

# The Status of Afan Oromo as Indigenous Language Program in Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions: An Exploratory Study of Three Selected Universities

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**Abstract:** *This exploratory study focuses on the status of Afan Oromo as indigenous language program in three selected Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions. The study aims at understanding the status of the program in line with major challenges and opportunities for development Afan Oromo. Relevant research methods such as interviews, focused group discussion and document analysis were employed. Relevant and significant data were identified and categorized based on thematic relations and interpreted qualitatively. The finding indicates that shortage (absence) of instructional material written in Afan Oromo; decline of interested student enrollment into the program; the negative language attitudes; lack of network with other universities and other stakeholders, non-existence of training, research conference, and panel discussion in university community for empowering the language program; absence of journal/proceedings that publish research output conducted in Afan Oromo are among the major challenges identified. The findings also indicated that expansion of higher education Institutions, Ethiopian constitutions grants for nations the right to develop, conserve and protect their indigenous languages. Therefore, it seems reasonable that promoting this language programs demand the supports of government, university scholars and larger societies.*

**Keywords:** Status, Afan Oromo, indigenous language, higher education institution

## 1. Introduction

Every society on the globe has a language that has been with them by transferring from one generation to another. Language, society and culture are strongly interconnected so that the intended societal development is impractical with negligence of development of languages that are most familiar to the majority of the people. Because of these facts, language issue in Africa is directly or indirectly linked to politics. The situation of indigenous languages has been documented by different scholars. Many of them focuses on the vulnerability of the languages when compared with imported foreign languages such as English, French, Spanish and Portuguese which are operating in Africa as official languages. In line with this, Bamgbose (2011) asserts that the net effect of the colonial legacy is the dominance of imported languages which began in the colonial period has persisted till today. This has led to give low status of African languages and restricted their use in only specific domain of functions. The same author has identified different factors for the low status attached to indigenous African languages and their restricted roles. These factors include colonial legacy, negative perception of multilingualism, language development status, national integration, modernization and economic development, globalization, negative language attitudes and defective language planning.

The beginning of Afan Oromo education in Ethiopian higher education Institutions is a recent phenomenon. Before the demise of Derg regime, the language had no opportunities of being offered as academic discipline in Ethiopian universities and other college institutions. It is after the collapse of the former military regime that the languages of nations and nationalities in general and Afan Oromo in particular has begun to gain attentions. Historically, despite

the language is spoken by largest population in Ethiopia, the language and its speakers had been suffering from successive Ethiopian emperors prior to the collapse of derg regime. In those periods, Oromo nations denied to develop their own language, values, norms and traditions. Despite the fact that the language had the potential to be developed, those past regime systems completely oppressed the language and attempted to ban any activities intended to develop Afan Oromo and Oromo culture. The consecutive Ethiopian governments in the past had not only banned development Afan Oromo but also mistreated Afan Oromo speakers in all aspects of life such as in socio-political, economy, education and even literatures. As many scholarly written documents indicate, the people with its natural resources and cultural resources were deliberately marginalized by the past regimes because of the abundant resource the nation possessed. Mekuria Bulcha(1996) writes, at the department of Ethiopian languages, Addis Ababa University, students spent two terms taking courses in the “dead” and “living” Semitic languages of Ethiopia while Afan Oromo and other Cushitic languages ,spoken by more than two-thirds of the population of the empire were totally excluded. This indicates how badly indigenous languages of majority people was marginalized by the consecutive governments ruled Ethiopia, particularly until the demise of Emperor Haile Sillassie regime in 1974.

During the regime of Emperor Haile Silassie (1930-1974), the Oromo nations were not given the chance to write in their language, to learn their history nor to engage in any free artistic expressions. Mekuria Bulcha (1994:9) states that Afan Oromo as core national identity, and was the one language that was most disparaged and least studied in Ethiopia. Baxter (1978) also confirmed that from 1942 to1974, Afan Oromo was the only language in Africa that was banned from being used for preaching, teaching and

production of literature and denied any official status. Of course, Afan Oromo literature was not only banned but also what was already available was collected and destroyed (Mekuria Bulcha 1994).

