familial interaction by gender. Generally, as the data suggests, females seem to contribute for the maintenance of Saho than males; and males show relatively slight inclination towards use of Tigrinya and the bilingual behavior than females. Breaking down the average scores of the overall language use report in the familial interaction by gender gives a birds' eye view to the difference; on the average, (using the nearest tenth) 68%, 9% and 23% of the female respondents indicate to use Saho, Tigrinya and both languages, respectively, whereas the respective percentages for male respondents are 54%, 17% and 29%.

Language most often used with	Responses															
	Saho				Tigrinya				Both				Total			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
Grandparents	87	81.3	100	86.2	4	3.7	3	2.6	16	15	13	11.2	107	100	116	100
Grandmother	45	83.3	51	86.4	1	1.9	3	5.1	8	14.8	5	8.5	54	100	59	100
Grandfather	42	79.2	49	86.0	3	5.7	-	-	8	15.1	8	14.0	53	100	57	100
Parents	63	53.4	94	70.2	20	16.9	11	8.2	35	29.7	29	21.6	118	100	134	100
Mother	34	57.6	48	71.6	9	15.3	4	6.0	16	27.1	15	22.4	59	100	67	100
Father	29	49.2	46	68.7	11	18.6	7	10.4	19	32.2	14	20.9	59	100	67	100
Siblings	43	38.4	79	62.2	26	23.2	16	12.6	43	38.4	32	25.2	112	100	127	100
Sister	23	39.7	40	62.5	13	22.4	6	9.4	22	37.9	18	28.1	58	100	64	100
Brother	20	37.0	39	61.9	13	24.1	10	15.9	21	38.9	14	22.2	54	100	63	100
Spouse	15	48.4	24	60.0	6	19.3	4	10.0	10	32.3	12	30	31	100	40	100
Children	10	35.7	16	47.1	8	28.6	6	17.6	10	35.7	12	35.3	28	100	34	100
Average use in %	53.8		68		17		9.3		29.2		22.7		100		100	

Table 17. Language use in the family domain by gender

Comparison of the two gender groups report on use of Saho in cross-generational communication show considerable difference. This can be deduced from the comparison of report of use of Saho with grandparents, parents and siblings. On average, (using the nearest tenth) 86% 70% and 62% of females claim to use Saho with their grandparents, parents and siblings, respectively. The corresponding percentages for male respondents are 82, 53, and 38. This figure suggests then recessive use of mother tongue is more apparent among males than females in inter-generational communication.

Moreover, in intra-generational communication still male appears to take Tigrinya home than females do. The average percentage of male respondents who report to use Tigrinya with their siblings is approximately 23% whereas that of females decline to approximately 13%. This is also observable in the case of language frequently used by spouse – 19.3% of male spouses claim to use Tigrinya, while only 10% of females claim likewise.

With respect to use of Saho in such a communication, on average 62% of females and 38% of males report to use Saho in speaking to their siblings; and 60% of female spouses and 48.4% of male spouse assert likewise in their interactions.

For successful intergenerational continuity of a mother-tongue, one of crucial and indispensable factors is language parents use to address their children. In this regard, the data shows that almost equal proportion of both groups and, in fact, the majority from both sexes appears to be in position of handing down both Saho and Tigrinya. Nevertheless, from those parents who claim to employ monolingual behavior in either language, slightly higher proportion of Irob mothers than Irob fathers report use of exclusive Saho, while slightly higher percentage of fathers than the mothers claim exclusive behavior in Tigrinya.

In sum, the above discussion on language use pattern of the two sexes show more or less the presence of some association between language use behavior and sex. In most previous studies on language shift and maintenance females than males have been found to be innovative in language behavior (for example, Al-khatib 2001; Gal 1979, cited in Naji and David 2003). Nonetheless, in the current study male Irobs than the females are found to be more innovative, i.e. the one who brings Tigrinya in the familial interaction in both its monolingual and bilingual behavior. Hence, they seem to be in forefront of the shift process to Tigrinya than their female counterparts.

3.7.2 Gender vs. Language Use for Various Functions

The reported language(s) frequently used for various functions has been examined vis-à-vis the gender category of respondents and the result is demonstrated in table 18. As the data suggests, the tendency for using the ethnic tongue in the considered cases appears to be relatively better among females than the males. In the overall cases, on the average, about 38% of females (as opposed to 26% of males) report to employ exclusive Saho. On the contrary, 46% of males (as opposed to 31% of females) claim to use Tigrinya exclusively. The remaining, approximately 33% of females and 28 % of males, indicate to use both languages.

Comparatively speaking, both gender groups show fairly consistent language behavior with respect to, first, language frequently used when *dreaming* and getting *angry* (where reported use of the ethnic language, language maintenance, is the majority's tendency for both gender groups, although females tendency is seen to be stronger than that of males, and in both cases sizable proportion of male respondents, approximately 34% in case of *dreaming* and 31% in case of *angry*, claim to use exclusive Tigrinya as opposed to approximately 22% and 19% of females, respectively). Moreover, the two groups also display a fairly similar pattern in cases of language most often used when *singing* and *praying*, but this time it is a case of language shift than maintenance, i.e. the majority from both sexes mark to use exclusive Tigrinya. Finally, language choice regarding *counting* reveals that majority of males are undergoing a shift from monolingual Saho to monolingual Tigrinya, whereas the females, though they are moving in the same direction with that of their male counterparts, are dominantly in a bilingual behavior (they seem in transitional stage of shift than a complete one).

As a whole, the above discussion points out that male Irobs are leading the shift from Saho to Tigrinya than their female counterparts. This is consistent with the language use behavior observed in the familial interaction where females' tendency of maintaining the home language has been seen to be relatively better than that of males. In the coming sections we will also notice variations between the two sex groups on other behaviors which would reinforce the current conclusion.

Language most often used when/during	Responses															
	Saho				Tigrinya				Both				Total			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
<i>Praying</i>	9	15.3	15	22.4	33	55.9	26	38.8	17	28.8	26	38.8	59	100	67	100
<i>Counting</i>	12	20.3	17	28.4	28	47.5	23	34.3	19	32.2	27	40.3	59	100	67	100
<i>Dreaming</i>	25	42.4	36	53.7	20	33.9	15	22.4	14	23.7	16	31.3	59	100	67	99.9
<i>Singing</i>	10	16.9	22	32.8	35	59.3	28	41.8	14	23.7	17	25.4	59	100	67	100
<i>Angry</i>	22	37.3	36	53.7	18	30.5	13	19.4	19	32.2	18	26.9	59	100	67	100
Average use in %	26.4		38.2		45.5		31.3		28.1		32.5		100		100	

Table 18. Language use for various functions by sex

3.7.3 Gender vs. Attitude towards Saho and Tigrinya

Under this section, the general attitudinal pattern presented above has been analyzed in relation to the gender category of respondents and the result is shown in table 19a and 19b. Moreover, an attempt has been made to classify the justifications provided for each items in accordance with the respondents gender category and the result is presented following the description of the responses to each item.

In response to item 1, the vast majority of respondents from either sex group show a positive attitude towards the importance of speaking Saho, though the attitude of females is stronger than that of males. Relatively higher percentage of males than females deem speaking Saho useless. In their justifications relatively the dominant majority of both groups (who interacted positively) explained strong tendency of communicative motives than symbolic ones. However, from those who justified the importance of speaking Saho in relation to its symbolic or cultural value, females' tendency was relatively higher than that of males.

With respect to item 2, 100% of respondents, regardless of their sex, feel speaking Tigrinya as vital. Again the predominant majority of both sex group provided instrumental motivation for claiming so. A few others from the male category, as well as the female, have reflected integrative motivations (or feel Tigrinya as their language too).

The statement "one can identify him/her self as ethnic Irob without speaking Saho" excites positive reaction among the majority of both sexes. However, such an inclination seems stronger among males than females. In other words, speaking Saho is felt as a necessary ethnic badge for relatively higher percentage of females (43.3%) when compared with that of the percentage of males (39%). For those who interacted positively, the prevalent justification was, it is possible to be an Irob if one was born from Irob parents.