After 1991 revolution, the present government has shown meaningful actions in promoting and empowering the development of indigenous languages of Ethiopia. The constitution of present government clearly identifies the rights of nations and nationalities of Ethiopia to promote conserve and develop their respective languages, values, beliefs and knowledge. Using this opportunity, Afan Oromo has become the official language of Oromiya Regional State. It has also become the language of mass media; medium of instruction in schools (from grade 1-8); and given as a subject at high schools and mandatory subject in ESLCE in Oromiya Regional State. Besides, Afan Oromo is medium of instruction and offered as a field of study for diploma level in Oromiya Regional State's Teachers Training Colleges.

Compared to uses of Afan Oromo as official language in Oromiya Regional State, however, the beginning of the language as a field of study in Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions is at its infancy. Degree programs of Afan Oromo language has been pursued in some selected universities since 2003 G.C. It is almost a decade since the beginning of the program at Jimma and Haromaya universities. Currently, Afan Oromo language is studied as academic discipline in nine Ethiopian government universities namely; Jimma University, Haromaya University, Addis Ababa University, Adama University, Ambo University, Mada Walabu University, Wallaga University, Dilla University and Mettu University. Nevertheless, Afan Oromo Education as field of study in Ethiopian universities is at its infancy compared to other Semitic languages such as Amharic, dominantly spoken by Amhara People in Ethiopia. As field of study, it has been offered in some selected universities since 2003 after Departments of Afan Oromo Education were launched simultaneously at Jimma University and Haromaya University for the first time in Ethiopian history. Students placed in the departments of Afan Oromo have been conducting research on the language as per requirements for accomplishment of their Bachelor of education degree in Afan Oromo until 2011, and later Bachelor of Arts degree in Afan Oromo and Literature. This has great contribution in providing scientific output on the development of the language from literary, skills and linguistic perspectives.

However, it seems that meaningful development of Afan Oromo education in higher education institutions demands cumulative contributions of all academic, research, and administrative staffs working in the area of the language, and other stakeholders. Besides, despite its infancy, Afan Oromo as field study is expanding its horizon and currently the program is offered in nine Ethiopian government universities. As observations of the researcher, however, there is no scholarly studied research conducted on the status and development of Afan Oromo education in Ethiopian higher Education Institutions until this research was compiled.

Therefore, this exploratory study attempts to understand the status of Afan Oromo as indigenous language program and identifies major challenges and opportunities to the development of Afan Oromo education in Ethiopian higher education institutions focusing on three universities namely Jimma University, Ambo University and Adama science and Technology University. Thus, this research will address the following specific objectives.

1. To identify major challenges those affect the development of Afan Oromo education in Ethiopian universities.
2. To identify major opportunities for enhancing development of Afan Oromo education in Ethiopian universities.
3. To identify quality and qualifications of staff profiles of Afan Oromo departments.
4. To understand the status of students enrollment into Afan Oromo departments.
5. To explore the development of researches and publications in Afan Oromo Education.

## **2. Methods and Materials**

This research is qualitative in type and exploratory in purpose which endeavors to accomplish the intended research goals by employing methods of data gathering familiar in exploratory studies. In exploratory studies focus on phenomena that are least understood or not well known (Gray 2004).

### **Participants of the Study**

In this exploratory study, different participants from various groups such as teachers of Afan Oromo and Literature departments, students and department heads were included for obtaining relevant and significant primary data sources. The participants from relevant groups were selected purposively which is possible in qualitative research design.