Regarding item 4, for the majority of males and sizable proportion of females Saho appears to be a less expressive language than Tigrinya, or it is inferior to, Tigrinya. However such a feeling seems widespread among the males than the females. As to their justifications, the males' tendency was more of linguistic criterion (such as "Saho has many borrowed words from Tigrinya") while females accounted for that in relation to Tigrinya's dominance in important domains.

Item 1-4	Yes				No				Do not know				Total			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
<i>Is it useful for you to speak Saho?(1)</i>	51	86.4	65	97.0	6	10.2	2	3.0	2	3.4	-	-	59	100	67	100
<i>Is it useful for you to speak Tigrinya?(2)</i>	59	100	67	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	59	100	67	100
<i>One can identify him/herself as an ethnic Irob without speaking Saho?(3)</i>	36	61.0	35	52.2	23	39.0	29	43.3	-	-	3	4.5	59	100	67	100
<i>Tigrinya is a more expressive language than Saho.(4)</i>	33	55.9	24	35.8	19	32.2	31	46.3	7	11.9	12	17.9	59	100	67	100

Table 19a. Attitude towards Saho and Tigrinya by sex

Items 5-7	Responses															
	Saho				Tigrinya				Both				Total			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
<i>Which language better serves for life?(5)</i>	6	10.2	11	16.4	37	62.7	36	53.7	16	27.1	20	29.9	59	100	67	100
<i>Which language do you want to speak most?(6)</i>	29	49.2	38	56.7	17	28.8	2	3.0	13	22.0	27	40.3	59	100	67	100
<i>Which language do you wish your children to speak?(7)</i>	4	6.8	7	10.5	22	37.3	11	16.4	33	55.9	49	73.1	59	100	67	100

Table 19b. Attitude towards Saho and Tigrinya by sex

Both sex groups are also favorably inclined towards Tigrinya (not in favor of Saho) as a language better serves for life (item 5), although the attitude of females is stronger than the males. All of the respondents who named Tigrinya justified it in relation to its socio economic significance.

With regard to item 6, language respondents want to speak most, majority of both sexes show a positive attitude towards Saho, although such an attitude is slightly stronger among females than males. (This is consistent with the responses to item 1, where 97% of females, as opposed to 86.4% of males, regarded speaking Saho as important.) The 2nd majority of females, and in fact significant proportion – 40%, show a positive attitude towards both Saho and Tigrinya, whereas the 2nd majority of males prefer Tigrinya. This also suggests that males are more favorably inclined towards Tigrinya than females. As regards their justifications, relatively the majority's tendency for both sexes was pragmatic or communicative motivations. These include, "to communicate with Irobs", and "I live among Irobs or Irobland". Yet, slightly higher proportion of females than males claimed that they preferred Saho because it is their language/symbol of ethnic identity/cultural asset etc.

The last attitude item is concerned with language respondents wish their children to speak or know. The majority from both sexes show positive attitude towards both languages. Both group claimed the importance of Saho for intraethnic communication while a few males and considerable number of females attached with its symbolic function. Tigrinya was predominantly justified for social advancement but a few males and females also expressed integrative motive for claiming so. Consistently though, significant proportion of males prefers exclusive Tigrinya as a language to be spoken by their children at the expense of Saho. This is consistent with the actual language use behavior parents have displayed in speaking to their children, where more fathers (male parents) than mothers (female parents) have reported use of bare Tigrinya is such a case.

All in all, the above discussion presents the presence of language attitude difference, though with slight degrees, between male and female Irobs. The males have generally shown a relatively less positive attitude towards Saho when compared with their attitude towards Tigrinya. Females, on the other hand, are inclined favorably towards their own language as well as Tigrinya. This indicates therefore that the shift process is comparatively more advanced among males than among females.

3.7.4 Gender vs. Language Proficiency

This section describes the relationship between respondents' gender and their claimed oral proficiencies in the two languages. In parallel with the previous discussions on language attitude and particularly on language use, table 20 shows that gender difference seems to bring about proficiency difference among the target group. On the average, around 91% of females maintain to have beyond average oral skills in Saho and this figure declines to about 72% in the case of their claimed proficiency in Tigrinya. On the other hand, whereas almost 76% of male respondents claim to have beyond average skills in the ethnic language, 91% of them evaluate to have beyond average oral proficiencies in Tigrinya. This indicates, consistently with language use pattern by gender, that females are more proficient in the ethnic language than Tigrinya while males are becoming to a greater degree competent in Tigrinya at the expense of their ancestral tongue. Accordingly, maintenance of Saho can be said better among female than male Irobs; or, conversely, the male than female Irobs can be regarded as spearhead of language shift.

Independently treating reports of the two sexes to be evaluated as *very good* in the proficiency of the home language (so that to determine the impact of gender on language loss) unveils some degrees of variation between them. On the one hand, 41(69.5%) and 45 (71.4%) of females evaluate their proficiency as *very good* in speaking and understanding Saho, respectively. On the other hand, 27 (64.4%) and 30 (65.2%) male respondents claimed to have *very good* skill in speaking and understanding the native tongue, respectively. This shows that relatively higher proportion of females than males are confident speakers of Saho.

Table 20 language proficiency by sex

Skills	Responses																							
	Saho												Tigrinya											
	Male						Female						Male						Female					
	VG & G		F		P		VG & G		F		P		VG & G		F		P		VG & G		F		P	
	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
<i>Speaking</i>	44	74.6	15	25.4	-	-	59	88.1	8	11.9	-	-	54	91.5	5	8.5	-	-	47	70.1	20	29.8	-	-
<i>Understanding</i>	46	78.0	13	22.0	-	-	63	94.0	4	6.0	-	-	53	89.8	6	10.2	-	-	50	74.6	15	22.4	2	3.0

3.7.5 Concluding Remark

The above discussion on the relationship between sex and the sociolinguistic variables taken into account to determine the state of LMLS disclose consistently that the two sex groups have remarkable language behavior variations. In the literature on language change and language shift and maintenance in particular (such as Labov 1972; Trudgill 1974; Hudson 1992; Al-khatib 2003; Gal 1979 and Milroy 1987, cited in Naji and Davis 2003 etc.) females than males have been stated to be innovative or spearhead of language shift. In contrast, some studies (for instance, Rubin 1968; Zelealem 2000), and theoretical works (Brenzinger 1997) suggest the presence of relatively better maintenance among females than males. The current study comes in line with the latter group of scholars and contradicts with the former, which assert that females are innovative than males.

According to Holmes (1992:234) the generalization that women are more innovative than their men folks is true only for communities in which females' role in public life is more apparent than males. In accordance with this point, the possible explanation for the difference between the genders among the target group seems due to the fact that among the Irob community females do not hold significant role in public life (incidentally, this is true of across most Ethiopian cultures). Usually, they are expected to engage in domestic affairs looking after children and/or dealing with other household affairs. Hence they spend most of their life in and around the home.

On the other hand, males have to engage in activities that make them able to earn their livings for it is by and large their expected social roles. Accordingly, they are socialized differently – they are sent to schools, they have to travel, to be employed in better work atmospheres, etc. These in turn pave the way for males to experience frequent exposure with other (probably dominant) cultures. And linguistic exposure is no exception.

As they frequently use the dominant language in their work, education and travel experience, they become more proficient in the language and probably they interfere in it more often than females would do. They bring the language home and knowing its socio-economic importance they develop a more positive attitude towards the language. These ultimately may generate favorable provisions for the males than females to abandon the native language. This seems the reality for the sex groups at Dowhan.

3.8 Interview Results with Government Representative

As mentioned above, the aim of the interview with government body is to obtain information on the institutional support issues. To this end, three interview questions have been forwarded to the head of an office for the Study and Promotion of Cultural Indigenous Knowledge. The responses to each item will be presented and analyzed.

Q1. The language has no official status. So have your office or/and the community ever raised such question to the concerned higher body, i.e., to promote Saho to a working language of your district? If yes when and what was the response?

Response

The office (SPCIK) has been included under the wereda's structure and become functional very recently. However, it is working devotedly to promote the people's culture in general and its language in particular. For ages, the language had been given little concern from government and the community. Recently in accordance with the new constitution of the country, the government allows us self-administration and thereby to promote our cultural practices. However, there is still some reluctance in the community and among the young generation in particular to fully participate in promoting and preserving its cultural assets. As I told you earlier the language had entertained little attention and it had been a spoken language for a long time. Let alone that, it had not a single name. Some insiders and outsiders used to call it Irob and others Saho. Accordingly, we planned, with the support of the regional government [of Tigray], to develop the orthography for the language and to bring it to the school.

In parallel with the development of the orthography, by allowing members of the community in the homeland, other parts of the country and overseas, the specification for the language's name and the alphabet were commented on. After this by consulting linguists and using the people's feedback the name of the language was specified to be Saho while Irob was taken for the name of the group. Besides, Geez has preferred to Latin script.

However, there were strong oppositions raised from some conservative Christian on the name...they did not like the name Saho, because it was associated with Islam [for it is spoken by Muslims in Eritrea]. Still some did not see any importance in such activities for various reasons of their own. Through these all, the language's orthography was designed and textbook for grade one in Saho was prepared. And starting from this year [2009/10] it is given in schools for four hours a week for grade one students. It will continue until grade four.

Q2. Saho is being taught in schools these days. Is there any plan to make it a school medium?

Response

So far there is no any further plan in this regard.

Q3. What other plans does your office have or what other activities have been accomplished so far concerning the maintenance of the language?

Response

As I mentioned earlier, the young generation is leaving behind its cultural asset: and we are working on awareness creation among the youth. In this regard, so far we have arranged poem and drama contests in which the youth participated and there is a plan to arrange further such contests via which cultural awareness works will be accomplished. Moreover, there is a plan to write public sign boards in Saho alongside Tigrinya and English throughout the district. In addition, the language spoken in urban areas is largely influenced by Tigrinya. So we are collecting native words from communities in the villages so as to use them as an input for material preparation and the like. We are also collecting the oral literature of the people from elders so as to record it and use it as input for the language's development.

Discussion

The interview data above makes vivid some important socio-linguistic facts. Generally, the interview suggests the presence of some positive and negative situations for language maintenance. To begin with the positive facets specified, Saho's introduction as school subject will create an opportunity for Irob children to have a formal exposure to their mother-tongue (which the previous generations missed). It is generally believed that language shift is favored when children of minority groups have education only on the high status group's tongue but not in their vernacular (Appel and Muysken 1987; Hoffman 1991). Because, such a condition will create bilingualism without biliteracy which in turn paves the way to asymmetrical bilingualism and eventually loss of the minority tongue (Baker 1996). Hence, the recent development we have noticed in Saho may have a positive contribution in revitalizing it.

Moreover, literacy in a minority language like Saho will widen its functional role (through writing and reading in it) and with wider function, its social status may rise (Baker 1996). This in turn may assist its status which ultimately contributes to long term survival of the language.

However, such achievements are largely dependent on the efficiency of the teaching-learning process. In this regard, there are some critical points that needs to be addressed so that to secure all the merits of mother-tongue education program. First, there is shortage of textbook for Saho. As I understood from an elementary school principal and some teachers, the distribution of text book is about 1:4. Second, the teachers have had limited training on the subject matter. Most importantly, published materials in Saho are scarcely available. So far, there is only one book, by Berhe, where Irobs' folklore is written in Saho and Tigrinya. However, as one scholar firmly declare, "Without vernacular literature, vernacular literacy cannot be taught" (Lotherington 1999, as cited in Varamasi 2005: 83). For such a circumstance makes access to supplementary material difficult for the teaching-learning process of the language under question.

Turning to the information above, the official's comment suggests also the presence of some negative contexts for the continued existence of Saho. Consistently with the other results, the official recognizes that the young generation is less interested in preserving its traditions. Furthermore, language maintenance efforts appear to be top-down than bottom-up. Participation of the community in preserving the people's culture and language has been evaluated to be weak. Some have been stated to have even negative and/or ambivalent attitudes to such activities. Once again, the official recognizes the presence of language diffusion in the variety of Saho spoken in urban areas. The supposedly competent speakers of the language are found in rural areas than urban areas like Dowhan. All in all, the comments of the official on different aspects of cultural and linguistic conditions of the community tend to support more or less the results of the quantitative and the other qualitative data analysis.

3.9 General Factors Favoring Language Shift in the Irob District

The aim of this section of the study is to present some external factors influencing maintenance of Saho in the homeland setting. The discussion is accomplished based on various secondary and primary sources. In doing so, comments stated in various theoretical and empirical sociolinguistic works concerning language contact issues and in particular LMLS issues are used as explanations. Where necessary, the findings of the quantitative analysis are used as evidence for propositions being made.

Generally, various factors seem to come into play with the current situation of Saho among the Irob community. They are in general socio-historical, socio-political, economic, social, psychological, and cultural in nature. But, I suggest, a more detail analysis may disclose various other causes and factors as well as relationship of factors than they could otherwise be discussed in here. These factors are thus taken tentatively as determinant on the viability of Saho. They are briefly discussed as follows.

3.9.1 Socio-historical Factors

Language maintenance /shift study would benefit, among others, from tracing the historical background of the contact situation (Edwards 1992). According to Fase et al. (1992: 7), minority groups that could isolate from dominant groups for a long time may start to get integrated as a result of new political or economic development within the country they are part of; and “once their relative isolation as a group is threatened, their language is a candidate for shift.” In line with this view point, according to online articles written by Souba and Tsegay (both cited in <http://www.irrob.org/articles-on-irob.html>), a book by Berhe (2000 EC.) and comments of Irob elders, the founding father of Irobs from whom they trace their root is Soummae. His father, Wärädä Mihrät, was a local king during the Middle Age seated originally in Sära'e, Källite-Awla'lo, an area about 60km away to the north east of Mäqälä, capital of Tigray Regional State. By the end of the 13th century, he was believed to change his seat further to the north near Adigirat. The reason was assumed to be the then political turmoil in the country.

Soummae's father was a descendant of Emperor Yitbaräk of the Zagwe dynasty – one of the ruling Christian dynasties of the Ethiopian Empire flourished in the Middle Age, which overthrew the Solomonic based Aksumitè Kingdom around the 10th century and ruled the empire until the mid 13th century (Last et al. 2008: 27-29). By the late 13th century, the throne of the Solomonic line revived and the Zagwe Empire came to its end. With this political development, Wärädä Mihrät and his compatriots left Sära'e for a place named Gole'a in Agamä, near Adigirat (Berhe 2000:14), in search of a militarily strategic area so as to keep away and defend themselves from the newly crowned rulers (Souba, as cited in <http://www.irrob.org/articles-on-irob.html>). It is from this place that Soummae is assumed to move deep into the east and come to the present naturally strategic area before seven or so centuries ago, from where Irobs had kept themselves away from political centers for centuries. Because, the area was somehow out of the reach or the challenge for political administration of the then magistrates at national or regional levels. During this period, they used to practice their

own traditional socio-political organizations (local administration and legal systems) which were believed to be based on an egalitarian system (Tsegay, as cited in <http://www.irrob.org/articles-on-irob.html>).

Historians suggest that interethnic and interclan conflicts were a characterizing insignia of Eastern Tigray for centuries. They were attributed to territorial expansion, controlling grazing lands, etc. As a result, in defending their interests, Irobs had waged several conflicts with their Saho speaking neighbors to the east (such as Debrimila, Assaurta, Hazo), with Afar to the south, and with Tigreans to the north and to the west (Tsegay, as cited in <http://www.irrob.org/articles-on-irob.html>). Nevertheless, from 18th century onwards they started to get integrated with the neighboring Tigrinya speaking community, *highlanders*, (with whom they shared the same religion – Christianity) than with the other groups with whom they shared the same language, but diverged in religion.

According to Tsegay (cited in <http://www.irrob.org/articles-on-irob.html>) whereas the other Saho and Afar speaking neighboring communities used to perceive political integration with the highlanders as unfavorable political stratagem, “the Irob ... increasingly began to participate in highland political, administrative and military affairs since the 18th century.” And throughout the 18th century such involvements had increased to a considerable degree and reached its climax at the turn of the century with an Irob leader Dejach Soubagadis Woldu who defeated the regional lord, Ras Woldselassie, and became the governor of the present day Tigray and Eritrea from 1822-1831(ibid).