### **Instruments of Data Collection**

Interviews and Focused Group discussions were the major tools used to procure data from target groups or participants. Interview is powerful instrument which is used in data gatherings from informants by eliciting information in depth. Hence, both in-depth interviews and structured interviews were employed as a means of data collection from the participants. Interviews were conducted with participants (teachers, department heads). They were asked on the status of Afan Oromo as indigenous language program. Focused group discussions were employed with teachers and students taken as a sample to obtain reliable data on the required information. 4 FGDs were conducted with the participants and valuable data were obtained through these methods. In one FGD, 12 participants participated and they were allowed to speak freely after objectives of the discussions were made explicit by the researcher. As Gray (2004), focus group discussion is the basic identity of exploratory study, and because of this fact major data of this research were collected using this tool. The data were collected in indigenous language of participants, Afan Oromo, and tape recorded to minimize data missing. After that, they were transcribed into English and analyzed qualitatively by narrative method.

### Document analysis

In addition to tools used in obtaining primary data, assessment of some important secondary sources such as archives, journals and electronics media were also used to strengthen information obtained through interviews and focused group discussions.

## 3. Results and Discussion

This section presents data collected from target informants through in-depth interviews, focused group discussions, and document analysis. The data were elicited from the informants focusing on the current status of Afan Oromo development as a field of study in selected Ethiopian higher education institutions. Besides, major challenges and opportunities for the development of the language as academic discipline were explored from the views of informants' perspectives. The analysis is based on thematic categories of relevant data obtained from relevant sources of information.

### 3.1 Status of Afan Oromo Development

On the status of Afan Oromo Development in their respective university, students were probed to provide their views from perspectives of education, research and administration (services). The procured views of the students participated in FGDs can be presented in the following subsections.

#### Status from Education Perspective

By education perspective, I mean the staff development (teachers); students' enrollments condition, interest and motivation; and availability and quality of instructional materials in the universities for the study of Afan Oromo at degree program. With regard to these perspectives, informants (students) provided their views in the following manner.

*Haalli amma irra jiru gaarii nutti fakkaata; yeroo ammaa kana afaan oromoo fi Ogbarruutiin sagantaan Maastersii illee banamaa jira. Gama biraatiin garuu, maqaadhaaf sagantaan maastersii banamaa jira malee sadarkaa digirii jalqabaattiyyuu hir'ina hedduutu mul'ata. Kitaabileen Afaan Oromotiin barreeffamanii wabiileef tajaajilan hinjiran/yookiin gahaa miti. Nuti yeroo mara afaan Ingiliffaa irraa jijjiirree fayyadamuuf dirqamna. Gama barattootaatinis fedhii guddaan hinjiru. Hojiin gurguddaan waantotiin gara fuuldurattii hojjatamanii hamilee namaa cimsan osoo jiraatanii, afaan oromoo guddisuufis ta'ee afaan kanaan barachuuf kaka'umsa uuma. Karaa biraatiin ammo ilaalchi afaan oromootiin baratani akka muummeewwan biro itti guddachuu jedhu hinjiru. "Afaan oromootiin baratee eessa geessa?" Ilaalcha jedhutu barataa biras ta'ee hawaasa keessa jira. Barsiisonnis akkasuma fedhiifi hamilee guddaa qabaatanii osoo hintaane ittiin jiraachuudhumaaf waan hojjatan fakkaata. Gama laayibrariitiins rakkoo guddaatu jira: yuunivaritiin kun, yuuniversity saayinsii fi teekinolojii jedhamuu isaatiin, dippartmeentii keenyaafis ta'e saayinsii hawaasummaa hundaaf xiyyeeffannoo hinkennu.....*

(Taken from FGD from Adama Science and Technology University). When this Afan Oromo version of informants' view is literally translated, it becomes the following in English version:

*The department seems in better position nowadays. There is expansion of the departments across the universities operating in Oromia regional state. Currently, there are also attempts to launch masters Degree Programs despite its existing problems at degree level. On the other hand, masters' degrees (MA) are being launched simply for the sake of name because the program has many deficiencies even at first degree program. There are no books published in Afan Oromo which may help for instructions or references. We are always compelled to use English books by translating into Afan Oromo. From students' side too, there is lack of interest. If there are great works by the department that build the interest of the learners, then it creates motivation to learn and develop the language in the minds of the students. On the other hand, there is a problem of attitude. There is a perception that learning Afan Oromo does not bring positive impact on your life as other departments do. There is the perception of "learning Afan Oromo takes you nowhere!" among the students and other communities. Teachers have also no complete interest and courage, but they teach the language simply for the sake of surviving their life (for salary). In addition, because of the fact that this university is named Adama Science and Technology University, top managements do not give attention to Afan Oromo Department in particular and social sciences and humanities in general.*