Afterwards, the relative isolation of Irobs from the Tigrinya speaking community has not been persisting in and the cultural contact between the two groups would be imagined to begin to take its deeper root. After these periods, the Irob have begun to adopt not only Tigrinya, but also various customs and social-organizations of their Tigrean neighbor. In fact, in his scholarly article, Tsegay (cited in <http://www.irrob.org/articles-on-irob.html>) underlined that the historical milieu of Eastern Tigray marked, among others, “the gradual population incursions, assimilation and integration of the lowland Saho speaking Irobs into highland Tigrinya speaking communities of Agamä and Kilde Awlaelo.” (Some manifestations for this will be addressed in cultural contact section below.)

In view of that, it can be said that the contact between the two linguistic groups, and undeniably between their languages, has been a long established experience. But the historical profile of the people suggests that the degree of contact could be assumed remarkable since the last few centuries. Moreover, it clearly shows that the directionality of cultural assimilation is

from the lowlanders to the highlanders, not vice versa. Hence, linguistic assimilation, which is part of the larger enterprise, among the Saho speakers of the Irob community cannot be claimed to be a recent phenomenon. It rather seems to have been in progress for two or more centuries now. But, currently, due to some socio-political changes in the country as a whole and some socio-economic changes in Irobland specifically, the degree of linguistic acculturation can be said further intensified. In what follows, the possible impact of these factors will be addressed.

3.9.2 Socio-political Factors

The present area where the Irob dwell traditionally used to be an autonomous quarter. By early decades of the 20th century it had become semi-autonomous. From 1970s to early periods of 1990s it had been a sub-district of Gulomekeda, and had lost its relative autonomy at all. This marks more or less the beginning of contemporary phase on the contact between the groups. Recently, since the last two decades or less, it has been established as a self-governing district, 'wereda', in its own right, although it has been remained dependent in sociolinguistic terms. That is, unlike the earlier periods of autonomy, Tigrinya has become the official language of the district these days, where Saho was assumed to be the *de facto* language for public life during those periods.

Language policy is a well stated sociopolitical factor for language maintenance or otherwise decline and death (Kamwangamalu 2003; Wolfram 2002; Holmes 1992; Romaine 1994). In studying the Rotuman language, Vamarasi (2005) identifies language policy, particularly in relation to education, as a threatening factor for the survival of Rotuman. Likewise, Hofman and Fisherman (1972) indicate that language policy is one of the factors responsible for language shift in Israel. By the same token, in the Saho situation, the language policy of the region does not seem on the side of Saho's continued existence. It has reduced the traditional functional rôle of Saho (i.e. during the periods of the group's autonomy) from important domains, such as traditional court, administration, work sphere, to less important realms as the home and the neighborhood today. This in turn creates a status difference between the languages within the traditional vicinity of Saho. Of course, as shown in the preceding sections, such a status disparity between the ancestral and the incoming language has been seen to affect the community's, particularly the young Irobs', perception of the languages.

Also, it hinders the institutional support for Saho and facilitates the spread of Tigrinya in the homeland context. For instance, Irob children at present have been exposed formally to Tigrinya

in their school life, as it is a medium of instruction starting from grade one to grade eight and a school subject throughout primary and secondary educations. Though Saho has been given as a school subject for two years now, the previous generation had not such a chance. This seems one of the factors for mother-tongue loss observed among Irob teenagers in previous sections. However, if efficiently implemented, the recent introduction of Saho as a school subject in the district would more likely to counteract such tendencies in the coming generations.

Language policy also appears to override some potential factors that are believed to work well for the survival of minority tongues like Saho. For instance, scholars suggest that number and concentration of a group within a particular geographical setting enhances language maintenance (Baker 1996; Downes 1998). In Saho's context, nonetheless, this demographic factor does not seem in itself a causal factor for the survival of the indigenous language. Though Irobs are, numerically speaking, the dominant majority in the district or in urban centers like Dowhan, the increasing tendency on the pressure to use Tigrinya for public life (work, education, administration) can be taken as a counterproductive element to the seemingly positive attribute for Saho's maintenance.

3.9.3 Socioeconomic Factors

Modernization and urbanization are the frequently stated and discussed socioeconomic factors for LMLS (Fasold 1984; Appel and Muysken 1987; Hoffmann 1991; Clampitt-Dunlap 1995; Baker 1996). In previous studies, scholars like Gal (1977) and Dorian (1981), both cited in Fasold (1984), and Zelealem (2000) have discussed the contribution of such socioeconomic factors vis-à-vis the impending language shift in their respective communities. In Irob district, modernization and urbanization seem to contribute for the spread of Tigrinya into the local community in various real and possible ways.

Clampitt-Dunlap (1995) indicates that introduction of modern components to traditional communities may simultaneously demand speakers of another tongues for having advanced education or required skills in operating them. And this is assumed to be one way for the spread of foreign tongue to local communities which ultimately may contribute to mother-tongue shift. Similarly, the new government administrative and service giving institutions in Irob district do not only bring home the socio-politically dominant language, Tigrinya, but also its speakers in considerable numbers, to run such realms for there is skilled workforce insufficiency among the natives.

In addition, the recent introduction of electricity, mass media (TV, radio, satellite receiver), education and improved road network, which connects the district with the Tigrinya speaking community, health care centers and the like have been transforming the native people from agrarian way of life into a modernized and urbanized society: they have started to engage in other-than-farming activities such as trade, teaching, health care, administration and so on. Such social changes make the daily pressure to use Tigrinya more intense and frequent than ever before. For instance, with changes in ways of life, considerable number of Irobs has made Tigrinya their dominant language in their work spheres these days.

On the other hand, following the introduction and/or expansion of such modern cultures, some villages, including Dowhan, have been changing rapidly into small towns very recently. These urban centers usually serve as centers and sub-centers of government administrative divisions. This directs then that they have been entertaining more Tigrinya speaking persons as government employees and many others who are looking for self-employment activities. Certainly, such in-migration by the dominant group would have played and would possibly play its role in making the degree of the spread of Tigrinya stronger at the expense of Saho than ever before. Besides, since among in-migrant group there is often a greater tendency on male proportion than their female folks (Weinreich 1968), it would possibly intensify the degree of exogamy between the two ethnic groups (where Saho has seen to have little chance of winning as a home language in such cases as seen in the previous section).

3.9.4 Economic Factors

Economic condition is another widely discussed cause for language shift (Baker 1996; Fasold 1984; Downes 1998; Cheng 2003). According to elders and secondary sources, Irobland had been fertile and rich. Until three or four decades ago, there had been a self-subsistence production in the district. Specially, it was well-known for its best honey which covered the local markets in most parts of Tigray. However, at present the area becomes one of the poorest spots in the region for several natural and manmade factors, such as difficult landscape (full of cliffs and gorges), deforestation, poor farming practice for centuries, low annual rainfall (250 mm) and so on (Tsegay, as cited in <http://www.irrob.org/articles-on-irob.html>). Such factors, and possibly others, have contracted the percentage of arable land and made its distribution per household trivial at present. This situation, as a consequence, makes Irobland unproductive or self-in-subsistence these days.

On the other side, such conditions have fostered out-migration in a considerable degree among the native people. According to the 2007 Ethiopian census while the number of Irobs all over Ethiopia is about 33, 407, those who reside in the homeland are about 25, 862. This implies that about 23% (or nearly ¼) of the total population have left the homeland or have made their habitat in other places than the traditional vicinity for Irobs. Economic factors could thus be one factor, perhaps a profound one, which has recently brought about mass migration among the Irob community.

Out-migration would enforce the language shift process from Saho to Tigrinya in some ways. If it continues at increasing rates, it will obviously threaten the numerical vitality of the group which may make the shift process swift in the decades to come. Most importantly though, since most of the migrants, according to 2007 Ethiopian census about 62%, have made their new habitat within Tigray regional states, particularly in urban centers such as Mäqälä and Adigirat, they must adopt Tigrinya for most parts of their day to day activity. This would in turn force them to change from habitual use of Saho to habitual use of Tigrinya not only when they are in the new areas but also when they come back home to visit or for other reasons. This has, of course, been observed on the report of language use with relatives from other parts of Tigray (where a weak tendency of use of Saho has been exhibited).

Moreover, the economic dependence on their neighbors might be taken from the fact that there is no market place in the district, probably for there is no enough production to make available for others. Hence they need to go beyond their borders (where use of Tigrinya is required most importantly) to fulfill their necessities. In general, the economic condition of the homeland does not appear to be in favor of maintenance of Saho; rather, in combination with other factors, it may have played its role for the negative intergenerational continuity of Saho observed among the Irob community today.

3.9.5 Socio-cultural and Socio-psychological Factors

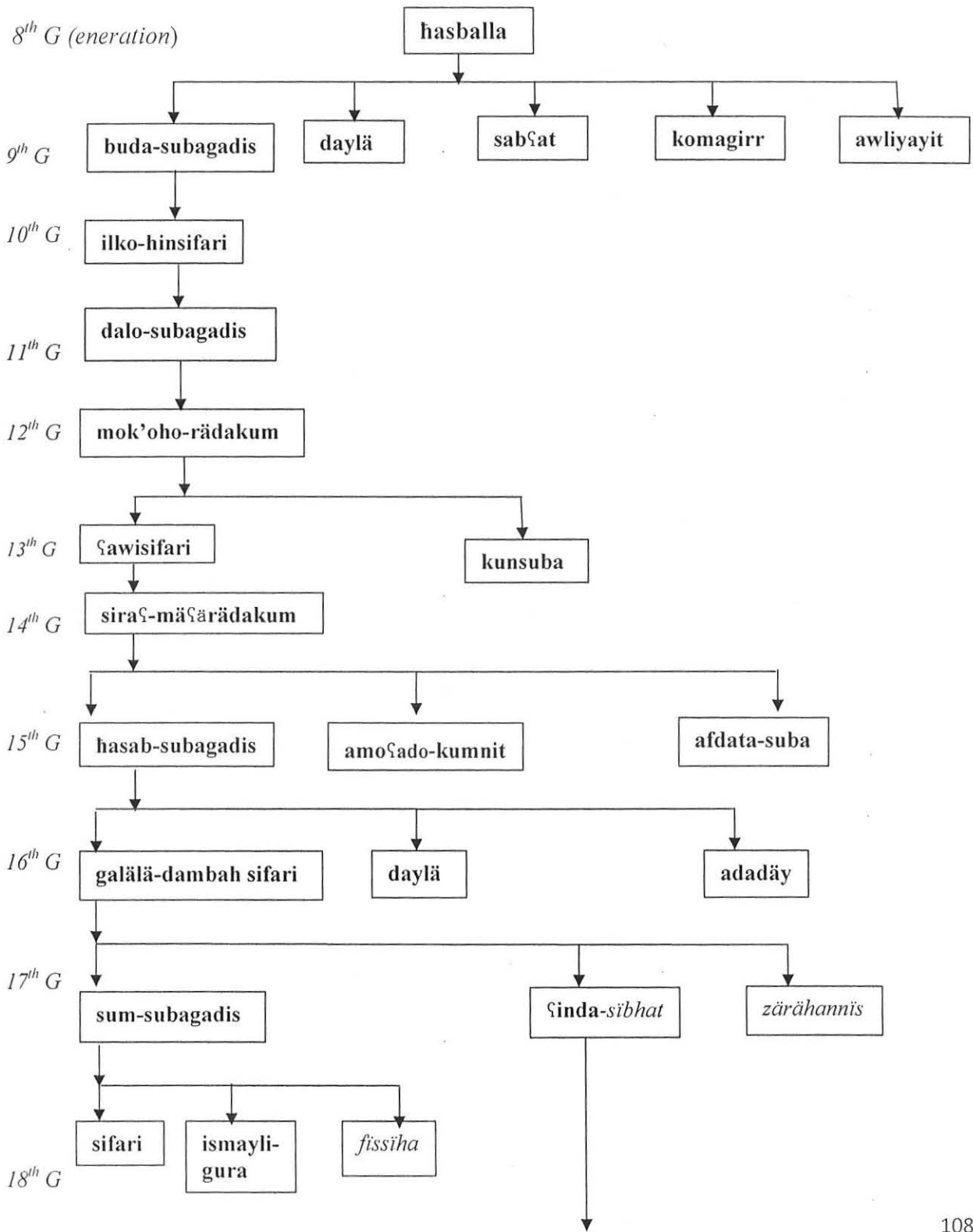
Cultural similarity can also be taken as a factor promoting language Shift among Irobs. Due to long established contact between the Irobs and Tigreans, the Irob have adopted a lot of customs and traditions from Tigreans that could distinguish them from the rest of Saho speaking groups. They have similar cultural foods, marriage custom, folks, traditional songs and religion among others. Religion is perhaps a very decisive cultural factor, in that it further instigates differences between Irobs and other Saho speaking communities and brings them in line with

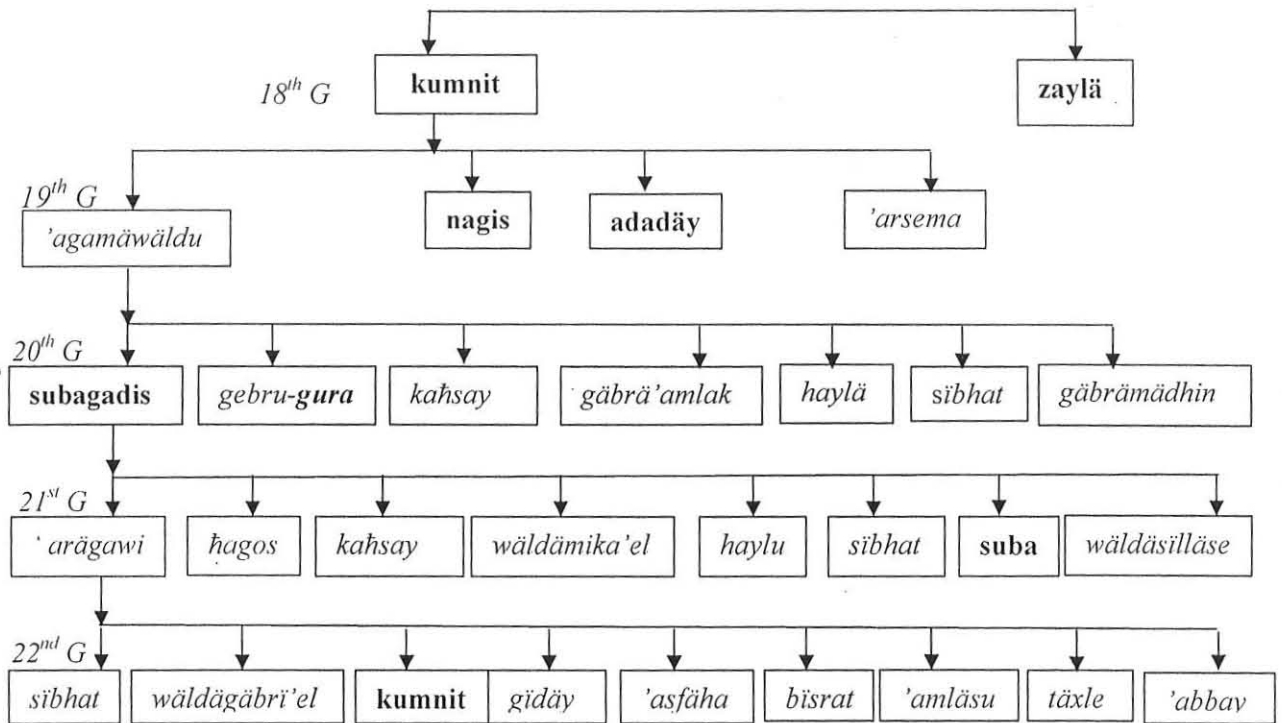
Tigreans. Religious similarity between linguistic groups in contact has been discussed to be a cause for language shift (Appel and Muysken 1987; Fishman 1985, cited in Clyne 1997).