As the views of students elicited during Focused group discussion, the development of Afan Oromo and literature in the university is somehow in a better condition despite its infancy as a field of study. The program is expanding and currently it is delivered as field of study at least in nine Ethiopian universities at undergraduate level. Besides the master degree program in Afan Oromo and Literature already started at Addis Ababa University, currently master program is also to be launched at Adama Science and Technology University, Jimma University, and Wollega University.

Despite its expansion as a program, the informants identified problems that affected the development of the language as field of study. Lack of instructional and reference materials in Afan Oromo; lack of students' interest and motivation; faulty placement (students are forced to join the department without their first choice); lack of teachers interest and motivation for encouraging learners for the development of the program; lack of giving attention to develop the language from universities administration; and faulty attitudes of students and the larger society were among other problems mentioned by the participants.

With regard to instructional and reference materials, the informants identified that there were no sufficient books, monographs and research papers written in the language. Students are compelled to translate from materials that are written in English into Afan Oromo. The course of translation, however, students claim that they are not fluent enough in English so that they usually fail to translate accurately to the target language, Afan Oromo. Besides, as



the views of the informants, library workers themselves are also not co-operating them. They are not happy when they ask the books for provision in Afan Oromo, and usually they respond them negatively when they ask them in Afan Oromo. As the informants confirmed, majority of the librarians are Amharic speakers and they do not like to welcome them when students ask them in Afan Oromo. The informants believe that the working language in University is either English or Amharic as Amharic is current federal working language of Ethiopian government and English an academic language in higher institutions. However, they underscored that majority of Afan Oromo and Literature department students could face difficulty in communicating with other language than their own mother tongue, Afan Oromo.

Informants view on teacher's knowledge and skill is somehow similar among the three universities. Student informants' qualitative judgment about their instructors indicated that each individual teacher is knowledgeable for themselves. But, they seem not motivated to teach Afan Oromo from their bottom heart. They are simply doing it for their own survival or for the sake of job as the student informants indicated. There are inconsistencies among teachers on the way they approach to the same subject. The student informants also underscore that teachers of the departments have problems of criticizing each other negatively and/ or underestimating the works of someone else instead of acknowledging. For instance, the informants described these views as follow;

*Kitaaba seensa xinqooqa Addunyaa barkeessaa akka wabiitti yoo fayyadamne, inni sirrii miti kan biraa fayyadamaa jedhu. Mojuliiwwan Jimaaa Univarsiitiitti barreefaman yoo fayyadamne, isas namumatu barreessee hin beeku nuun jedhu. Haala kanaatiin hojii tokko hojjate tuffachuu fi kufaa taasisuutu mul'ata. Kunimmoo nuunis hamilee keennya miidha. Guddina afaanitifis tokko gumaacha godhuu hindanda'u. (yaada FGD barattoota Adaamaa).*

When this view in AO is translated into English literally, it becomes as follow:

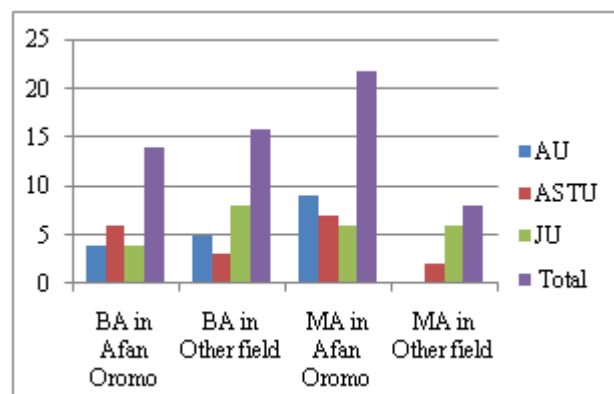
*If we use the book entitled "Seensa Xinqooqaa" written by Addunya Barkeessa for referencing, our teachers do not give recognition and they reject by saying it is not correct, and they recommend other sources. Modules written by Jimma University are also not acceptable by our teachers. These conditions of our teachers' failure to recognize one's own work on Afan Oromo have affected our interest and courage. It also never contributes to the development of the language.*