This may have resulted in the shared psychological contact with Tigreans which could be taken as another motivating factor for the displacement of Saho. Fasold (1984: 193) explains that in a contact situation where a minority group considers itself as part of a dominant group, there appears some conflict in language choice and “members of the lower-status group will resolve this conflict in various ways – with interesting linguistic consequences”. One way of reconciling with such a conflict is switching to the dominant group’s language in the presence of its speaker(s); and language shift is indicated to be one of the ultimate outcomes of such a pattern. Such a psychological set up and its consequent language behavior seem true of the Irob community. As Tsegay (cited in <http://www.irrob.org/articles-on-irob.html>) vows, Irobs apparently regard themselves as members of the Tigrean community; “almost all Irobs feel a special sense of community with Tigreans and strongly deny ancestral affinities with their Saho neighbors sharing the same language”. Similarly, they have been stated to show strong ethnocultural affiliation towards Tigreans (than other Saho speaking neighbors) owing to the close historical, cultural and religious bonds between the two (Souba, as cited in <http://www.irrob.org/articles-on-irob.html>). As has been noted earlier, switching to Tigrinya in the presence of a Tigrean person appeared to be a dominant language behavior of the Irob community in Dowhan. These socio-psychological set ups would thus be taken as a possible factor for such a behavior and ultimately it can be regarded as one possible factor contributing to the downturn movement of the ethnic tongue.

Another manifestation of such a contact is that the original nomenclatures of Irobs are seldom found among the community today; they are rather “largely T[i]greanized” (Tsegay, as cited in <http://www.irrob.org/articles-on-irob.html>). An early sign of language shift, as Dressler 1988 proposes, is “the cessation of giving and using proper names in the recessive language” (as quoted in Al-Khatib 2001: 165). Some studies of LMLS prove this assumption to be true (eg Zelealem 1998) while others contradict it (eg Al-Khatib 2001). Among Irobs this assumption seems to work well and interestingly it coincides with the historical background of the interaction of Irobs with Tigreans. This can be understood from the major genealogical tree of one of the Irob clans, Hasballa – the 8th generation from Soummae. It has been adopted with some modification from Berhe’s (2000 EC.) book in Tigrinya entitled, *The origin and history of the Irob people*. The bold items are native Saho proper names, while items in italics are adopted from those which are commonly used by Tigrinya speakers.

Figure 3. Genealogical tree of the Hasaballa clan





Hasballa, according to Berhe (2000), was the 8th generation from Soummae, founding father of the Irob people: su:mme → su:bayto → yatik → giloba → afkara → Ṣamidaldagah → su:ba naba radakum → hasbälla. Accordingly, from Soummae to Sibhat and his siblings, we have twenty-two generations as partly illustrated in figure 3. The genealogical tree suggests that giving native Saho names had been the norm until the 16th generation. And in the two successive generations from the 16th, there seem some degree of encroachment of giving names that have been commonly used by Tigreans (and less apparently by other Christian groups in Ethiopia) alongside the natives. From the 19th generation on, giving native Saho names seems to begin dramatic decline and instead using foreign names especially those names common to Tigreans appear to be a prevalent norm.

If Dressler's assumption is true, this genealogical description tends to support the hypothesis made based on the historical background of the Irob people in section 3.9.1. That is, participation of Irobs in the socio-political affairs of the Tigrean community might have facilitated cultural and in particular linguistic assimilation of the Irob community into their Tigrinya speaking neighbors. Accordingly, after considerable periods of isolation, from 18th century on, Irobs had begun to participate in political affairs of Tigreans more or less by Šum Agamä Woldu (the 19th generation in the genealogical tree presented above) who became

governor of the traditional Agamä zone of Tigray. His son, *Dejach* Soubagadis Woldu (the 20th generation), further advanced his father's power and emerged as governor of Tigray and Eritrea in the early decades of the 19th century. Figure 3 shows that cessation of giving native Saho names draw a parallel with such historical developments of the community. In this regard, it can be argued that language shift process among the Irob community would not be deemed a recent phenomenon (though it can be said the recent social, political, economic, etc., factors mentioned above would have possibly made it somehow to be more rapid than the prior periods); rather it seems to have been going on for several generations now (assuming that termination of giving native proper names is an early sign of language shift).

In line with Andersen's cultural and socio-psychological conception of a community, the Irob community appears to be "open" and to some extent "exocentric", i.e., they have undergone high degree of cultural assimilation into the Tigrean community (cf. the discussions by Tsegay as cited in <http://www.irrob.org/articles-on-irob.html>); and there are some symptoms that they seem to focus more outwardly than their own internal norms. Adoption of Tigrinya names at the expense of the natives, the presence of strong ethno-cultural affinity towards Tigrean than other Saho speaking groups, and presence of greater tendency to use numerals in Tigrinya than in the traditional tongue (cf. discussion on language choice for various functions above) can be taken as evidence for such a claim to be more likely than not. Generally, such cultural and socio-psychological contacts with the dominant group seem to have contributed for the present endangerment of Saho and probably they would exert their pressure in its future prospect too.

3.9.6 Concluding Remarks

To sum up the discussions so far, the various factors mentioned seem to have played a subtle role in the state of language maintenance and language shift among the Saho speakers under investigation. Though these factors are presented discretely, they appear to interact practically and to reinforce each other in different complex ways. Also, the same factor has been exposed to have a pull and push effect on the shift of Saho among Irobs. For instance, economic reason seems to be a cause for both in- and out-migration, which have been deemed an influential factor on the shift process of Saho; moreover, institutional support, language policy, socioeconomic, etc., factors have been held responsible for the recession of the functional role of Saho in one of its traditional vicinity in one direction and for the spread of Tigrinya into the indigenous community in another.

CHAPTER FOUR

Summary, Findings and Conclusion, and Recommendation

4.1. Summary

The main objective of this study has been to find out the degree of stability in Saho-Tigrinya bilingualism (the state of LMLS) among the Irob community. In doing so, various language behaviors (language use, attitude, proficiency), and factors affecting language maintenance (both large-scale and individual factors) was specified as specific objectives through which the main objective (state of LMLS) has been examined.

The research was principally designed quantitatively. However, qualitative methods were also employed as supplementary and/or complimentary to the quantitative method. Accordingly, quantitative data as well as qualitative data were gathered from primary and secondary sources. The instruments employed to obtain the primary data were questionnaire, interview and vocabulary test as well as observation. The secondary data was produced via document analysis.

As presented in chapter one, a total of 162 subjects took part in the study. Of these, 126 informants who belonged to different social categories participated in responding to the questionnaire; 25 subjects, including parents, elders, officials, were interviewed; and vocabulary test was administered to 11 teenagers. They were identified through various probabilistic and non-probabilistic sampling techniques.

Chapter two of the study dealt with the review of various theoretical and empirical works on the subject of LMLS. To this end, various sources including books, online sources, journals, and manuscripts were consulted. The relevant theoretical issues were highlighted in the first portion of the chapter while some empirical works pertaining to the current research were summarized briefly in the second segment of the chapter. The review of theoretical points was accomplished so as to have the basis for the explanation of the research findings. The review of related works was made to have a good acquaintance with the previous works and in the process to learn how such a study would be best approached.

In the third chapter, the sociolinguistic data produced via the main instrument for the study (or the questionnaire) was presented and analyzed quantitatively. In parallel, the pieces of information gathered through the other instruments were drawn on in supporting the questionnaire data. The analysis was carried on in two parts. The first part set out the

groundwork for the raw data analysis. The second part dealt with, (a) further analysis of the groundwork in relation to generation and gender, (b) presentation and discussion of the interview result with SPCIK's representative, and (c) discussion on the various large-scale causes and possible factors affecting the maintenance of Saho within its vicinity.

As a whole, analysis of the data was accomplished through quantitative and qualitative methods. The data that had been obtained via the questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively. First, the raw data was interpreted and explained in the first part of the analysis and it was further analyzed in relation to generation and gender categories of respondents, in the second part. In the process, the result for the items on various language behaviors considered had been computed using simple frequencies, percentages and, less frequently, average scores. The quantitative results were illustrated in tables. The findings were put forward in the corresponding sections and sub-sections.

The information collected through interview, document analysis and observation was analyzed qualitatively; interpreting the raw data in relation to its sociolinguistic implication with the case at hand. The results of such analyses were in part used to reinforce the discussions of the quantitative data and in part presented and discussed in separate sections (eg. discussion on factors). The vocabulary test data were analyzed via both qualitative and quantitative methods. First, the frequency and percentage each examinee had scored were calculated and the results were presented in a table. It was discussed in association with some sociolinguistic variables taken into account: sex, parents' socio-economic status, and place of residence. This was followed by qualitative analysis of the data through which various ways of language loss and compensating strategies for lexical gaps had been identified and discussed. They were presented and discussed by providing illustrative examples under the discussion on the interplay of generation and proficiency.