On the other hand, the efforts of teachers in imparting knowledge is encouraging although they are not actively working on developing the instructional materials and reference materials in the universities to narrow the current big problem for the development of the program as field of study. Reference books inscribed by instructors are not found in the library, even the available ones are written in English. There is no doubt that development of the language is related with the availability of instructional materials and references books for research as well.

As it is apparent in Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions, university has three pillars: teaching-learning, research and service. The staff members are of different background and specialties, and some are on the study leave. All staffs are master's degree at current time. The university encourages academic staffs to do their PhD, but many are lagging to pursue their PhD because they have an interest to change their study area or they seek scholarship abroad.

### Staff Background Qualification

In any educational program, the quality of staff members is one of the major essential components in promoting quality education among other issues. Although Afan Oromo department is at its infancy compared with other social sciences' departments in Ethiopia, the quality and experiences of its staff members is highly demandable for development of the program in particular and for Afan Oromo development in general. Teachers' educational background of the department can be demonstrated in the following bargraph form:

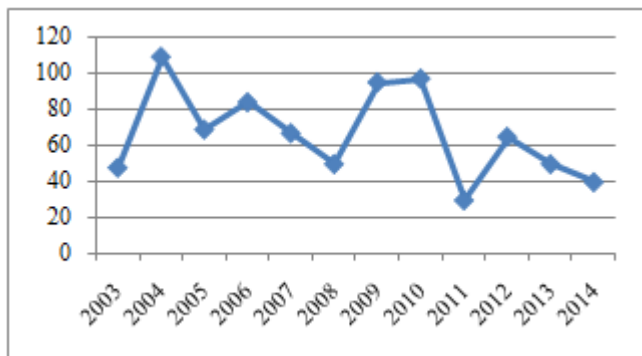


**Figure 1:** teacher's academic profile in AU (Ambo University), ASTU (Adama Science and Technology University) and JU (Jimma University)

For the analysis, Jimma University seems convenient as the department of Afan Oromo has been in effective since 2002/2003 academic year in G.C. at the beginning the program was started with few staffs who were not graduates of Afan Oromo but who were from other professional backgrounds such as English and literatures or/and graduates in Amharic and minor Afan Oromo, with a general motive to produce trained human power for teaching Afan Oromo in schools of Oromia Regional state. As it is clearly observed in the above table, if we take jimma university which is the first university in launching Afan Oromo Department as a field of study( of course, share same history with Haromaya University, the oldest university in Ethiopia next to Addis Ababa university), the backgrounds of staff member qualification is diverse. Among staff members who have been teaching Afan Oromo courses in the department, only 33.3% were graduates of Afan Oromo and about 66.7% were from other fields of study at BA/Bed level. At masters' level, however, the gap is not as wide as in that of first degree level background. In this case, it is proportional 50 % of staff members have had their masters degree.

## Status of Students' Enrollment

With regards to students, currently students joining Afan Oromo department lacks motivations, interest and skill as well. The number of students' enrollment has also become somehow declining. In this case it seems suitable to use Jimma University student enrollment into Afan Oromo and Literature department as empirical evidence.



As it is clearly shown, a shocking decline in enrollment into the department was observed in the academic year of 2011. This is attributed to the policy shift of Ethiopian government on education at higher institutions. That year the first 30/70 strategy was implemented. In which, of the students enrolled in university, 70% of them were placed in science and technology and 30% only were allowed to join social sciences and humanity plus business and economics. That tremendously affected the number of students enrolled into Afan Oromo department in particular and other social sciences and humanities in general. In addition, the curriculum was also changed from the previous one, in which until 2008, students joining Afan Oromo Department were trained for teaching the language at high schools in Oromiya, and job opportunity was not problem for the then graduates. But, after the curriculum was changed into applied aspect, getting jobs for graduates of the students in this field has become the major challenge.

As the department heads underscore, these problems are not unique to the department of Afan oromo and Literature, but also the problem of College of Social Sciences and Humanities following the government's new 30-70 ratio education policy. One of the interviewees from Ambo University remarked that the current challenges to the development Afan Oromo as a discipline in universities emanated from three things. First, there is lack of attention from top management to the department (social sciences in general) following 30-70 ratio education policy. Secondly, lack of instructional materials and reference materials in Afan Oromo; last but not least is problem associated with attitudes. Before the policy shift, students joining the department of Afan Oromo were competent and learned with interest as they were directly employed as teachers or other related position after they graduated. At that moment, job opportunity was large and students were learning with interest. Today, however, there are no employment opportunities after they are graduated in Afan Oromo. There are no wider job opportunities in the market for accommodating the graduates of Afan Oromo. Because of these, there is a perception that being educated in Afan

Oromo does not bring change on life standards of the graduates. As repeatedly raised by both students and teachers informants, they say "Afaan Oromo barattee eessa geessa?" literally translated, "Learning Afan Oromo brings you nowhere!" This saying is echoed both from students' family and students themselves which affect motivation of learners as it was possible to understand from the informants. This attitude emanated from the problems of job opportunities in the market place in the field of Afan Oromo, but it is not from underestimating the discipline (Afan Oromo) itself. Of course, there is attitude of students' assumption that they have already known the language because of the fact that they are primarily socialized in the language as their own mother tongue.

The current education policy encourages natural sciences and engineering studies by allocating 70% of student into this area of study and only 30 % of students joining Universities are placed in social sciences. Relatively academically weak students are placed into the department. There are also students who join the departments by interest and their own choice, but they choose it because they wrongly assume that the language (Afan Oromo) is relatively simple and they are familiar with the language so that they can complete their university courses without facing any difficulties and challenges. To obtain competent student into the department is difficult. It is not easy to get competent students who make Afan Oromo their choice. For instance, in Adama Science and Technology University, there is an understanding that majority of the students make Afan Oromo 5<sup>th</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> of the six departments available in college of Social sciences and Humanities. This indicates that majority of the students join the department without their 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> choice. This is a big challenge to the development of the language. In this regard, department head from Adama University reflected his views as follow:

Barsiisota ogummaa garagaraa qaban 10 qabna. Kuni ammo carraa gaaridha. Miseensi staafii keenyas muuxannoo gaarii qabaniin tajaajilla kennaa jiru. Ta'us gahaadha jechuun nama rakkisa. Gama barattootaatinis yeroo gara kutaa barnoota kanaa seenanii eegalee hudhaawwan tokko tokko nuquunnamu. Akkuma beekamu, barattootni erga dhufanii muummaa filatu. Adeemsa filachuurratti rakkoon nuquunnamu, yuunivarsiitiin keenya, saayinsii hawasummaa fi humanitii jalatti muummaa jaha qaba. Asitti barattoota akka barbaannetti argachuun baayyee rakkisaa dha. Karoora barbaannu sanaan barattoota 1fa muummaa Afaan oromoo filani dhufan argachuun rakkoo guddaadha. Barattootni muraasni 1ffaa fi 2ffaa filan jiraatanis, baayyee isaanii 4ffaa fi 5ffaa akka filan hubannoon jira. Kanaafuu, karoora dippartimentii guutuuf jecha, haalli barattootni filannoo malee gara dippartimentii afaan Oromoo seenan ni jira.

The scarcity of instructional materials, books and reference materials is also the big challenges to the development of the program as a field of study. Although the departments ask the the university for purchasing books repeatedly, no sound reaction has been given. Afan Oromo books, especially, are obtained by searching from different places and is difficult to purchase such books which we need for our specific purpose by the university's purchasing rule. Besides, purchasing process takes place once in a year as the department heads

remarked. As a result, there are no sufficient books in the library.