4.2. Findings and Conclusion

4.2.1 Major Findings of the Study

The research eventually comes up with various findings. To a greater extent, they tend to reinforce each other. They will be presented in accordance with the specific objectives set out at the beginning of the study.

1. The first aspect of bilingualism investigated was the impact of intermarriage on language acquisition.

- 1.1. In this regard, the study shows that children born in such households have a little chance to acquire Saho as a first language.
 - 1.2. And this is particularly vivid in recent times than before.
2. Language use pattern of the community in various domains was another behavior investigated.
 - 2.1. The study reveals the presence of declining pattern in mother-tongue use for intraethnic communications across generations. Monolingual Saho is used most often with the elderly (grandparents, parents) than with the youth (siblings, spouses and children) in which cases the encroachment of Tigrinya is more apparent.
 - 2.2. Presence of Tigrinya speaker(s) affects use of Saho: there is a great tendency to switch from Saho to Tigrinya in such contexts.
 - 2.3. Use of the native language tends to be relatively stronger at the home, the neighborhood and worship place, albeit with considerable degree of Tigrinya's intrusion both as variable and categorical language. Tigrinya is a dominant language in school, market and workplace.
 - 2.4. The native tongue is relatively dominant in situations as dreaming and angry, but greater reliance on Tigrinya is discovered when counting, singing, and praying.
3. There is language use variation among the social categories considered: between the young and the old generation and between male and female. Accordingly, use of Saho, both intergenerationally and intragenerationally, tends to be stronger among old people and females than their young and male folks.
4. Investigation of attitudes toward Saho and Tigrinya was also included in the research. As it turns out,
 - 4.1. In general, the native tongue entertains less positive attitude than Tigrinya. When compared with Saho, Tigrinya has received positive ranges of social meaning.
 - 4.2. Saho seems no longer a necessary element to signify its respective ethnic identity.
 - 4.3. There is a tendency to look at the native language as a communication tool than an important symbol of ethnic and cultural identity.

- 4.4. The target community expresses most frequently, instrumental motivations and, less frequently, integrative motivations vis-à-vis Tigrinya.
5. As regards the correlation between attitudes to languages and social variables:
 - 5.1. There is generally language attitudes variation towards the native tongue from one segment of the community to another and this is differentially so to a greater degree by generation and to a lesser degree by gender. As a result, positive attitudes with strong symbolic attachments toward Saho are found to be stronger among the old generation as well as females than their young and male counterparts.
 - 5.2. There is more or less a shared positive attitude towards Tigrinya across the social groups.
6. Language proficiency assessment was another facet of bilingualism considered in determining the state of LMLS of the community under study.
 - 6.1. To this end, the result of the self-assessment proficiencies (particularly in the oral skills) in Saho and Tigrinya shows the presence of almost impartial bilingual skills. There is a greater proficiency in both languages.
7. As to the comparison of proficiencies across the social categories:
 - 7.1. Older people and females are found to be more competent in the native tongue than in Tigrinya.
 - 7.2. Conversely, younger people and males are more proficient in Tigrinya than in Saho.
8. Investigating the lexical competence of younger speakers was another portion of the research.
 - 8.1. In this regard, Irob youngsters are in general undergoing loss in the lexical proficiency of their mother tongue.
 - 8.1.1. Females have better lexical competence than males.
 - 8.1.2. Rural teenagers are more proficient than their urban counterparts.
 - 8.1.3. Youngsters who have farmer and/or illiterate parents tend to show better competence than youngsters from government employees as well as merchants and/or educated parents.
 - 8.2. As to the manners of lexical loss or the strategies used in filling the gap:

- 8.2.1. They do not know or acquire some items at all. In such cases, lexical accommodation (borrowing) from their second language (Tigrinya) is a common compensating mechanism.
 - 8.2.2. They confused some native items with other semantically related native items. In such cases, primary accommodation is the most common strategy though at times it has still resulted in the interference of Tigrinya.
 - 8.2.3. Retaining borrowed Tigrinya items that are in variable use with the native items at the expense of the natives is another, but less common, feature.
 - 8.2.4. Conversely, some Tigrinya items that are not yet part of their language's lexicon are borrowed and employed as synonymy with indigenous items.
9. Various large-scale factors that do and would possibly affect the survival of Saho have been identified. These include, among others, language policy, modernization and/or urbanization, in- and out-migration, low economic conditions or low productivity, cultural proximity with the dominant group, absence of institutional support for Saho, negative ranges of social meaning associated with Saho, absence of literacy in Saho (though there is a recent introduction of the language as a school subject) as well as the presence of widespread (societal) bilingualism.

4.2.2 Conclusion

As a whole, the above stated findings of the study suggest that Saho-Tigrinya bilingualism is not a stable commodity. They rather portray that there is a downward movement on the aboriginal language in favor of the incoming language. The sociolinguistic situation reveals more or less the presence of actual jeopardy on the indigenous language, with a declining pattern in its uses and users, and with cross-generational differences in values, outlooks and aspirations.

Various factors come into play with the current state of Saho. They can be categorized into external (or group) factors and internal (or individual) factors. The nature of the external causes ranges from the socio-historical developments to cultural proximity and from socio-political developments to socio-economic and socio-psychological changes. After long period of isolation and limited contact with their Tigrean neighbors, at times in peaceful terms and at times in violent ones, Irobs had begun to participate in the military and political affairs of the neighboring

Tigrinya speakers. This in turn has increased the degree of contact between the two, which had been there for reasons of religious similarity and geographical proximity. After some periods, from being an autonomous group, the people had become under the hegemony of the central and regional administration of Ethiopia.

Currently, the community has obtained back its legacy of autonomy, but unlike before, it does not inherit its linguistic autonomy. This is attributed to the language policy of the region, Tigray, which favors more to Tigrinya than Saho. Language policy in turn brings about prestige value differences between the indigenous and the homeward-bound language – Tigrinya, and thereby socio-psychological *dislocation* between younger and older people.

In the mean time, the community and/or their surrounding has undergone various socio-economic developments, including urbanization or modernization, and with it inward movement of Tigrinya speakers. Moreover, there has been a decline in productivity of the area, which instigates mass migration among the natives in the opposite direction. Consequently, these large-scale factors, which are usually closely interlinked with one another, put their pressure in one or another way on the continued existence of the indigenous tongue.

On the other hand, internal (individual) factors such as intermarriage, gender and generation have brought about differences on the contribution of maintaining the home language. By and large, positive contribution to the maintenance of Saho has come about from females and older people. Exogamy appears to be one possible factor contributing to the recession of the indigenous tongue.

4.3 Recommendation

As Nettle and Romaine (2000) argue, “We should preserve our biolinguistic diversity for moral, ethical, and aesthetic reasons. We must view the earth’s language as natural resources to be managed carefully, part of each group’s rightful inheritance, and part of our collective human cultural legacy” (as quoted by Tsung and Qingxia 2005: 177-178). Accordingly, the overall findings of the current research point out that Saho is not a safe language in Dowhan in particular and possibly in the Irob district as a whole. Of course, the study mainly examines the state of affair among Irobs in Dowhan. However, the impact of the large-scale socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural factors discussed above cannot, by any means, be restricted to the community in this town. Rather they appear to create unfavorable condition throughout the indigenous setting of the language in Ethiopia. Also, from what has been learned in other communities (such as among Oberwartes by Gal, among speakers of a Gaelic variety in

Scotland by Dorian) passive reaction to language revitalization in urban areas will be no more than a time biding until the total displacement of the language has been accomplished all over the indigenous setting. The case in hand thus needs some careful treatment from all concerned bodies: principally, from the community itself and government bodies, and any individuals, groups, or institutions that have a great interest or concern on preserving the world's "biolinguistic diversity".

Consequently, the present thesis sets out some important recommendations in accordance with its findings. The measures to be taken are directed to various members of the community, government bodies and other concerned or interested individuals, groups or institutions.