### **Status of Research and publication in Afan Oromo**

The conditions of Researches that are conducted by academic staffs and student have also without any doubt affect the status of language development. Staff research is being conducted but not many. No or small number of staff members were participating until the new education policy of Ethiopia emerged, 2010. Until 2010, around the adoption of 30-70 ratio education policy, research by the staff members were almost forgotten. However, following the policy shift environment, staff members have inclined to engage in research activities in addition to teaching and learning activities. Provided the good opportunities to carry out staff research, however, the participation of staffs in research activities is not satisfactory as the informants indicated. The informants identified some of the reasons for staffs' less participation in research area: lack of sufficient funding; lack of interest or individual courage; the culture of conducting research is not expanded or lack of understanding on benefits of doing research ; absence of journals/monographs/proceedings publishing in Afan Oromo.

From the beginning, students have been doing their research projects as partial requirements of their first degree in Afan Oromo and Literature. However, the thematic areas were shifted with the policy shifting education. Before the policy shift, the department was producing teachers as professional and major emphasis was given to pedagogy and skills of the language. As a result, the theme of research the departments focusing on were skills (reading and writing), methods of teaching, spelling errors, grammar errors etc. But after the policy shift, the previous curriculum was changed and the new curriculum (applied aspect) have been introduced and attempted to be harmonized across all the universities in which Afan Oromo has been offered as field of study. The theme of research area for the students has been decided by the department. Now, the thematic research areas as identified by the departments are oral literatures (folkloric, and culture). As it is possible to evaluate for the development of the language, both the before and after policy shift approach is insufficient as research area in Afan Oromo development.

The informants were also asked to forward their views on the status of publications, trainings, arrangements of seminars and workshops/symposiums, panel discussions in afan Oromo at the university level. It is apparent that Afan Oromo as field of study has spent a decade in universities such as Jimma University, one of the major first generation universities in Ethiopia. Ambo University and Adama Science and Technology University are among the second generation universities and Afan Oromo department in these two universities is somehow younger in age. Nevertheless, the informants responded that they had no observation when these important activities were practiced in their respective universities in Afan Oromo until these data were collected for the development of the department in particular and for the improvement Afan Oromo in the arena of academic discourses in general. In addition, the informants explained

that there have been no ways to disseminate the activities of the department to the university community and other larger concerned society, institutions and organizations. To foster and promote the language to a larger scale, creating network among universities of affiliated disciplines is indispensable. But, as it is possible to discern from the informants, there was no cooperative networks to work on the issues of Afan oromo and literature among the universities of the country. One of the informants from Ambo University explained this issue as follow;

*Amma ammatti, sadarkaa universititti hojiiwwan dippartmentiin hojjataman, hawaasa bal'aafis ta'e hawaasa univarsitiitiif haalli itti ifa taasifamu hinjiru. Kuni ammo xiyyeeffannoo dhabuu isaa agarsiisa. Discipliniin/barnootni tokko kan guddachuu danda'u, leenjiiwwan barsiisota bifa adda addaatiin taasifamu, woorkishooppii, konfireensii qorannoo fi paanal diskeeshinii dhaabbilee gara garaatiin walta'uun dhiyeessuu barbaachisa.*

If this idea in Afan Oromo version is literally translated into its English version, it is read as follow:

*So far, there have been no ways to make known the activities of the department to larger societies and university communities. This indicates lack of attention to the discipline. Any discipline is developed by arranging different training sections for teachers, workshops, research conferences and panel discussions in collaborations with different relevant institutions.*

As an opportunities, the informants reported that there is at least no opposing for the development of Afan Oromo and Literatures as the current government ruling Ethiopia has granted the right to develop, teach and speak in their languages to nations, nationalities and people of Ethiopia in general and Oromo nation in particular at least at constitution level. This linguistic right had not been permitted in the past Ethiopian governments, especially until the downfall of Haile Sillassie regime. Of course, the Derg regime was also the same as that of the previous regimes in its language policy which attempted to brings national integration through imposing of 'Amharic' calling it "as national language of Ethiopia".