1. The Irob community

- 1.1 Elders should deliberately encourage and teach the young generation in knowing the community's culture, history, customs and traditions. This can be done in various social gatherings and festivities. This may help the young generation to be excited in their traditions or to be "endocentric" and ultimately to develop positive attitude towards their language and culture.
- 1.2 Educated Irobs and/or the elite should take the lead in supporting language maintenance efforts; for example, through producing some vernacular literature. This will enhance the language's status and widens its functional role, which ultimately will contribute for its continued existence. In addition, such publications will create additional sources for the recently commenced teaching-learning process of Saho.
- 1.3 Religious personnel should contribute to the upholding of the language via translating the bible or other religious materials into Saho. This would possibly change attitudes of people towards it. Also, it could help efforts to standardize the language.
- 1.4 Parents should intentionally employ Saho in addressing their children and should expect it in reply. They should reserve the home domain to Saho as much as possible, because it is the decisive realm for intergenerational continuity of the language.

2. Government Bodies

2.1 SPCIK

2.1.1 In collaboration with concerned bodies at the wereda, zonal, and regional level, the office ought to facilitate further status planning activities. As a short-term plan, it should work to secure the language's status in lower levels, such as upbringing Saho to school as a medium of instruction at least in the first cycle primary education. This will have psychological, linguistics and academic advantages for children. As a long term plan, the office should work to sustain Saho as a working language of the wereda. Because, it will enhance the language's status and ultimately contribute to the maintenance of Saho.

2.1.2 The office should also facilitate some corpus planning activities, particularly, with the intention of modernization. The language needs further lexical development (elaboration) to subsume modern concepts, in relation to, for example, academic, administration, etc., realms. Besides, codification activities should be accomplished (via publishing materials, such as news paper, dictionary etc.).

2.1.3 As indicated above, the office has had accomplished some activities with respect to language and culture maintenance. It should strengthen further the activities that the office has undertaken so far, such as awareness creation, particularly among the young generation, status related activities with the language, and the like.

2.2 Wereda Education Administrative unit

2.2.1 It should make sure the efficiency of recently commenced teaching-learning process of Saho: fulfilling the necessary visual aid materials, building the capacity of teachers, providing the required text books, etc. This can be achieved in collaboration with government bodies, with the Irob community, with NGO's, etc.

2.2.2 It should also prepare extra mother-tongue trainings for the young people who have not had the chance to learn it formally. This can be achieved by preparing Sunday classes.

3. Other interested or concerned bodies

3.1 Linguists should help maintenance of Saho by preparing grammar books and dictionary, and by involving in the language's development program. They are also recommended to undertake further (socio) linguistic research on Saho so as to come up with a better image of the state of affair addressed in here.

3.2 Interested and/or responsible organizations/institutions should play their role in promoting the language through financing language and culture related projects, such as printing vernacular books, newspaper and the like.

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በርሀ ዝግታ (2000)። መብቆልን ታሪኸን ህዝቢ ኢሮብ። መቸለ፣ ቤተ ሕትመት ዘመናዊ

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Appendix I: Questionnaire

Addis Ababa University

School of Graduate Studies

Department of Linguistics and Philology

I am currently a postgraduate student at Addis Ababa University in the department of linguistics and philology. In partial fulfillment of my study, I intend to undertake a piece of research on some aspects of the sociolinguistic profile of Saho. Also, the study would have its own contribution for the Irob community cultural and in particular language maintenance efforts being undertaken. To this end, genuine participation of members of the community is indispensable.

Accordingly, this questionnaire is prepared to gather the required information for the study. The genuine information you provide will enable the researcher to be acquainted with the various issues related to the language and thereby to accomplish the intended research.

Your responses to each of the questions are confidential and used for research purposes only. Thank you in advance for your priceless time!

General Directions

Do not write your name.

Where you have a question with alternative answers, please indicate your answer using '✓' in the corresponding boxes.

Whenever you encounter questions that do not concern you, you can skip them.

If the question demands some information from you use the space provided for your answer.

Thank you again!

I. Demographic details

1. Sex: Male Female

2. Age: _____

3. Occupation: _____

4. Religion: _____

5. Educational background: Illiterate Elementary

Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____

13. Which the language do you most often use with the following members of your ethnic group (or Irob community)?

a) Elders : Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____

b) Friends: Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____

c) Priests/ sheiks: Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____

d) With Irobs in the presence of Tigrinya speaker (s):

Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____

14. Which language do you frequently use in the settings provided below?

a) Home: Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____

b) Religious places: Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____

c) Neighborhood: Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____

d) School : Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____

e) Workplace: Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____

f) Market: Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____

15. Which language do you most often use for/in the following functions/situations?

a) When dreaming: Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____

b) When praying: Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____

c) When counting: Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____

d) When angry: Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____

e) When singing: Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____

IV. Language Attitude Items

Questions 16-22 are set to investigate your opinions towards Saho and Tigrinya. Each item seeks two levels of answers: first, indicating your positions by marking one of the alternatives given (yes/no/I do not know in cases of items 16-19; and Saho/Tigrinya/both for items 20-22); and then giving your reason or justification for your position in each case.

If your answer to item 16-19 is I do not know, you may not need to write justifications for that.

16. Is it useful for you to speak Saho? Yes No I do not know

Because _____

Junior high school

High School & Preparatory

College/university diploma/degree

Post graduate

6. Martial Status: single married

7. If married please specify your spouse's ethnic background (nationality) _____

II. Linguistic and parents' ethnic background items

8. What is your first language? _____

9. What other language(s) do you speak? _____

10. What is your mothers' ethnic background _____

11. What is your fathers' ethnic background _____

III. Language use (choice) Items

This section deals with an investigation on the language (s) you most often use with different individuals, in different settings and for various functions or situations. Please mark your answers using '✓' in the corresponding boxes. If your answer is different from the given alternatives or if you want to add another language besides the given ones, please use the space (if other) provided to each item to write your answer.

12. Which language do you use most often with the following members of your family?

- a) Your grandmother: Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____
- b) Your grandfather: Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____
- c) Your mother: Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____
- d) Your father: Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____
- e) Your sister (s) : Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____
- f) Your brother (s): Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____
- g) Your child/ren : Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____
- h) Your spouse : Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____
- i) Your relatives from other parts of Tigray Region:
Saho Tigrinya both if other, specify _____
- j) Your relatives from other parts of Irob Woreda:

17. Is it useful for you to speak Tigrinya? Yes No I do not know

Because _____

18. One can identify himself or herself as ethnic Irob without speaking Saho.

Yes No I do not know

Because _____

19. Tigrinya is more expressive language than Saho.

Yes No I do not know

Because _____

20. Which language better serves for life (or more useful to know)?

Saho Tigrinya both

Because _____

21. Which language do you want to speak most?

Saho Tigrinya both

Because _____

22. Which language do you wish your children to speak?

Saho Tigrinya both

Because _____

V. Language proficiency items

Items 23 & 24 seek to obtain labels of your skills in Saho and Tigrinya. Accordingly, you are given five proficiency labels (very good, good, fair, poor & no skill at all) based on which you are going to rate your proficiency in speaking, understanding, writing and reading skills in the two languages.

23. When I evaluate my proficiencies in Saho, I think I have _____ skills in

a) speaking: very good good fair poor no skill at all

b) understanding: very good good fair poor no skill at all

c) writing: very good good fair poor no skill at all

d) reading: very good good fair poor no skill at all

24. When I evaluate my proficiency in Tigrinya, I think I have _____ skills in

a) speaking: very good good fair poor no skill at all

b) understanding: very good good fair poor no skill at all

c) writing: very good good fair poor no skill at all

d) reading: very good good fair poor no skill at all

Appendix II: Interview Guides and Questions

A. Interview topics (guides) for the unstructured interview

The topics for unstructured interview conducted with various members of the Irob community in accordance with subjects for interview are

- with the youth on language choice, attitude and identity issues
- with adults and/or parents on language use, transmission and attitude issues
- with elders on the history of the people and sociolinguistic situations of the area in different periods

B. Interview items presented to a government body

1. The language has no official status. So have your office or/and the community ever raised such question to the concerned higher body, i.e., to promote Saho to a working language of your district? If yes when and what was the response?
2. Saho is being taught in schools these days. Is there any plan to make it a school medium?
3. What other plans does your office have or what other activities have been accomplished so far concerning the maintenance of the language?

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this is my own work, and all the sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name: Yared Arefaine

Sign:  _____

Place: Addis Ababa University, School of Graduate Studies, the College of Social Science and Humanities, Department of Linguistics and Philology

Date of Submission: March, 2011