The other opportunities that help for development of Afan Oromo as indigenouse language program is related to the expansion of government universities in the country. This has created chances for expanding Afan Oromo departments across many universities. Currently the departments have been in operation in almost nine government universities. If universities support the programs by giving attention, these opportunities will facilitate the competitions among the departments in different universities and contribute for the development of the program in general and fostering the language into science and technologically viable language in particular.

The other opportunity is related to its scope of speakers and its geographical coverage. Afan Oromo is spoken by nearly 30 million people in Ethiopia. As many literatures indicates many times, it the third language in Africa by the number of its speakers next to Arabic and Hausa. It is also the only



cross-boundary language in east Africa, spoken in Kenya and Somalia. These all have advantages in research in the language, as it can provide different mutually understandable dialects and that in turn help develop the language. No other Ethiopian indigenous languages have these opportunities.

## 4. Conclusion and Recommendation

### 5.1 Conclusion

Based on the analysis of data presented in the preceding section, it seems possible to arrive at the following conclusions:

- a) Currently, the quality of staffs in terms of their educational background seems in good status as almost all of the staffs are second degree holders in Afan Oromo teaching or other related fields of specialty.
- b) The number of student enrollment into the departments of Afan Oromo and Literature has been declining following the education policy shift of 70% to 30% ratio of students' placement into universities.
- c) The main factors for the decline of enrollment into the departments of afan Oromo and Literature is attributed to lack of job opportunities in the field after students graduate in the field of Afan Oromo.
- d) The major challenges to the development the program as indigenous language include:
  - lack of student motivation towards learning the language because of the fact that they could not get employed after graduation;
  - lack of availability of instructional and reference materials written in Afan Oromo;
  - lack of attention from top managements of the universities;
  - lack of journals or proceedings that publishes research works in Afan Oromo;
  - lack of independent library/ archives where literary, research and reference books or monographs written in Afan Oromo are collected, preserved and used by students and instructors to foster and facilitate development of the languages both in academics and research works;
  - lack of coordination among stakeholders working in the area of indigenous language, culture and other related issues ( universities, government institutions, intellectuals (academicians, researchers, scientists), agencies, non-governmental organization)
- e) As an opportunity, contrary to the regimes before the 1991 revolution, the current government of Ethiopia has granted the right to develop, and preserve the languages and other cultural assets to nations and nationalities of Ethiopia on its constitutions. Nevertheless, there is no clear planning and procedures for its implementations
- f) Besides, the current expansion of higher education institutions in Ethiopia has created a chance for launching Afan Oromo departments in many universities operating in Oromiya regional state in Ethiopia.

### 5.2 Recommendations

As it is discerned from conclusion section of the research report, the status of Afan Oromo as Indigenous language

program is at its infancy. Despite the infancy of the program, almost not having more than a decade age, the program is at good position in terms of its coverage. Almost it is taught at nine universities in Ethiopia as fields of study. However, there are problems that need to be solved by interventions of government body and top university managements. Hence, the researcher likes to recommend /suggest the following as possible solutions:

1. The government should encourage indigenous language programs such as Afan Oromo by giving attention to the program in coordination with the universities in arranging seminars, research conferences, and trainings.
2. Top university management in collaboration with other stakeholders responsible in indigenous language areas should consider such programs differently and give special support for promoting the language into the language of science and technology.
3. The government should make arrangements employment opportunities for graduates in Afan Oromo so that students can join the department with interests and contribute for the development of Afan Oromo as indigenous language.
4. As the major challenges to the development of the program is related to lack of standard instructional and reference materials written in Afan Oromo. The government should give attention to these matters in collaboration with universities, especially by allocating sufficient budgets for developing standard materials by relevant professionals.
5. Having independent library/archives is also important for the program to develop the language and work for further promotion of the language. The universities should provide independent institutions for storing and using the materials relevant to the discipline.

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